

CURRENT TOPICS

LAFOLLETTE'S Magazine says: "That the one great obstacle to the development of our waterways is the opposition of the railroad companies, is the statement made by Commissioner of Corporations Herbert Knox Smith in his report to the president on September 26. Says Commissioner Knox: 'Probably the greatest single deterrent to water terminal advance in the United States is the present adverse attitude of rail lines toward independent water traffic, in their exclusive control of frontage, in refusal or neglect to co-ordinate with general water traffic, and in refusal to pro-rate generally with water lines in through movement of traffic.' In some cities, says Mr. Knox, railroads own almost the entire water frontage and are able to stifle possible water competition. Europe's rivers are busy arteries of commerce. Europe's great natural highways are used to carry commodities between producer and consumer as cheaply as possible. Europe looks upon her waterways as a resource to be developed in the interest of the people. In the United States they are allowed to lie unused and undeveloped, because of the selfish interest of the rail transportation monopoly."

THE AUTHOR of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" died at her home in Middletown, Rhode Island. An Associated Press dispatch from Middletown says: "Julia Ward Howe is dead. Bowed under the weight of her ninety-one years, the noted philanthropist and author succumbed peacefully to an attack of pneumonia at her summer home here. The funeral was held at the Church of the Disciples, Unitarian, Boston, Thursday. Those who knew her said that Mrs. Howe's unflinching optimism was the great source and support of her manifold activities. Born in a cultured home in New York City and educated with care, she showed early a remarkable ability for study. She was but twenty-two years old when she came to Boston and met Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, the great philanthropist, and two years later they were married. From that time until Dr. Howe's death in 1876 this remarkable couple showed a never tiring co-partnership of activity in all things making for the uplift of mankind. After her husband's death Mrs. Howe continued her work by pen and mouth for many a worthy cause up to the very end. She had shared her husband's labors for the Greeks in their struggle for independence; she had assisted him in his anti-slavery work and fired the nation with her 'Battle Hymn of the Republic.' She had joined heartily in the crusade for woman suffrage; then in the last years of her life she pleaded the cause of the little children by participating in a public hearing at the state house and urging that action be taken to insure pure milk for infants. Mrs. Howe was the author of many poems, of which she had published several volumes, and of many prose works. Her works included volumes recounting her travels with her husband in Greece and Cuba. Mrs. Howe leaves four children, Mrs. Florence Howe Hall, a prominent woman suffrage worker; Mrs. Laura E. Richards, an author; Mrs. Maude Howe Elliott, wife of John Elliott, the artist and professor, and Marion Howe, professor of metallurgy at Columbia University."

A BROOKLYN, N. Y., light investigation recently made with respect to 141 city municipal plants, resulted in an interesting report. The report is described in a New York dispatch to the Chicago American in this way: "That electricity can be produced and sold at a profit by municipally owned plants for as little as four cents per kilowatt hour, whereas the privately owned monopoly in this city gets as much as twelve cents per kilowatt hour for it, has been proved by an investigation by the Twenty-eighth ward board of trade of Brooklyn. The members of that organization, having suffered from exorbitant rates of the electric light trust of their city—the Edison Electric Illuminating company—began looking into the situation in other cities about nine months ago. The report has been made. It was a most striking argument in favor of municipal ownership. It will be pre-

resented to the public service commission, and that body will be called upon to investigate the lighting situation in Brooklyn. One hundred and forty-one municipal electric plants were examined in all parts of the United States. One hundred and fifteen of these sold electricity cheaper than the Brooklyn monopoly, fifteen at the same rate and eleven at a higher rate. Municipal ownership in every one of the cities investigated had proved itself, the investigators found, a splendid success. Owensboro, Ky., was one of the towns investigated. A municipal lighting plant constructed in 1901 at a cost of \$86,235, and bettered since then to the extent of \$125,573, had in eight years paid off this \$211,829 in cost out of its profits and had left over \$1,040. And at no time was more than five cents per kilowatt hour charged. Jacksonville, Fla., paid \$171,000 for its plant. Last year its net earnings were more than \$178,000. In fourteen years the Jacksonville plant had paid for itself and turned over in profit to the city nearly \$400,000. Naturally, the greater number of persons served the lower could and should be the price of service, the board of trade men argue. They point out, then, that Blair, Wis., with only 461 population, is able to make and sell electricity from its own plant at only six cents per kilowatt hour. Brooklyn, with a population of 1,539,235, if it had a municipal plant, should be able to sell current at a price even less than that, they claim."

