

# CURRENT TOPICS

THOSE WHO THINK the government ownership of railroads is an entirely new idea, should read some of the old newspapers. Rogers Bros., the manufacturers of silverware, published a paper in 1847. The April number contained an editorial announcing that "the railroad had become a great instrument of land commerce and trade" and then proceeding to argue in favor of constitutional power for congress to construct railroads and the necessity for such construction. The article goes so far as to propose six different lines of railroad aggregating 6,500 miles to be built at the cost of \$5,000 a mile.

A READER OF THE New York Evening Post, writing to that newspaper, says: "In answer to a request of the Maryland legislature, that he should be a candidate for a third term, Jefferson said: 'If some termination to the services of the chief magistrate be not fixed by the constitution, or supplied by practice, his office, normally four years, will in fact become for life, and history shows how easily that degenerates into an inheritance. I feel it a duty to do no act which shall essentially impair that principle; and I should unwillingly be the person who, disregarding the sound precedent set by an illustrious predecessor, should furnish the first attempt of prolongation beyond the second term of office.'"

AN INCIDENT occurred in Ohio recently which set many hearts a beating. The story is told by the Columbus (Ohio) Press-Post in this way: "A little tot of a girl played between the ties on an interurban railway; a work train dashed toward it on a steep grade; the motorman made frantic efforts to stop his car, and the mother, crazed with fear, rushed to the rescue—too late. The car passed over the little one, laughing at the fun, and none the worse, save for the dust thrown over her by the car. On the west side of Reynoldsburg, on the Buckeye Lake interurban, is a small bridge, and from it to the street is a pretty steep grade. When cars descend it is at a high speed. Alongside resides Abner Grant, his wife and their five children. Two are twins, nearly five years old. One strayed away from the eye of the mother and found a pretty place to play between a couple of ties on the railway track. The mother at her household duties heard the whistle of an approaching car and, thinking of her children, ran to the door to see the tot on the track. The motorman was swinging at the brakes, but the speed was too great for him to stop, and the car dashed over the little one. He soon stopped, expecting to find a horribly crushed little child. Realize, if you can, the revulsion of feeling to mother and carman when the child was still alive, unhurt and laughing."

A WASHINGTON dispatch to the Denver News says: "Justice Harlan of the United States supreme court, aged 74, made a home run and won the game in a baseball contest at the annual shad bake given by the Washington Bar association at Marshall Hall, Md., yesterday. When Justice Harlan went to the bat the score was a tie, and the umpire had called two strikes and three balls. It was a critical and exciting moment, when Justice Harlan smashed the sphere a wicked swat squarely on the nose and drove it to deep center. He started around the bases, and his leg work was really marvelous. The ball was lost in the tall grass, and before it was recovered Justice Harlan had reached the home plate, where he stood sipping a mint julep, which had been prepared hurriedly for the agile Kentuckian as a reward for lining out a four-base hit and showing the younger element how to get around the bases."

EMPEROR NICHOLAS has recently issued through the new governor of St. Petersburg, General Dratchewski, an edict which is calculated to have a far more serious influence upon his future than any of his projects of political reform. Referring to this order, a writer in the New York Tribune says: "It is an edict, not merely for the suppression of gambling, but for the closing of all those social clubs where playing cards for money is found

to prevail. There have been previous manifestoes about the gambling mania at St. Petersburg during the present and during the previous reign. But hitherto the imperial directions about the matter have remained to a great extent a dead letter. General Dratchewski, however, has made it clear that on this occasion the matter is a very serious one; that he is determined to obey the orders of the czar very stringently, and that the commands of the czar are such as admit no misconstruction, both Nicholas and his consort being firmly resolved to stamp out that high play at cards which is the curse of Russian life, and responsible for nine-tenths of the official dishonesty and for the social demoralization."

IF RUSSIANS, says this same writer, were content to play cards like Americans and western nations in general, that is to say, in a sensible fashion, keeping their wits about them and the stakes in relative moderation, no one would dream of offering any objection to the pastime. But the Slav and Tartar characters, which together go to make up the Russian nature, are always prone to senseless extravagance in politics and sociology, nay, even in philosophy, and particularly in the matter of vices. Nowhere are drunkenness, immorality and gambling carried to more insane lengths than in the dominions of the czar, of which the population of the German speaking provinces constitutes the leaven, and the Poles make the useless, frivolous froth.

