

# CURRENT TOPICS

AND NOW THE Standard Oil trust claims that it has been given an immunity bath. The Washington correspondent for the New York World says: "The blame for suspending the operation of the Elkins anti-rebate act for twenty-four hours, thereby possibly granting amnesty to all offenders not actually brought into court up to that date, is placed on President Roosevelt. It is held that by signing the railroad rate bill one day before the joint resolution making it effective in sixty days was signed this result was accomplished and that as a result the Standard Oil company will escape punishment under the indictments found in Chicago, containing more than 1,900 counts. The legal experts of the government do not accept the construction placed upon this action of the president's, and say the court in passing upon the point raised by the attorneys for the Standard will take into consideration the intent of congress, which was not to suspend the operation of the Elkins act. It is admitted that a delicate question of law has been raised."

GEORGE F. BAER, the famous coal trust magnate, did not always hold the opinion with respect to corporations which he now expresses. In 1887 Mr. Baer delivered an address before the law students in the University of Pennsylvania. The subject of the address was "Land Tenure" and the following extract from that address is printed by a writer in the Philadelphia Public Ledger: "How much of this great wealth (mineral deposits of Pennsylvania) falls to the share of our state and her citizens? It has passed into the hands of gigantic associations, kept together by state charters, or some cunning called a trust, whose principal stockholders are not among us or of us. Daily they carry off our treasures and leave only enough to pay the labor which prepares them for and transports them to market. The profit which should enrich our citizens and state goes beyond our borders, and we receive little benefit from it. All this has become possible through the mistaken policy of attempting to foster the development of our resources by departing from the staple principles of honest free government. It is through the manipulation of these associations that men ride to sudden fortunes, and thereby provoke the discussion of social problems and the promulgation of theories which are at variance with all sound thinking and past experiences. These evils primarily owe their existence to the caprice of government in delegating sovereign power to creatures of its own creation."

COMMENTING UPON Mr. Baer's address the Public Ledger writer says: "In 1887 we regarded this as an expression of a 'jurist,' in 1906 the sentiment seems to be that of the 'blatherskite.' Which? Twenty years ago Mr. Baer could criticize the federal supreme court for making a decision (the Dartmouth college case) which makes possible his ignoring the spirit and sentiment—perhaps the letter—of the state constitution. Today we are all disposed of by language more befitting a nisi prius lawyer than a statesman when we suggest that the Reading company is doing precisely the mischief of the quoted extract. Mr. Baer would do well to recall the saying of the great French reactionary, De Bonald: 'Follies committed by the sensible, extravagances uttered by the clever, crimes perpetrated by the good—there is what makes revolutionists.'"

IN HIS ADDRESS relating to the income tax, Andrew Carnegie quoted the late William E. Gladstone in opposition to that tax, saying that it would make "a nation of liars." A reader of the New York World writes to that paper to say that he has been looking up the Carnegie quotation, and while he was not able to locate the "nation of liars" quotation, he did find on page 68 of Gladstone's biography this: "There are many objections fairly applicable to the imposition of an income tax, but surely it must be allowed on all hands that at least such a tax has one great and signal merit—that it does reach what no other tax can be guaranteed to reach, that enormous accumulation of wealth

which is constantly mounting upward in this country. It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of this country that we see, beyond the possibility of denial, that while there is at this moment a decrease in the consuming powers of the people there is at the same time a constant accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, an increase of the luxuriousness of their habits and of other means of enjoyment which, however satisfactory it may be as affording evidence of the existence and abundance of one, among the elements of national prosperity, yet adds bitterness to the reflections which are forced upon us by the distresses of the rest of our fellow-countrymen; and in this point of view I can not help thinking that the arguments which the noble lord (Lord Howick) has advanced upon the question of the income tax are satisfactorily met by the fact that it is upon those accumulating riches that the weight of the impost chiefly rests."

A LETTER WRITTEN by the president to Attorney General Bonaparte may provide a sort of consolation for those negro citizens who are criticizing Mr. Roosevelt because of the discharge of the negro troops. Addressing Attorney General Bonaparte, the president says: "Some three years ago Sheriff J. L. Merrill of Carroll county, Georgia, lost his chance for re-election by his action in beating off a mob of several hundred white people who were trying to take a negro out of jail and put him to death. Sheriff Merrill and his deputies fired on the mob, killing and wounding several men and beating the others off. Because of this he was defeated for re-election. Congressman Adamson brought the matter to my attention, saying that he hated to see a man who had done such a service as a public official defeated because of the very fact that he had rendered the service. He told me that Governor Terrell had offered Merrill a place, the best he had to give, which carried a salary of \$50 per month. I told the congressman I thought I could beat that, and got him a place at \$1,200 a year as custodian of the grounds of the federal prison at Atlanta. I hear he has done well. If he has done well, can't we give him a promotion?"

