

CURRENT TOPICS

SECRETARY OF the Interior Ballinger delivered an address at Williams College, Williamstown, Mass. He chose for his subject "Executive Functions Under the Constitution." A Williamstown dispatch to the Washington Herald says: "In the course of his address he laid bare his sentiment in the Pinchot controversy, administering a scathing rebuke to the former chief forester. Former President Roosevelt did not escape censure. The secretary of the interior openly avowed that developments in his department are natural sequences to administration acts of the past several years. Although Secretary Ballinger announced the subject of his address at the outset, in the same breath he added that he did not intend to confine himself wholly to his text. What followed amply justified that rather mild foreshadowing of what his address proved to be."

CONCERNING SOME "public men and their vagaries" Secretary Ballinger said: "We have been surfeited for a long time with this kind of public men, and in a measure their vagaries have been seized upon by the faddist and sentimentalist for exploitation, so that on many public questions the public mind is in a ferment of uncertainty and alarm. Those who do not become hysterical over their tales of dire calamity and calmly ask for facts are charged with being in league with or accomplices of these imaginary criminals. Some public officers make the mistake of assuming that they have been commissioned by their own assumed indispensable qualities of fitness to govern. It is elemental under our republican form of government that public officers govern only with the consent of the governed. The stability of our institutions is wholly dependent upon our firm adherence to this principle. Ours is a government of law; of liberty regulated by law. That is not legislation which adjudicates in a particular case, prescribes the rule contrary to the general law, and orders it to be enforced. It is a maxim of our constitutional law that the powers conferred upon one department can not be delegated to any other body or authority. Where the sovereign power has lodged this authority, there it must remain and be exercised. The founders of our government realized that men love power; that they will generally exercise it when they can get it, and abuse it in popular governments under declaration of lofty patriotism to disguise the assumption. Public servants of this class are the least amenable to the law, for they are generally harder to get at from the standpoint of popular disfavor."

IT IS JUST beginning to dawn upon the American people that the Alaska coal fields are very valuable property. A Washington dispatch to the Denver News says: "John E. Ballaine, of Seattle, said to be the largest individual property owner in Alaska, made a proposition in writing to the senate committee on territories, of which Senator Beveridge of Indiana is chairman, offering to the government a royalty of 50 cents a ton for coal mined, for the lease of five thousand acres of some of the choicest coal lands in Alaska, in the Katallo and Nantanusaka districts. Such a tonnage royalty would net to the government, Ballaine claims, amounts as high as \$2,000,000 per hundred acres. This proposal contemplates a radical departure from past practices in the government's disposal of the Alaska coal lands, and it comes avowedly to do battle with another proposition embodied in a bill that has been prepared, but not yet introduced, designed to permit the sale or lease of such lands at a rate of \$10 per acre. It is said that the general features of the plan have the approval of officials high in the administration and of influential members of both houses of congress, including some of the prominent insurgent republicans and Delegate Wickersham of Alaska. Ballaine in his letter to Senator Beveridge offers to enter into a bond of \$1,000,000 with the government for the performance of his part of the agreement, which he proposes, and he makes the charge that 'other interests' have now at work in Washington a lobby, 'headed by a former United States senator,' in support of the bill referred to above,

under whose provisions, he declares, the government would extend an unconditional guarantee to a railroad or railroads which these interests purpose to build in Alaska, and would virtually donate to them at \$10 per acre one or more tracts of 5,000 acres each to be selected by them. Ballaine asks congress to authorize the head of a department to be designated in the legislation to enter into a lease with a coal company to be organized by him for 5,000 acres of Matanuska coal land, under all the provisions for regulation and against monopolistic control of prices, as stipulated in the bill recently introduced by Senator Nelson in conformity with the recommendations of Secretary Ballinger's annual report. This coal company would pay the United States and Alaska a royalty of 50 cents a ton for the coal as mined. Ballaine says veins averaging a total thickness of twenty feet would yield, according to standard measurements, a total in excess of 100,000,000 tons from the 5,000 acres, making a royalty of \$50,000,000 for this comparatively small area."