THEY ARE TRYING to revise the fine old hymn "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," and there is general protest from the Atlantic to the Pacific. A writer in the New York World says: "The revisionists take the ground that the hymn in question deals rather with the sublimities of natural scenery than with the omnipotence of a Creator. Perhaps by no other plea could they reveal more definitely the weakness of their case. They have submitted the hymnal lines to the cold analysis of the study table. Setting aside the obvious fact that few compositions in the book of song would pass unscathed through this form of censorship, we may remark that the committee has by its method of criticism lifted itself entirely out of the congregational spirit. True believers do not worship by construing the lines in gospel minstrelsy; they do not dissect while they sing. Left to themselves, we believe they would have sung of icy mountains and coral strands to the end of time without discovering the worldly point made by the revisionists. It is a question, indeed, whether the mere words of hymns have not lost place in the congregational mind to the tunes with which they have long been associated. Melodies can inspire without words. They also can repeat inspirations absorbed from words grown familiar. The 'Old Hundred' on the organ is impressive without the chorused 'Doxology.' We do not believe any revision committee can keep the churches from singing 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains' to the old tune, or could lead them to sing it to a new tune."

REFERRING TO THE famous old hymn a Lock Haven (Pa.) reader of the Philadelphia Public Ledger says: "In connection with the current talk relative to the famous hymn, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains,' by Bishop Reginald Heber, which a certain Episcopal bishop proposes omitting from a proposed new hymnal, and which has created a very great deal of adverse comment, permit me to give you the origin of said hymn, as found in the Rev. Edwin M. Long's 'Hymns and Their Authors,' page 208: 'Of the fifty-nine elegant hymns written by Bishop Heber, none are so widely known or so frequently sung as his missionary hymn. In 1819 a royal letter authorized collections to be taken in every church and chapel in England connected with the establishment, in furtherance of the society for propagating the gospel. On the evening of Whit Sunday, which was the day appointed for this purpose, Heber had engaged to deliver the first of a series of Sunday evening lectures in the church at Wrexham, which was in charge of his father-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Shipley. On the Saturday

previous, as they were seated around the table in the parsonage, the dean requested his son-in-law to write something for them to sing in the morning that would be suitable to the missionary service. Heber at once retired from the circle of friends to a corner of the room. After a while his father-in-law inquired, 'What have you written?' Heber then read the first three verses, which he had already produced. 'There, that will do very well,' said the dean. 'No, no,' said Heber, 'the sense is not complete.' Accordingly he added the fourth verse, commencing, 'Waft, waft, ye winds, His story.' Next morning it was sung in the church at Wrexham, and soon after caught up as the grand missionary hymn of the church universal, reaching 'from pole to pole.' The Rev. Dr. Raffles was in possession of the original manuscript, from which it is seen that so accurately was it written at first that he had occasion to alter but one word. It would seem from the above that our modern bishop has set his opinion over against that of a very much greater man in his own communion."

THE "POISON bugaboo" is treated in an interesting way by Samuel Hopkins Adams, writing in Everybody's Magazine. A synopsis of Mr. Adams' article is printed in the Chicago Record-Herald and is as follows: "Mr. Adams is full of scorn for some of our most cherished illusions—as he considers them—concerning the poisonous quality of snake bites. He tells us that 'pseudo science to the contrary notwithstanding, there is no living thing within the boundaries of the United States of America whose bite or sting is sure death or (with one possible exception) even probable death.' On the basis of actual evidence, Mr. Adams says, only about eighty persons ever have died from snake bites in the United States. Nowhere in the civil war records does a death from this cause appear, though hundreds of thousands of men were living out of door lives in regions abounding with snakes. Discussing the ratio of mortality he shatters another popular belief by declaring that the large amount of whisky poured into many persons bitten probably has been responsible for many deaths, and that it is an error to suppose that whisky will counteract the poison of a rattlesnake's bite. On this point he says: 'Be it remembered always that death following snake bite is not necessarily the same thing as death from snake bite. Error in treatment plays no small part in vitiating the statistics. For 'error' read 'whisky.' Whoever is primarily responsible for the hoary superstition that liquor in huge doses is useful in snake poisoning has many a life to answer for.'

MR. ADAMS asserts that the terror of country folk of the puff adder or sand viper is unwarranted. "There's no such thing as an adder or viper in the western hemisphere," he cheerfully tells, "and never has been one, unless it came, carefully pickled, in a jar. What passes for the supposed deadly reptile is the common hog-nosed or bull snake. It is about as dangerous as an infuriated rabbit." But the elaps, "a pretty little red and black banded serpent about as thick as your thumb," Mr. Adams advises the reader to "shun as you would a rabid dog." Mr. Adams opines that the Gila monster, over which such controversy has raged, probably is not poisonous to man except under unfavorable conditions, though the evidence on the matter is not conclusive. Passing to discussion of insect bites, he again assails tradition by telling us that there is but slight foundation for the belief that the bite of the scorpion, centipede, tarantula and common spider often bring death. The kissing bug, which caused so much popular dread a few years ago, is discussed by Mr. Adams, and he concludes that under certain conditions it may produce a painful but not dangerous wound. But our greatest insect foe, he points out, is the anopheles mosquito. On this subject he says forcibly, his words having sound foundation in the discoveries of science: "One venomous creature there is in this country which may justly be termed a public peril, in the widest sense. Proportionately to popula-