CAPTAIN LEWIS KOEHLER has recently been under court-martial in the Philippines for having criticized General Leonard M. Wood. D. R. Anthony, Jr., of Leavenworth, Kan., brother-in-law of Captain Koehler, wrote a personal letter to President Roosevelt, appealing to him to see that Koehler had a fair trial. The Washington correspondent for the New York World says that, while on the witness stand, General Wood offered this letter in evidence; that the letter must have been given to General Wood by Mr. Roosevelt. In consequence the president's critics are recalling a sentence which appeared in Mr. Roosevelt's letter to Bellamy Storer as follows: "It is never pleasant to have to discuss personal affairs, or to quote or explain from personal correspondence; which is one reason why it is held to be a peculiarly ungentlemanly thing to publish private correspondence."

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE on banking and currency has decided to make a favorable report on the asset currency bill. This bill will be similar to the measure advocated by the American Banking association. In the committee ten republicans favored the measure while four democrats opposed it. The Associated Press gives this description of the bill: "In the bill advocated by the bankers it was provided that a tax of 2½ per cent should be paid by national banks on credit currency equal to 25 per cent of their capital. The committee increased the tax on such bank notes to three per cent. No change was made in the provision that national banks may also take out a further amount of national bank guarantee credit notes equal to 12½ per cent of its capital with interest at the rate of five per cent. Another change of importance made by the committee is one providing that national banking associations desiring to take out credit notes and having notes outstanding in excess of

62½ per cent of their paid up capital may redeem such excess without reference to the limitation of \$3,000,000 each month prescribed by the act of July 12, 1882. The bill as reported extends the privilege of issuing credit currency only to national banking institutions which have been in business for one year and have a surplus equal to 20 per cent of its capital. The national guaranteed credit notes authorized by the bill may be taken out for issue without a deposit of United States bonds as now required by law. The notes will be of form and denominations designated by the comptroller of the currency. If the measure be passed as reported by the house committee every national bank meeting the requirements of the bill will be permitted to issue emergency or credit currency in the sum of \$37,500 for every \$100,000 of its capital. It is maintained by the supporters of the bill that it will afford sufficient elasticity in the currency to relieve the pressure for money which occurs at crop moving time and in great emergencies. Bankers estimate the amount of additional currency which the measure would afford at \$200,000,000."

THE NEW YORK GLOBE prints the following table of contents of simplified words in the president's message showing the number of times they were used and the number of letters saved by adopting the new system:

Simplified word:	Times used.	Letters saved.
Altho.....	3	9
Tho.....	7	21
Thoro.....	2	6
Thoroging.....	2	6
Thoroly.....	3	9
Thru.....	10	30
Thruout.....	2	6
Past.....	7	14
Exprest.....	3	2
Supprest.....	1	2
Discust.....	1	2
Wisht.....	1	2
Stopt.....	2	4
Unlookt.....	1	1
Demagog.....	5	10
Program.....	2	4
Maneuver.....	2	2

Total saving .....134  
Total letters in message, 125,000.

LEO TOLSTOY has written an extraordinary attack on Shakespeare. The Paris correspondent for the New York American says. "Tolstoy describes Shakespeare as a time-server who flattered the governing classes. He declares besides that Shakespeare had no genius as a writer, but was actually worse than mediocre. 'Othello,' which he declares Shakespeare's best play, the Russian philosopher describes as inferior to the earliest Italian works upon which it was founded. The same kind of criticism is leveled at 'King Lear.' Tolstoy says that the chronicles from which this story was taken were more full of human interest than the tragedy itself. Marlowe, he declares, was a greater dramatist than Shakespeare, who only succeeded because, being an actor, he had a practical knowledge of the stage. Shakespeare is denied the power of characterization by Count Tolstoy. All the characters of Shakespeare, he says, speak the same language. A tyrant or buffoon in any one play speaks exactly as the tyrant or buffoon in any other play of Shakespeare's. It is merely Shakespeare speaking pompously through each of his characters."

"SCHOOL FOR crooks" has been exposed in New York, and the "professor" has been placed under arrest. According to the New York Sun one of the witnesses testified that the students are put through a regular course of training. The lads were taught how to pick pockets with deftness and speed. The preliminary work consisted of exercise, to promote lightness of touch and quickness of handling. It was a course that required a lot of hard work before the pupil graduated into the class which continued its edu-