THAT THERE is something rotten in the territory of Alaska is the opinion expressed by the Omaha World-Herald. The World-Herald says: "The slimy trail of that rottenness covers all the thousands of miles that lie between the rich coal fields of Alaska and the interior department at Washington. Every few days there is a fresh development going to show that Congressman Hitchcock's original resolution, calling for a congressional investigation of the interior department's administration of Alaskan affairs, went straight to the mark. And the nearer the congressional committee comes to confining its inquiries to what has been happening in Alaska, and what now is happening there, the better it will serve the purpose for which it was created. The offer made in writing by John E. Ballaine, described as the largest individual property owner in Alaska, to the senate committee on territories is absolutely astounding both in what it discloses and in the possibilities it suggests. The scheme which is now on foot, and which only the investigation and the publicity attending it can defeat, is for the government to lease or sell the Alaska coal fields at \$10 an acre. Mr. Ballaine now offers, instead, to pay a royalty to the government of 50 cents a ton for 5,000 acres of such coal land. He offers to file a bond of \$1,000,000 to insure his fulfillment of the contract. The royalty, he estimates, basing the estimate on reports of the United States geological survey, would run as high as \$2,000,000 per hundred acres—or \$100,000,000 for 5,000 acres! Contrast this with the \$50,000 the government would realize out of the sale or lease of 5,000 acres in the manner proposed by Secretary Ballinger's friends! Mr. Ballaine further quotes the geological survey as estimating that there are sixteen billions of tons of coal already in sight in Alaska. If this were mined on the same royalty basis he offers the government would realize, out of these coal fields, the stupendous sum of eight billions of dollars!"

"IS IT STRANGE," asks the World-Herald, "in the light of these figures that the Guggenheim interests should find it worth while to make strenuous efforts, to stop at nothing, to reach even into the cabinet itself and into congress, to realize its ambition to gain control of these enormous coal deposits for a mere song, \$10 an acre—deposits worth many billions of dollars! According to charges made by Delegate Wickersham of Alaska, even army officers are at Washington lobbying in behalf of the Guggenheim steal, and have threatened him with personal violence for his opposition. One of these officers proclaims himself to be 'the adviser of the administration on all matters relating to Alaska.' In written charges filed with the senate committee on territories Judge Wickersham—who for several years was a federal judge in Alaska appointed by President McKinley—makes allegations so serious, reflecting even on President Taft, that Senator Beveridge, chairman of the committee, refuses to make them public or incorporate them into

the record. Even if the president were Bryan, or a prohibitionist, or a socialist, says Beveridge, with a fine gush of patriotism, he would not allow such charges to be published against him! Despite anything that may be done, however, the public attention has been focused on Alaska. The indignation of an entire nation has been so stirred that whatever plots of gigantic jobbery and rapine of public property may have been under way, it will be impossible now to put them through. The game has become too dangerous. It may have been an easy matter to deceive the president as to Secretary Ballinger and the plotters who are backing him. But light is flooding the dark places and the deeds that were begun in darkness can never be carried to a successful conclusion when the sun is shining. The president may stand by Ballinger to the end—to the bitter end—but the gigantic conspiracy, the greatest ever plotted against the American people, and of which the foisting of Ballinger upon Taft as secretary of the interior was a necessary part, is foiled in its beginning."

ANOTHER NEW anesthetic has been discovered. A Hartford Conn., dispatch to the Philadelphia North American says: "Before about twenty-five surgeons of this city, Dr. Louise Rabinovitch, of New York, the physician who, for fifteen years, has been perfecting her methods of electrical anesthesia, supervised an operation on John Crosic, 25 years old, at St. Francis hospital this afternoon. Three toes were amputated successfully from his two feet while the subject was under the influence of the weird electrical phenomena, which was used for practical purposes on a human being for the first time in medical history in this city today. Last night at the Hartford Medical Society's clubrooms Dr. Rabinovitch demonstrated the possibilities of her discovery on a rabbit which she subjected to the electrical anesthesia, and, after cutting the spinal cord, sewed up the wound, permitting the rabbit to hop freely and happily about the room, as though nothing had happened. The patient was given an electric current of four milliamperes and fifty-four volts by means of three electrodes, one at the ankle, another at the shinbone and the third at the groin. It was a complete success. The patient felt no pain and absolutely no after effects, such as ether is apt to produce. The operation will become a regular thing at the Philadelphia General hospital when the apparatus is installed."

SOME LIGHT on prices from the farmers' viewpoint is given in a letter printed in the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal and written by Mr. S. C. Bassett of Gibbon, Neb. Mr. Bassett writes: "I have just read in your issue of January 25, the statement that Representative Thiessen of Jefferson county had marketed a carload of hogs which brought him \$1,608.05 and that after deducting all expenses he had left \$1,108.41. Analyzing this statement as best I can, it appears that Mr. Thiessen raised, fattened and marketed, all expenses included, approximately twenty thousand pounds of fat hogs for \$500 or at the rate of about two and one-half cents per pound. If Mr. Thiessen will furnish, in detail, for publication, a statement showing that on farms in eastern or central Nebraska on the basis of present prices for grain or other food products fed to hogs it is possible to raise, fatten and market, all expenses paid, a carload of hogs at a cost of \$2.50 per hundred pounds he will furnish a news article of more absorbing interest to the farmers of Nebraska than any news item which has been published since Nebraska became a state."

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