

CURRENT TOPICS

CORNELL UNIVERSITY professors are to investigate the question, "Did the comet hurt the hens?" An Ithaca, New York, dispatch to the Philadelphia North American says: "Whether the comet had any influence on the laying of eggs is a question to be determined by the professors of poultry of the state college of agriculture at Cornell University. A soft-shell egg with a tall two inches long has been given to them by William Scott, of Southhill, this city. Scott says he is not sure whether it was a white Leghorn or red Wyandotte which laid the egg, but asserts that it was the first one laid since the comet found its tail and was to be seen in the western sky. At the time of doubt as to whether the earth passed through the comet's tail Scott's hens did not lay at all, he says. The egg is much like the ordinary soft-shell egg, but extending from the rear is a two-inch tall made of a harder substance than the eggshell proper."

THE TERMS of the postal savings bank bill as it passed the house of representatives are described by the Associated Press in this way: "By this bill a board of trustees is created, consisting of the postmaster general, the secretary of the treasury and the attorney general, who shall declare what postoffices shall become postal savings banks. Deposits in these banks made by any one person shall not be more than \$100 a month or exceed a total of \$500. An account may be opened with \$1, but stamps of 10 cents each will be issued for those desiring to accumulate money to be deposited. On deposits 2 per cent interest per annum is to be paid. Any depositor so desiring can exchange his deposits for government bonds to be issued in denominations of \$20, \$40, \$60, \$80, \$100 or \$500, to bear interest at 2½ per cent per annum. The money accumulated in the postal savings bank is to be deposited in both national and state banks in the vicinity of the postoffices in which the money is deposited by the people, such banks to pay 2½ per cent interest. Five per cent of the total deposits is to be retained by the secretary of the treasury as a cash reserve. Not more than 10 per cent of these deposits may be withdrawn by the government at any one time for investment of bonds of the United States, the balance to remain on deposit in the banks. The banks are required to give as security for the deposits received 'public bonds or other securities supported by the taxing power,' which restricts such securities to some form of national, state, municipal or other such bonds approved by the board of trustees in charge of the postal savings banks. The bill passed by the house as a substitute for the senate bill differs from the senate measure in many particulars, chiefly in respect to the nature of securities that may be given by banks for the deposits of postal savings funds received by them. In addition to government, state and municipal bonds, various other classes of securities, such as mortgages, etc., may be received. The bill has already passed the senate."

PRESIDENT TAFT has administered a snub to Representative Harrison of New York. Mr. Harrison is a democratic member. Some time ago Mr. Harrison made an appointment with the president to introduce to him a number of Jewish rabbis who wanted to talk with the president on the question of the expulsion of Jews from Russia. Mr. Taft's secretary, Norton, informed Mr. Harrison that the president refused to see him, but would receive the rabbis. Representative Goldfogle of New York then presented the rabbis to the president. Representative Harrison gave to the Associated Press the following statement: "It is unfortunate for the president that he can not stand criticism; it is unfortunate for the country that he can not stand the truth. My newspaper statement at which he takes offense was merely an exposition of the scandalous fact that the president had sent to the senate of the United States an official document in the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy of which the date had been wilfully falsified by being pre-dated. My resolution of inquiry drew out this information in a written confession by the attorney general. It is of no

concern to me that I am not welcome at the White House, but it is of concern to every American citizen that a statement of the truth about the president may make it impossible for a representative to discharge his duties. I went to the White House today, not as a matter of pleasure but in the expectation of performing a public duty. I went by appointment made by the presidential office May 31 to present a delegation of distinguished Hebrews on an important public mission. After a delay of forty minutes, at the very door of the president's office I was told that the president would not receive me. It is not surprising that he did not care to face any one who was instrumental in bringing to light the desperate attempt to bolster the administration case in the Ballinger-Pinchot matter by manipulating public documents. If every one who is justly criticizing the Taft administration is to be barred from the White House it will become a lonely place." Representative Goldfogle stated, as had Representative Kelliher, that had he known Mr. Harrison was not to be received at the White House he also would have refused to go in.

CONCERNING THE president's "snub" to Representative Harrison the Associated Press says: "Mr. Taft based his refusal to see Mr. Harrison on statements attributed by newspapers to the representative in connection with his resolution in the house calling upon Attorney General Wickersham for full information as to the connection of his office with the Ballinger-Pinchot episode. Mr. Harrison, according to the White House version of the matter, charged the president and the attorney general with having wilfully attempted to mislead congress in the back-dating of the attorney general's summary of the Glavis charges. Secretary Norton was at first unwilling to discuss the incident. Later, when he was informed of the statements made by Mr. Harrison, he told the story. He said the president had no purpose of publicly humiliating the congressman, and that nothing would have been said regarding the affair if Mr. Harrison had not made the matter public. Mr. Norton said that during the congressional receiving hour he noticed the party of rabbis awaiting admission to the president's office. He informed the president of their presence. Mr. Taft announced that he would be glad to receive every member of the delegation but Mr. Harrison. Secretary Norton, thereupon invited Mr. Harrison into his office. Meantime he had the party shown into the president's office. When the two were alone the secretary told Mr. Harrison the president would not see him. Mr. Harrison asked if others in the party knew that the president had barred him, and Mr. Norton replied that no one knew but they two. Mr. Norton asserted the president himself had no previous knowledge that Mr. Harrison was to be one of his callers today."

