

CURRENT TOPICS

SAN FRANCISCO was visited by a terrible earthquake at 5:13 o'clock on the morning of April 18. Many houses were wrecked, hundreds of lives were lost, while thousands of persons were injured. Fire broke out spreading throughout the business district. Property loss will exceed \$250,000,000. Thousands of persons were made homeless and destitute. One thousand federal soldiers, under command of General Funston, were placed on guard in the city and orders were given that looters would be shot at sight. Before three o'clock in the afternoon four men who attempted robbery were killed. The people were panic stricken, and newspaper dispatches describe the scenes as heart-rending. The first shock occurred at 5:13, the second was felt at 9 o'clock, thus reviving the fears of the terror stricken populace.

THE FLAMES FROM the wrecked buildings began to spread and in a short time the entire business district was destroyed. The fire raged for several days, the water supply giving out and the fire fighters being unable to stop the progress of the flames. Perhaps one-fourth of the city was saved from destruction by fire. The supply of food in neighboring towns ran short and from all over the country special trains loaded with food and clothing were hurried to San Francisco. It is impossible yet to estimate the number of lives lost. A special correspondent for the Kansas City Star says that estimates have been made varying all the way from 300 to 20,000, and while undoubtedly the loss is greater than the first figure given, yet it seems impossible that the total deaths can really reach the larger aggregate. Congress has already appropriated two million dollars and will probably increase it, while individuals everywhere are giving money, food and clothing.

GOVERNOR PARDEE, of California, issued a proclamation calling for aid for the stricken people of California, and immediately in every city and in nearly every village in the United States collections were taken up and men and women hastened to send supplies to their stricken fellows. Promptly the United States senate passed a resolution appropriating \$500,000, and the house increased it to a million, and later adding another million. An Associated Press dispatch says: "R. A. Cole, a horseman, well known over the country, was at the Palace hotel in the midst of the scenes of horror Wednesday morning. 'My God, I never saw anything like it,' said Mr. Cole. 'And I have seen things, too. I was in the St. Louis cyclone and the Baltimore fire. They were nothing. Man, you can't imagine it; it's indescribable. I saw all San Francisco staggering and rocking and then in flames. I wanted to rush down and jump in the bay and shut out all the awful sights.'"

SANTA ROSA, ONE of the prettiest cities of California, in the prosperous county of Sonoma, was also wrecked. An Associated Press dispatch says: "There are 10,000 homeless men, women and children huddled together. The loss of life is not to be estimated. As the last great seismic tremor spent its force in the earth the whole business portion tumbled into ruins. The main street is piled many feet deep with the fallen buildings. Not one business building is left intact. This destruction includes all of the county buildings. The four-story court house, is merely a pile of broken masonry. Nothing is left. Identification is impossible. What was not destroyed by the earthquake has been swept by fire. Until the flames leaped into the heavens there was hope of saving the residence district. It was soon apparent that any such idea that might have been entertained was to be abandoned. This was appreciated by the citizens and they prepared to desert their homes. Not even their household goods were taken. They made for the fields and hills, to watch the destruction of one of the most beautiful cities of the west."

THAT HE MIGHT re-establish the San Francisco Examiner at the earliest possible moment, twenty-four hours after the earthquake, W. R. Hearst had material for the equipment of

a metropolitan paper valued at \$500,000 on the cars hurrying to the west. The material was in charge of W. T. Leach, one of the business managers of the Chicago American. Mr. Leach, speaking to a correspondent of the Omaha World-Herald, said: "Wednesday morning, as soon as we learned of the magnitude of the San Francisco fire and that the plant of the Examiner was doomed, acting under orders from Mr. Hearst, we commenced preparations for the republication of the paper in San Francisco. We spent a day in buying new machinery and equipment and before night we had three cars loaded with all of the necessary machinery and material that will be required in the publication of a newspaper. Some of the material in the old Examiner may be saved and perhaps can be used. We are not taking any chances on this. We are putting in a new and complete plant, and before the end of next week we will again be publishing the Examiner. Our equipment is going through on the fastest trains between Chicago and the coast. We are sending supplements through for the first paper, but after that we will be able to get out the entire paper in San Francisco. We have everything that we will need. The shipment has been bought with the greatest care and includes the necessary number of linotype machines, presses, stereotyping outfits and a small engraving plant."

THE MOB AT Springfield, Mo., which hanged three negroes and burned their bodies on the public square is everywhere denounced for its brutality, while the growing conviction that the victims of the mob were innocent men has resulted in a widespread revolt against mob law. Governor Folk ordered several companies of the state militia to hurry to the scene, and several members of the mob have been placed under arrest. The governor has denounced the mob in unmeasured terms. He has sent a deputy attorney general to Springfield for the purpose of assisting in the prosecution, and he announces his determination to exert every possible effort to send to the penitentiary the leaders of the mob. While there have, perhaps, been other mobs just as brutal as the one at Springfield, the impression that the victims were innocent men has aroused public sentiment as it was never stirred before, and many incline to the belief that the result will be a greater reluctance on the part of individuals to engage in a mob, and a more determined purpose on the part of authorities to protect the prisoners intrusted to their care.

