

CURRENT TOPICS

DAVID WARK who died at Fredericton, N. B., August 20, had been a member of the Canadian senate since 1867, and had served in the New Brunswick assembly and senate from 1841 to 1867. A writer in the Chicago Record-Herald says: "Mr. Wark had thus seen some sixty-four years of legislative service, and at the time of his death had reached the great age of 101 years and 6 months. It is upon this record that he has been called, and probably truthfully, 'the oldest legislator in the world.' Not long since, however, there was a member of the British parliament whose term of service did not fall far short of Senator Wark's, while in some respects it was more remarkable. We refer to the Right Hon. C. P. Villiers, who was known as 'the father of the house of commons' and who was returned from Wolverhampton from 1835 until his death, January 16, 1898, when he was 96 years old. Mr. Villier's service, it will be observed, was continuous in one body and from one constituency for nearly sixty-three years. It is said, moreover, to have been unprecedented. The man who bore the title of father of the house before Villiers was a member for only sixty years, and his record was found not to have been equaled in a search that went back into the eighteenth century."

MR. GLADSTONE was first elected to the house of commons in 1832 and resigned from that body in 1895. Referring to Mr. Gladstone the Record-Herald writer says: "Unlike Mr. Villiers, he represented several constituencies during his life, and there was a break in his service which would have prevented him from claiming the title against such a rival. It appears also that Mr. Villiers was longer in politics than Mr. Gladstone. He was a candidate for parliament as early as 1826, when he was twenty-four years old and when Mr. Gladstone was a boy of sixteen or seventeen years and still devoted to his school books. The actual period from Mr. Villier's first appearance as a candidate until his death while he was a member of the house was thus seventy-two years, or greater than the allotted life of man."

SOME INTERESTING export figures for the last fiscal year are presented by the Manufacturers Record of Baltimore. Among exports exclusively from the south it includes: Cotton, \$379,965,014; cottonseed oil, \$15,125,802; cottonseed cake and meal, \$13,897,178; naval stores, \$16,106,643; phosphates, \$6,886,274. Commenting on these figures, the Chicago Record-Herald says: "This makes a total of \$451,980,911, and that alone was nearly one-third of all our domestic exports. But besides the articles named, the south exports other products which it raises or manufactures in common with other parts of the country—timber, tobacco, petroleum, cotton goods, provisions, grain, coal, cattle, fruits, iron and steel, wood manufactures, leather—and its share of such exports is roughly estimated at \$183,000,000. Hence a total of \$614,900,000, or 41 per cent of the value of all the exports of the country. The figures prove the wealth of southern fields, and unquestionably cotton is still king among our exports. The value of exports of raw cotton alone exceeded the value of the combined exports of breadstuffs, cattle, hogs and sheep, provisions and mineral oils. It was almost three times as great as the value of our iron and steel exports, and two-thirds as great as the value of all our manufactured exports. With such a staple and with its gains in new industries, the south is certainly entitled to feel fairly well satisfied."

SPEAKING before the international factory inspectors association in session at Detroit, Owen R. Lovejoy, assistant secretary of the national child labor committee, said: "When industry lays its hands upon childhood and makes conscripts of the defenseless, then industry strikes at the life of the state. Here lies the justification of legislation governing employment. Despite the efforts to reduce the army of working children in America, during the period from 1880 to 1900, while the population of the country increased only 50 per cent the number

of boys from 10 to 15 years of age engaged in mechanical and manufacturing pursuits increased 100 per cent, while the number of girls between the same ages and in the same class of industries increased 150 per cent. During the recent legislative campaign in Pennsylvania members of the legislature from Philadelphia were found who had not seen the interior of a textile mill, while members from that hive of industry known as the Pittsburgh district confessed to me that they had never visited a glass house and had not entered one of those little tenement cigar shops where girls and young children roll the famous 'Pittsburg toby' for eight cents a hundred. It is the factory inspector who must stand between a given industry clamoring for special consideration, and the people who are affected by that industry, and submit his expert testimony."

MR. LOVEJOY declared that he found in the reports of the various state bureaus information and argument sufficient to blot out child labor in a day, adding: "Can any man, with this fact spelled out for him in simple sentences, fail to see that although every savage tribe has always drawn a cordon of defense about its infirm and its little ones, we in the pride of our progress do not hesitate to thrust our children into the front of our industrial conflict and let them fall or be carried to the rear crippled and maimed for life! Private enterprise must undertake the collection of information that cannot be gathered by an official. For example, the law of Pennsylvania forbids the employment of children under fourteen in the coal breakers and the record of the mines show that the law is obeyed. Yet in May of the present year an investigation by the national child labor committee showed that in one small borough of 7,000 population, among the boys working in the breakers 35 were 9 years old, 40 were 10, 45 were 11, and 45 were 12. Over 150 boys working illegally in the single borough! The extent of the field of mine inspection and the defects in the law regarding proof of age, left the inspector powerless to correct the abuse. It is, perhaps, too much to hope that the near future will witness uniform child labor legislation in the different states, but it is one of the aims of the national child labor committee to hasten the harmonizing of legislation as rapidly as social and economic interests will justify a rising standard."