THE TRIBUNE writer concludes: "Nicholas, who is a far more level headed man and infinitely more courageous than asserted by the malcontents of his own nation and by ignorant scribes abroad, has had an opportunity of ascertaining that the cause of nearly all that venality and dishonesty which are the bane of Russia and the obstacle to reform is gambling; that when a naval, military or civil official renders himself guilty of embezzlement, of fraud and of corruption, it is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, in order to obtain the means to pay off those so-called 'debts of honor' contracted at cards. He appreciates the fact that if he can at once put a stop to gambling he will have done more to bring about administrative integrity than anything else that he could devise, and that it is hopeless to dream of any reform as long as the mania for high play continues to prevail. While the gambling mania pervades every class of the social scale in Russia, it is at its worst in the highest ranks of officialdom and of the grand monde. Some of the members of the reigning family are the greatest offenders in this respect, particularly the German born Grand Duchess Vladimir, who is largely responsible for the inauguration of the roulette wheel as an indispensable article of furniture in all the smartest salons of the aristocracy at St. Petersburg, having been warmly seconded therein by Princess Nellie Bariatinski. The late Emperor Alexander III often intimated to the grand duchess his disapproval of the encouragement which she gave to gambling in high life, and her conduct in the matter led to her estrangement with her sister-in-law, now the widowed czarina. This is a matter in which the empress mother and her daughter-in-law, the reigning czarina, are united, and if the Grand Duchess Vladimir spends so much of her time abroad it is because she has long since ceased to be on friendly terms with the emperor and the two empresses."

THE LUCKY horseshoe is the subject of an interesting letter written to the Boston Herald. The letter follows: "I have noticed several communications in your paper about the 'horseshoe' as a symbol of good luck, and the discussion seems to center about its position when set up, whether the toe should be up or down. It is in my mind that the origin of the idea that the horseshoe is emblematic of good luck is something like this: A mythological legend owns that a certain god, having fought a losing battle, was escaping on his good horse, being closely pressed by his enemies. He was confident of eluding them until his horse cast a shoe and soon went lame. In distress and

despair the god and his horse came to a 'forge in the forest.' Upon the god stating his plight, the master of the forge fastened a shoe upon the horse's foot with such skill and alacrity that the horse pranced for joy and pawed his gratitude, and was soon able to carry his master into safety. Before waving adieu, the god thanked the blacksmith and proclaimed that for all time the horseshoe, which had enabled him to escape death, should be the emblem of 'good luck.' Although I can not give the authority for the above story, I have no doubt you will find that it exists, if you have inclination or time to look it up. The question of whether the shoe should be up or down is unimportant. The shoe is the emblem."

A BRAHAM REUF, for years known as the political boss of San Francisco, created something of a sensation in pleading guilty in a San Francisco court to the charge of extortion. It is said that Reuf will uncover the story of boodle in San Francisco. An Associated Press dispatch says: "Reuf read his statement from a manuscript which he had prepared in the presence of his attorneys a few moments before Judge Dunne's chambers opened. He showed in his voice, in the expression on his face, in his quiet and gestureless attitude, and by the tears that again and again overflowed his eyes, the great emotion and utter humiliation that he suffered. The pathos of the scene was communicated to the crowd that thronged the court room. Tears sprang to the eyes of veteran newspaper men who have been lifelong acquaintances and whose papers have conducted against him and his political associates a long and bitter campaign for the purification of municipal affairs. The accused man was several times all but overcome by emotion. When he reached the final words of his address—I desire to withdraw my plea of not guilty and enter the contrary plea—his voice was sunk to a whisper. But so intense was the silence that it reached to the far corner of the room. Though Abraham Reuf has formally declared himself to be guilty of the charge on which he was about to be tried, he nevertheless proclaims his innocence. He confessed that he is guilty of having connived in the corruption in municipal affairs, but he denies, with all the emphasis a man in his unhappy position can command, that he is not guilty of the crime of extortion charged against him. He declares that his sole motive in accusing himself in open court was to save the lives of those who are nearest and dearest to him, his aged father and mother, his maiden sister and a niece."

THE CALL FOR a republican love feast at Columbus, Ohio, has been abandoned for the reason, it is said, that the rank and file of the party do not take kindly to the Roosevelt-Taft alleged tie-up with Foraker. In spite of the fact that the love feast has been called off there is an impression that the result of the republican state convention will be an endorsement of Taft for president and an endorsement of Foraker for senator.

AN ASSOCIATED PRESS dispatch from Cleveland says: "The rescinding of the call for the republican love feast at Columbus and the consequent failure of the Taft and Foraker factions to get together has greatly encouraged democratic leaders in Ohio. They are of the opinion that they now have an excellent chance of electing Senator Foraker's successor and cite the existing legislative makeup as proof. The present Ohio house consists of sixty-two republicans, fifty-seven democrats and two independents. The senate has eighteen republicans, eighteen democrats and one independent, who is classed as a democrat. This gives the republicans eighty votes against seventy-eight for the democrats and independents. The next senator will be elected by the legislature chosen at the next election and there are so many districts in which the vote is exceedingly close that it may be safely said that the democrats have at least as fair a prospect of overcoming the republican lead on joint ballot as the republicans have of increasing it. Five of the present republican representatives were elected by plurality of less than 100. One had a margin of three votes