AN IMPERIAL decree was published in China early in May announcing that the senate or imperial assembly, Tzchenyuan, will hold its inaugural meeting October 3 in accordance with the decrees on constitutional reform that were published during the last reign. A Shanghai letter printed in the London Times says: "The members, of whose names the decree contains a full list, owe their appointment to selection by the throne; they number ninety-one in all, and are drawn from six different classes. Of these princes and nobles of the imperial clans supply fourteen members; the Manchu and Chinese nobility twelve; the princes and nobles of dependencies outside the eighteen provinces seventeen; the imperial clansmen other than the classes already mentioned six; officials of ministries and offices thirty-two; and eminent scholars ten. Apart from the seventeen princes and nobles of dependencies, we find on the list thirty-nine Manchu names and thirty-five Chinese. But these figures do not accurately represent the balance of power in favor of the Manchus, in that the bulk of the Chinese representatives are drawn from the ranks of officials and scholars, and can scarcely be expected to exercise the same influence in the counsels of the assembly as the princes, nobles, and gentry of the im-

perial clans. The decree contains the following exhortation: "The members should understand that this assemblage of the senate is an unprecedented undertaking in China, and will be the forerunner of the creation of a parliament. They are earnestly desired to devote to it their patriotism and sincerity, to observe proper order, and to fulfill their duties in representing public opinion. Thus it is hoped that our sincere wish to effect constitutional reforms in their proper order and to aim at success may be duly satisfied." So far as the 'proper order' of the nine years' constitutional reform program mapped out in August, 1908, is concerned, it must be admitted that the government has been exact enough. The provincial assemblies and the senate are well up to time; and on February 6 and 7 last two imperial decrees appeared approving schemes submitted by the commission for constitutional reforms, for the institution of local government in prefectures and departments, and for reform of the judiciary. Both these schemes come in their right place on the program, although China is likely to wait some time before seeing them put into effect. The torture administered to the two wretched scapegoats at Changsha before their execution on May 1 does not suggest much alteration in judicial methods."

THE PROSPECTS for reform in China are described by the Times correspondent in this way: "It is curious to see these nominally constitutional bodies appointed before the precise form of constitution has been decided. In point of fact that decision, like the trial of the messenger in 'Alice Through the Looking-glass,' 'comes last of all' on the 1908 program. This however, is a comparatively minor point, because no one can expect the constitution to burst instantaneously into working order, whether now or six years hence. The tradition of too many centuries blocks the way. But the program contains two conspicuously weak points, according to constitutional ideas. It does not appear to give either to provincial assemblies or senate the least say in financial matters; we are to wait for the seventh year before a budget is drawn up, and there is no clear indication that this will be done by the assemblies. And it makes no mention of the control of officials and official appointments by the assemblies. In view of these deficiencies it is impossible, with all the sympathy that one may wish to feel for China's constitutional aspirations, not to wonder whether the reform program can ever attain its ostensible purpose. To look at the bright side of things, we know that the provincial assemblies have taken themselves far more seriously than the government wished or seems to have expected. It was the Nanking provincial assembly which a few months ago called attention to the Shanghai Taotal's use of the Huangpu conservancy funds to buy up native newspapers in Shanghai, and thus contributed to getting that kind of abuse stopped. Other examples of energy by the provincial assemblies might be quoted; and the new senate may yet prove equally active, provided it is not swamped by the Manchu contingent. But clearly the thing for the provincial assemblies to do, instead of clamoring for the creation of a parliament, is to endeavor to get some control over the officials of their respective districts. So long as the officials remain a class apart, with sole power of the purse, no real reform is possible."

VICTOR L. BERGER, the well known socialist of Milwaukee, speaking in Philadelphia, replied to President Taft's strictures upon socialism. Mr. Berger said: "President Taft does not understand socialism. It is not merely a theory, as he says, but it is a new phase of civilization, a new epoch in civilization. It is the phase that will follow capitalism just as capitalism followed feudalism. Socialism must come if civilization is to survive. How can anything that is a phase of civilization be a 'problem' to be settled by a party or a menace, as President Taft seems to imply? When capitalism came in it was a menace to feudalism. Every phase in civilization is a little higher than the one before, and it has always been a menace