RAYMOND BARKER, of Racine, Wisconsin, sends to The Commoner a translation of an anecdote found in a volume of old Spanish stories. The translation follows: "Representatives of the bakers' guild once appeared before the chief magistrate of a certain city and asked permission to raise the price of bread. After the interview was finished, as the deputation was going away, one of its members took care to place, with great dexterity, a purse with fifty ounces of gold upon the magistrate's table. A few days later they came back, not doubting but that the purse had proved a most eloquent advocate for their case. But, to their surprise, the magistrate said: 'Gentlemen, I have weighed your arguments in the balance of justice, and have found them wanting; to me it does not seem right that a whole city should suffer through this ill-advised advance in price. As to the money which you left, I have divided it between the two hospitals of our town, for I presumed that that was the use which you desired should be made of it; and I naturally supposed that, if you were rich enough to give alms of such proportions, your business could not be such a losing one as you say.'"

NEWSPAPER dispatches say that in the dismantling of the late Samuel J. Tilden's home, a secret stairway leading to a hiding place was revealed. William O. McDowell, 51 Liberty street, New York, referring to this dispatch says: "I was with Governor Samuel J. Tilden at his 'Greystone' home the day that President Garfield was assassinated in Washington. Governor Tilden had requested me as a friend to advise him in connection with the use

for the public good to be made of his great fortune. I submitted two plans. One of these plans availed of Greystone as the site for a great national educational institute for post-graduates particularly interested in subjects of political economy and government to be opened as freely as possible to students from all over the world. The second plan was to use his library as a nucleus, and to build to it in such a way as to make a great national library. With these two plans before him, he wrote me requesting that I would join him at Greystone at the earliest day I could give to the subject. In discussing 'Greystone' as an university, we did it walking around the grounds and studying the availability of the situation for the purpose. While thus engaged, Mr. George W. Smith, Governor Tilden's then private secretary, and at the present time one of his executors, came across the grounds to where we were and announced the fact of President Garfield's assassination in the Pennsylvania depot at Washington. Governor Tilden sent Mr. Smith back to the telephone to investigate the truth of the report, and then sitting down upon a rustic bench in the shadow of one of the noble trees upon the Greystone property, that far-off look came into his eyes, and it led me to say to him: 'Governor Tilden did you ever fear assassination?' He answered: 'The only time that it came into my thoughts was during the period when I was solely in possession of the information that would convict Tweed and his associates,' and then, he said, he felt that his life was in jeopardy at any moment."

CHARLES STEWART of Bradford, Pa., writing to The Commoner says: "In all this present day talk of public ownership of railroads, many people, perhaps, do not know there exists, in this country, an example of municipal ownership of long standing. The city built the road and owns it yet. The main facts are recited, as follows, by Frank H. Spearman in 'The Strategy of Great Railroads,' Scribner's N. Y., 1905, on page 267 et seq. Mr. Spearman in speaking of disasters in early construction of railroads, says; 'Nearly all of the first ventures failed * * * but a remarkable exception was a little Cleveland road, begun with many misgivings in 1850. It opened for business in November, 1852, and in July, 1853, paid its first semi-annual dividend of 5 per cent. This was not unusual. What is unusual is that this road never thereafter failed to pay regular dividends. It made its stockholders rich, and a small block of its shares, taken reluctantly by the city of Cleveland, was the basis of the Cleveland municipal sinking fund that has since become world-famous. A more extraordinary municipal railroad experience, however, has been that of Cincinnati. Cincinnati enjoys a peculiar distinction in that it has been the only American municipality, possibly the only one in the world, that has ever built a railroad—and in this instance a very big and successful railroad. * * * The most interesting feature of this unique understanding is that the road was well built. During the last decade American railroad systems have been relocating and rebuilding large portions of their lines, but no such work has been found necessary on this admirably built road. * * * Cincinnati put \$18,000,000 into her venture, but she has never lost one dollar of her rentals. Her income today exceeds \$1,000,000 a year, and the scale increases from year to year. She paid 7.3 per cent interest on the bonds issued for the construction of the road, and there were times when she had to turn out her street lamps on moonlight nights to pay her interest; but her reward is now coming, not alone in her traffic supremacy, but on her actual investment.' The road is from Cincinnati to Chattanooga, and on it are two of the fine bridges of the world; the one over the Ohio river, with a channel span of 515 feet, was said when built to be the longest truss span in existence; and, the one over the Kentucky river has been pronounced the most remarkable in America."

A WRITER in the Alpena (Mich.) News says that the United States is a laggard among the nations that are striving to ameliorate the conditions of impecunious old age, and that in Europe nearly every nation has made some provision for