

# CURRENT TOPICS

**S**PEAKING of \$32,000,000 contributions to the "cause of education" an Associated Press dispatch under date of Cleveland, Ohio, March 26, is interesting: "The Standard Oil company today advanced all grades of gasoline, naphtha and refined oil in barrels one-quarter cent a gallon, free on board, at Cleveland. It is stated by Standard officials that the advance at this time is made necessary by the constantly increasing cost of cooerage and the material used in manufacturing barrels. It is declared that the company is experiencing the greatest difficulty in securing timber of the right kind to supply its cooerage plants. No advance in prices is made on gasoline or refined oil sold from tank wagons."

**C**AN it be possible that the staid old Public Ledger of Philadelphia is after all not infallible? In a recent issue the Public Ledger printed a letter under these headlines:

## A HOMESICK EXILE

Forgotten Grave in Tunis of Payne, the Author of "Home, Sweet Home."

The letter follows: "I think it is not generally known that Colonel John Howard Payne, who wrote the words of the song 'Home, Sweet Home,' died in Tunis, Africa, and that his remains now lie in a small English cemetery in that city, far away from 'Home, Sweet Home.' Payne was born in New York in 1792, and died 54 years ago. Carroll S. Tyson, of Philadelphia, in a letter recording the above facts, adds (after a recent visit to Tunis) that 'John Howard Payne must have been actually and truly a homesick exile.' He was American consul at the time of his death. Does it not seem pitiful that one who so pined for 'Home, Sweet Home,' without avail, should be buried in a neglected grave in a foreign land?"

"WILMER ATKINSON.  
Athens, Greece, March 8, 1907."

The remains of John Howard Payne were removed from Tunis, and in 1883 interred in Oak Hill cemetery, near Washington, D. C. This was done at the expense of the late W. W. Corcoran, the Washington City philanthropist.

**J**OHAN ELLMORE, a shoemaker living at Altoona, Pa., has discovered a secret which, in the opinion of well informed men, will be worth millions of dollars to him and of great service to the world. By Mr. Ellmore's discovery six parts of ashes mixed with one part of coal and treated with a compound produces heat fiercer than the best bituminous and under this arrangement one ton of coal may be made to do the work now done by four.

**A**CCORDING to a special report issued by the census bureau, a synopsis of which is given by the Washington correspondent for the Houston, Texas, Post, the total estimated value of the national wealth in 1904 was \$107,104,192,410. The Post correspondent says: "This represents an increase in the four years' period from 1900 to 1904 of \$18,586,885,655. This advance in national wealth has no parallel in the history of the United States except the decade from 1850 to 1860. In 1850, when the first estimates of the national wealth were made, the figures were only \$7,135,780,228. The most potent cause for the increase in the nation's wealth from 1900 to 1904, it is stated, was the reaction from the low prices of the period of depression from 1896 to 1900. The annual increase of the wealth per family from 1900 to 1904 was \$182. The total public indebtedness of continental United States in 1902 was \$2,789,990,120, and the total per capita indebtedness was \$35.50. The total indebtedness of the national government for the same year was \$925,011,637, and per capita indebtedness was \$11.27. The indebtedness of the United States government is its gross indebtedness less capital in the treasury. In 1902 the annual interest charge on the public debt of continental United States is shown to have been approximately \$115,206,558, or an annual payment of \$1.46 for each individual. In Great Britain the per capita indebtedness of all classes, national and local, was 3.93 times that of the United States, in France 4.86 and in Italy 2.25. The assessed valuation of property subject to ad valorem taxation has increased from 1850 to the present time,

but it has not kept pace with the increase in the actual national wealth. The total assessed valuation of property in 1902 was \$35,338,316,833, while in 1890 it was only \$25,473,173,418. The estimated true value of all property in 1902 was \$97,810,749,590, against \$65,037,091,198 in 1890. The total levies of ad valorem taxes in 1902 was \$724,736,549, and the tax rate per \$100 of estimated true value was 74 cents."

**S**OME idea of the way the people of Pennsylvania have suffered under machine rule may be obtained from this statement made by the Philadelphia Public Ledger: "As the investigation into the building of the \$13,000,000 state capitol proceeds it is apparent that State Treasurer Berry's charges and accusations, instead of being exaggerations, were really mild and subdued as characterizations of the actual facts. It appears from the mere surface scratchings of the legislative committee's inquiry that the job has all the marks of the regular larcenous contract business with which the people of Philadelphia have been familiar since the day when the organization got complete control of the city and state. It is believed that of the \$13,000,000 expended, at least two or three, and possibly five or six, millions of dollars were stolen or thrown away. If one such contract results in so great an exhibition of corruption and recklessness, what would happen to the state and to its people if into the hands of the politicians there should be delivered continuing operations involving billions of money and the prosperity of the inhabitants? It is possible to foresee only chaos, corruption and a total distrust of the government."