THE CORNERSTONE of the new building for the house of representatives' offices was recently laid at Washington. President Roosevelt delivered an address entitled "The Man With the Muck Rake." Mr. Roosevelt said that while he hailed as benefactors, writers and speakers who make truthful attacks, he had no use for the literary man with the muck rake. He said that there is a disposition on the part of some writers to "grossly and recklessly assault character," and these men were to be vigorously condemned. He protested against what he called "hysterical sensationalism." In the same speech Mr. Roosevelt said: "At this moment we are passing through a period of great unrest—social, political and industrial unrest. It is of the utmost importance for our future that this should prove to be not the unrest of mere rebelliousness against life, of mere dissatisfaction with the inevitable inequality of conditions, but the unrest of a resolute and eager ambition to secure the betterment of the individual and the nation. So far as this movement of agitation throughout the country takes the form of a fierce discontent with evil, of a determination to punish the authors of evil, whether in industry or politics, the feeling is to be heartily welcomed as a sign of healthy life. If, on the other hand, it turns into a mere crusade of appetite against appetite, of a contest between the brutal greed of the 'have-nots' and the brutal greed of the 'haves,' then it has no significance for good, but only for evil. If it seeks to establish a line of cleavage, not along the line which divides good men from bad, but along that other line, running at right angles

thereto, which divides those who are well off from those who are less well off, then it will be fraught with immeasurable harm to the body politic. The wealthy man who exults because there is a failure of justice in the effort to bring some trust magnate to an account for his misdeeds is as bad as, and no worse than, the so-called labor leader who clamorously strives to excite a foul class feeling on behalf of some other labor leader who is implicated in murder. One attitude is as bad as the other, and no worse; in each case the accused is entitled to exact justice; and in neither case is there need of action by others which can be construed into an expression of sympathy for crime."

MR. ROOSEVELT said that efforts at reform must not be spasmodic, but must be marked by "honesty, sanity and self-restraint." He added: "It is important to this people to grapple with the problems connected with the amassing of enormous fortunes, and the use of those fortunes, both corporate and individual, in business. We should discriminate in the sharpest way between fortunes well won and fortunes ill won; between those gained as an incident to performing great services to the community as a whole, and those gained in evil fashion by keeping just within the limits of mere law-honesty. Of course no amount of charity in spending such fortunes in any way compensates for misconduct in making them. As a matter of personal conviction, and without pretending to discuss the details or formulate the system, I feel that we shall ultimately have to consider the adoption of some such scheme as that of a progressive tax on all fortunes beyond a certain amount, either given in life or devised or bequeathed upon death to any individual—a tax so framed as to put it out of the power of the owner of one of these enormous fortunes to hand on more than a certain amount to any one individual; the tax, of course, to be imposed by the national and not the state government. Such taxation should, of course, be aimed merely at the inheritance or transmission in their entirety of those fortunes swollen beyond all healthy limits. The men of wealth who today are trying to prevent the regulation and control of their business in the interest of the public by the proper government authorities will not succeed, in my judgment, in checking the progress of the movement. But if they did succeed they would find that they had sown the wind and would surely reap the whirlwind, for they would ultimately provoke the violent excesses which accompany a reform coming by convulsion instead of by steady and natural growth."

THE RECOMMENDATION by Mr. Roosevelt of an inheritance tax has attracted widespread discussion. Washington dispatches say that the republican leaders have privately condemned Mr. Roosevelt because of his utterance. They say he is simply providing fuel for the flames that are burning too brightly already. Referring to Mr. Roosevelt's proposition Mr. Tillman says: "An inheritance tax is hardly an adequate method of getting at stupendous fortunes, because it only comes once in a lifetime. I have always been a strong advocate of an income tax, and a graduated one at that. I would be willing to vote tomorrow to put an income tax law up to the supreme court and see if it has not got new light. I would also support an inheritance tax. If a graduated inheritance tax were provided, limiting the amount that could be devised to any individual, the question would arise whether such a law did not amount absolutely to confiscation. Let fortunes pay and not grow too big rather than seize the whole fortune when the man dies. I believe that great fortunes are a menace to this republic, and something will have to be done to break them up. There is a general feeling that these fortunes are a menace, but it will take a campaign of education to arouse the people before the matter can take legislative shape. There are probably some legitimate fortunes, like that of Marshall Field and others that I know of, that have been accumulated because of the rapid growth of the country and the opportunities for shrewd investment that cannot and ought not