

CURRENT TOPICS

TOM JOHNSON, mayor of Cleveland, has selected three gentlemen as members of a commission whose duty it will be to dissuade those contemplating suicide from carrying it into execution. This commission is to make it known that desperate persons are expected to explain their needs and their troubles generally, in order that it may be determined whether some course better than self-destruction may not be pointed out to them. Mayor Johnson was prompted to appoint this commission because of the fact that, during a period of nine months eighty-six suicides took place in Cleveland.

MAYOR JOHNSON'S anti-suicide commission is an experiment which appears to be very favorably regarded by newspapers and public men. Referring to the appointment of this commission the Denver News says: "There can be little question that despondency—a feeling of utter hopelessness—is the cause of a large proportion of suicides. The kindly interposition of friends and friendly aid and counsel given at the right time would unquestionably result in deterring many such from self-destruction. But in most cases persons committing suicide act on a suicidal impulse, without thought or reflection. And in cases where this is not true they invariably conceal their suicidal intentions. In all the large cities the associated charities and the almshouses supply material relief, and their secretaries and visitors would without doubt give whatever might be needed in the way of friendly counsel and advice."

IN AN INTERVIEW concerning the Cleveland anti-suicide commission, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, of Chicago, says: "The commission is a most interesting undertaking. Now, if the commission would make a study of conditions and throw light on preventive measures its enterprise should be of marked help to a community. The times are too strenuous. There's the secret of this terrible wave of suicide. The trend of modern life—the strain, the pressure, the high tension, the strenuousness of it all—that's what unsettles minds. In my own observation the terrible increase in suicide has been marked in the last ten years. Previous to that a Jewish suicide was an exception. But in the last decade I have acted at many funerals where the strenuous times had brought on despondency or conditions akin and made mor. suicides. Take the modern excitement out of the world and you will have fewer suicides. Now if a public commission can get at the bottom of the underlying reasons for the manner of living as it is and suggest remedial plans the board should yield satisfactory results."

THE NOBEL PRIZES, founded with his vast fortune by Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, to reward each year those who have most aided humanity by scientific or medical research, and by idealistic literature, and by the promotion of peace have, according to the New York World been awarded this year to the following: Philipp Lesnard, Kiel university, for researches into cathode rays; Adolph von Baeyer, Munich university, for researches in organic chemistry; Professor Koch, of Berlin, for researches designed to promote the prevention and cure of tuberculosis; Henry Sienkiewicz, whose trilogy of Polish historical novels is a lesson in patriotism, and Baroness Berthe von Suttner, of Vienna, for her labors and writings in the cause of international peace.

THOSE WHO HAVE received the Nobel prizes since their establishment until the present year are as follows: 1901—Roentgen, X-rays; Van 't Hoff, physicist; Von Behring, developer of antitoxin for diphtheria; Sully-Prudhomme, poet; Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross; Frederic Passy, writer on peace. 1902—Lorenz and Zeeman, physicists; Fischer, investigator of uric acid; Major Ross, malaria investigator; Mommsen, historian; Prof. de Martens, who visited this country with the Russian peace envoys. 1903—Becquerel, of the Becquerel rays; M. and Mme. Curie, finders of radium; Arrhenius, Swedish

chemist; Finsen, discoverer of Finsen rays; Bjornsen, poet; W. H. Cremer, M. P., of the London Arbitrator. 1904—Baron Rayleigh, British Royal Institution; Sir William Ramsay; Prof. Pavloff, St. Petersburg Military Academy of Medicine; Frederic Mistral, Provençal poet, and Jose icine; Frederic Mistral, Provençal poet, and Jose Echegaray, Spanish dramatist. Referring to these prizes the World says: "Already the lengthening list is becoming an international upper house of the truly great men of Europe—the men whose achievements dwarf the deeds of warriors and the petty contrivances of ordinary statesmanship."

EDWARD ATKINSON who died at Boston, December 11, was vice president of the anti-imperialist league. Mr. Atkinson was stricken with acute indigestion. The Boston correspondent for the St. Louis Globe-Democrat says: "Edward Atkinson was born in Brookline, Mass., on February 10, 1827, and was the son of Amos and Anna C. Atkinson. He was educated in private schools. He received the degree of LL. D. from the University of South Carolina and the degree of Ph. D. from Dartmouth college. In 1855 he married Mary C. Heath. Mr. Atkinson was the author of papers and pamphlets on banking, competition, railroading, cotton manufacture, fire prevention, the tariff, the money question, imperialism, etc. He was a vegetarian, and invented an improved cooking stove called the 'Aladdin oven.' Since 1878 he had been president of the Boston Manufacturers' Mutual Fire Insurance company. His principal pamphlets include 'The Distribution of Property,' 'Industrial Progress of the Nation,' 'The Margin of Profit,' 'Taxation and Work,' 'The Science of Nutrition' and 'The Prevention of Loss by Fire.' He was vice president of the anti-imperialist league. In 1899 his action in sending out circulars regarded as seditious was denounced by the members of the cabinet at Washington as treason."