**A**N INTERNATIONAL TRUST has, according to the New York World, secured control of the Bible and fixes the price of the precious book like the price of oil or sugar is fixed. The American Bible society, founded ninety-one years ago, is the American branch of the combination. The other members of the pooling agreement are the British and foreign Bible society, and the National Bible society of Scotland. A movement is now on foot in New England to bring about an investigation by congress of this Bible trust. At the same time congress is to be asked to remove the twenty-five per cent tariff duty on imported Bibles, and a general attack is to be made against this great octopus.

**S**PEAKING of the Bible trust Rev. Edmond F. Merriam, editor of the Watchman, the organ of the Baptist denomination in New England, said: "I have written as strongly as I have because of the two points, which are evident to any one who reads the annual report of the American Bible society: First, the price of Bibles has been raised to a rate higher than independent booksellers charge; and, second, the free gifts of Bibles during last year by the society amount to only \$10,400 in the United States and foreign lands, while the administration expenses exclusive of the item, 'Diffusion of Information, \$7,000,' mounts up to over \$36,000. Every dollar's worth of free Bibles distributed by the American Bible society cost nearly \$4 to circulate. The salaries of three secretaries and a treasurer, who compromise the executive officers, are \$20,000 a year. Clerks and assistants take \$10,621 more. We used to buy a testament in Canada which cost us laid down in Boston, a little less than three cents, and which we sold at that price. Since the trust was formed we cannot get these, and a similar book put out by the American Bible society costs five cents. We can buy more cheaply from independent publishers than from the American Bible society since the recent increase in price. This is why I wrote on the editorial page of the Watchman recently: 'The undisputed facts are these: The British and foreign society has an agreement with the American Bible society that it will not sell Bibles for distribution in America nor will the American Bible society sell Bibles for distribution in England. The Canadian Bible society will not sell Bibles for gratuitous distribution in the United States. The American Bible society has also been carrying on a propaganda by which local Bible societies have been induced to become auxiliary to the central society and to

send their funds there, and the Bible colportage work, which was formerly one of the chief activities of the society and which deservedly won to it the support of Christian people, has been almost entirely discontinued. Although heavily endowed the American Bible society does not sell Bibles any cheaper than they are made and sold by independent publishers. The administration expenses of the society are enormous and it does not do any such amount of benevolent work as would justify these expenses. The writer has long studied the work of the American Bible society at home and abroad and has believed for several years that it is not an organization to which the contributions of Christian people for Bible work could be judiciously committed."

**I**N THE CURRENT annual report of the American Bible society the board of managers say: "During the year (1906) four new Bible societies have been recognized as auxiliaries of the National society. Thirty-two societies have been restored in the list of living and active auxiliaries. During the same period three societies, formerly auxiliary, have been removed from our list. This action became necessary because those societies long ago ceased to maintain those close and helpful relations to the National society which the name auxiliary implies. The total number of local Bible societies sharing our burdens and recognized as our auxiliaries is 541."

**T**HE WORLD adds: "It is charged by the officers of the Union Bible society that instead of aiding in the circulation of the scriptures in the United States, the absorption of a local society as an 'auxiliary' merely makes it a collector of funds for the American Bible society, which, for twenty-five years previous to the issuance of its last annual report, had abandoned 'house-to-house' work among white Americans. The constitution of every 'auxiliary' must contain this article: 'All funds not wanted for circulating the scriptures within the society's own limits shall be paid over annually to the parent society.' Local Bible societies, of which there were 2,200 in this country a few years ago, all do house-to-house work in their districts, maintaining paid agents, who sell Bibles where they can and give them away to families too poor to purchase them. But if a local society does not consent to become an 'auxiliary' it pays an additional 10 per cent more for its Bibles than if it buys from the American Bible society. Since the Bible trust began to absorb local societies under threat of dropping them from its list of favored customers—those allowed to purchase at cost—nearly 1,000 of these societies have been driven out of existence. This has meant the abandonment of that number of fields of house-to-house work. The American Bible society for many years prior to 1906 did no colportage work except a little among the negroes in the south, among the Indians and in foreign fields. Of scriptures printed and purchased last year the annual report of the society shows that including Bibles, testaments and portions there were printed at the Bible House 1,020,055 pieces, and printed abroad 1,126,011 pieces, while nearly 50,000 more were purchased abroad. Of this vast output a little more than one-third was distributed in the United States and its possessions. Cash was received for all of this output except for \$10,397.52 worth of Bibles which the society gave away."

**D**R. J. W. THOMPSON, of Cheshire, Mass., who is president of the Union Bible society, says that the agents of his organization have been systematically persecuted by the American Bible society since the Union society refused to become an auxiliary to the Bible trust. Dr. Thompson says that the methods of the Bible trust do not materially differ with those of the Standard Oil trust. The New York World says: "Name the amount in cash you will take to bring about the disbandment of this society," was the direct proposition made to one of the executive officers. It was made in the hearing of Vice-President John I. Alden, who is a director in two banks, president of one, treasurer of the other, and president of three of the largest corporations in Worcester. The offer was declined. The American Bible so-