BANBURY CROSS, according to a writer in St. Nicholas, is more famous for its rhymes than for its history. This writer says: Would you not think, if you found the following lines—

ES ROHK CO CAED IR!

Seogeh sreve ereh wcisumé vahl
lah sehs se otreh nos llebdnas
regni freh nos gnires rohyar
ganóed iryd ale nifae esots sorcy
rub nabot es rohk co caed ir—

That you had discovered some quaint old Runic rhyme, or a verse in some language so ancient that it would take an antiquarian to decipher it. That was exactly what an enthusiastic band of archaeologists did think one time, so the story goes, when they found this inscription cut in the corner stone of a very old building in Banbury, England. These gentlemen were on the lookout for just such quaint old bits, and you can imagine how excited they were over this when they discovered it. "This is certainly prehistoric Welsh," said they, and took it straightway to the president of the archaeological society to which they belonged. He rubbed his hands softly and smiled. "This discovery is something quite worth while," he said; and all these wise gentlemen felt very virtuous, as they wrinkled their brows and wondered what story or what great secret the queer old words would unfold.

ACCORDING TO THIS SAME authority these great men could not solve the riddle, so they telegraphed to a widely known professor of dead languages, asking him to translate it for them. The story is told by the St. Nicholas writer in this way: Very soon the return message arrived and all clustered around the president to hear the telegram. "Read backward," it suggested, "and when it is deciphered it will be found to be a well-known rhyme." So it is, as you may see for yourselves; and these wise gentlemen found that a fine hoax had been played upon them. You all know how it goes:

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady upon a gray horse;
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes.

Banbury is best known, the English-speaking

world over, by this nursery rhyme, although, as a matter of fact, this famous little town is in the heart of a country that has seen many stirring times in English history. It is in Oxfordshire, seventy-seven miles from London. The procession of the fine lady of the rings and bells mentioned in the rhyme takes place each year in Banbury with considerable ceremony. The lady is usually mounted on a white horse, however. The present cross, which stands at the top of High street, is a wide, open space at the junction of four cross-roads, is an ornate affair, with a steeple point, erected in 1859 near the site of the old Banbury Cross. It commemorates the marriage of the late Emperor Frederic III of Germany to the Princess Royal of England on January 25, 1858, and is decorated with the arms of Banbury, those of the German emperor, of Queen Victoria and of several other sovereigns, earls, knights, bishops and vicars.

IN HIS OPINION, dismissing the Santa Fe rebate cases, United States District Judge Phillips said: "The greatest offender in such transactions is the shipper. * * * It is not fair play and a square deal that the railroads should first be held up by the shipper and then punished by the government for being held up, while the shipper gets the rake-off." In his annual report Attorney General Moody said: "Officials of railroads have in general terms assured me of their willingness to aid the department in every way in enforcing the provisions of the law against rebates, discriminations and departures from published rates, but have declined to render the only assistance that would be of the slightest value—namely, the furnishing of evidence proving the offense." If railroad managers intend to play the "baby act" and to lay the blame upon the shipper, then let them appeal to the attorney general to protect them from these "hold ups" as the attorney general intimates he stands ready to do if they will but give some assistance of real value.

COMMENTING UPON the extract from Judge Phillip's opinion and the extract from Attorney General Moody's report, the Chicago Record-Herald hits the nail on the head when it says: "It certainly is a shame that the railroads should be caught in this painful way between government and shippers, and then not have sense enough to make use of the opportunities the government offers them for checking the 'hold-up' men in their careers and preventing the further levy of the 'rake-offs.' Anything that congress can do this winter to give the interstate commerce commission power to suppress such bitter persecution will clearly be a great boon to the railroads, even though the roads don't know it themselves at the time. That the shippers have their share of blame is recognized by the federal authorities, but the commiseration for the railroads that is expressed by the judge seems to be wholly gratuitous."

JUST AS WAS EXPECTED, the representatives of the railroads are taking advantage of President Roosevelt's action in the Paul Morton-Santa Fe case to criticize his recent order to United States district attorneys concerning the enforcement of the anti-rebate law. Walter Wellman, Washington correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald, says that public men are now asking on every hand "why has the attorney general just discovered that rebaters may be punished not only with fines but with imprisonment for conspiracy?" Mr. Wellman adds: "The interstate commerce commission, it will be remembered, claimed to have indubitable proof that the Santa Fe was guilty of granting rebates and discriminations and that Paul Morton was the Santa Fe official who should be punished. The interstate commerce commission turned its proof over to the department of justice. There was an interminable delay. In vain the commission asked for action. Paul Morton came into the cabinet as secretary of the navy. Nothing was done. The attorney general failed to prosecute. Finally the department employed special counsel to investigate the case—former Attorney General Harmon of Cincinnati, and Lawyer Judson of St. Louis. They did investigate. They reported that