

Current Topics

"IS THE COAL TRUST A CONSPIRACY?" IS the subject of an interesting article in *Gunton's Magazine* for September. The facts stated in this article will be a surprise to many people. It is pointed out that in the first place there was absolutely no justification for present conditions, and it is explained: It will be remembered that, at the outset, the laborers made no demand whatever; they simply asked that a conference be held to arrange the schedule of prices and other conditions for the ensuing year. That course had previously been adopted. At the close of the strike in 1900, they agreed to that method. It was very satisfactory; and the agreement terminated on the 1st of April, 1902. A very sensible, commonplace act, therefore, was for both parties to meet, and either confirm the old agreement or arrange a new one for the future. The request for a conference was an ordinary, rational procedure, which nothing but a disposition to create a disturbance could refuse. Yet the railroads all rejected the proposition, and while the president of each railroad made a personal reply, the tone, and very largely the language, of the communications were identical, showing that the letters had all been written or revised by the same hand.

IN THESE SAME LETTERS RAILROAD PRESIDENTS, according to this same writer, refused to confer with the men through their organization, while claiming to be willing to "deal justly and fairly by them (the laborers) and give every man fair compensation for the work he performed." In short the operators insisted upon being sole arbiters of both sides of the contract. In accordance with this idea, a few days later they posted notices at their respective collieries, stating that "the rate of wages now in effect will continue until April 1, 1903, and thereafter be subject to sixty days notice." This was well calculated to create a rupture, and it is difficult to interpret this action in any other light than that it was purposely designed to produce that result. Had there been the slightest element of fairness, or respect for the common right of the laborer to make a contract, or the desire to maintain industrial peace, such arbitrary action could not and would not have been taken. This left the laborers no alternative but to forego all right eventually to participate in bargain making, regarding their own conditions, or to make a specific demand and strike for it.

IT IS REPORTED THAT THE ESTATE OF Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph alphabet, who died in 1872, has but recently been settled. During thirty years of administration in controversy, the estate has been reduced from \$524,000 to \$346,000. The latter sum, it is said, is now being distributed among the heirs.

THE RESTING PLACE OF THE MOTHER OF Abraham Lincoln has recently been marked by a suitable monument, erected by the Nancy Hanks Memorial association, in a seventeen-acre tract near Lincoln City, Ind. The base of the monument was formerly used for a similar purpose under the first monument erected to the great emancipator in Springfield. For more than sixty years the grave lay neglected, but in 1880 a plain marble slab was put up through funds provided by an anonymous donor who succeeded in keeping his identity a secret. It is reported that unless the legislature provides for turning the surrounding tract about the new monument into a permanent park, the land will revert to Spencer county, which is willing to complete the task.

THE DOMINEERING INSTINCTS OF SOME rich men is illustrated in a story that concerns William K. Vanderbilt and the stand he has taken in regard to the people of North Hampstead, L. I. It is reported that because that place refused to accept his offer of \$50,000 for Lake Success, a pretty sheet of water which has long been a favorite resort for picnic and other excursion parties, Mr. Vanderbilt has decided to refuse right of way over property surrounding it, and which is the only means of reaching the lake. He has gone so far as to station pickets at all entrances to prevent the passage of any but those to whom he gives permission. This action on the part of the millionaire has aroused great opposition and it is said

that resort will be had to the courts should Mr. Vanderbilt persist in his course.

THE RETURN OF THE PEARY ARCTIC EX-pedition has aroused a new interest in the frozen regions of the north. Lieutenant Peary has been absent for four years, and though he did not discover the North Pole, he claims to have made important scientific discoveries. In a newspaper interview Lieutenant Peary said: "The discovery of the North Pole is merely a more or less spectacular fact, but still one that will be tried again and again until actually accomplished. I have traveled the most northerly land on the globe, although I did not succeed in forcing my way over the ice to the pole itself. The departments of science which will be benefited by my sojourn in the north are geology, meteorology, anthropology and natural history. The full result of my labors, especially in the field of meteorology, cannot be fully ascertained until the observations I have taken have been worked out by scientists. Perhaps the most important result of my labor is the demonstrating most conclusively that the right kind of man can carry on arctic exploration without great danger or suffering exceptional hardships. In fact, he can work in the far north as well as in his office in New York. I have been a close student of the tribe of Eskimos at Whale sound, who are the most northerly people of the world and are completely isolated from all other inhabitants of this sphere. They are a small tribe, some 115 or 200 in number. The isolation of these people has resulted in a process which has differentiated them from every other people in their modes of living. I have a complete collection of everything pertaining to their habits of life, the implements they use, etc., and have forwarded them to New York."

THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER H. SHEPHERD at Batopilas, Mex., on September 12 gives the *New York World* occasion to recall some of the things that he did to make the national capital what it is. Mr. Shepherd was born in Washington in 1835. President Grant appointed him governor of the District of Columbia and he transformed the city of Washington from an unsightly mud-hole into the beautiful city it now is. At one time he was accused of enriching a political ring with public funds, but the administration stood by him, and he served as governor until 1874. He had then spent \$40,000,000 in improving the city, and on his retirement found his private business ruined. He then went to Mexico where he bought mining property at Batopilas, and carried his ideas of improvement into effect by paving the streets, installing a public library, and an electric light plant and making the town a wonder spot to the natives, incidentally, also, amassing a fortune, and dying a millionaire.

EX-PRESIDENT KRUGER OF THE BOER RE-public has written an autobiography which is to be published simultaneously in many countries on November 15. President Kruger's friends assert that whatever is made out of the book will be given to the suffering burghers. The book contains the story of Paul Kruger's life from his childhood to the negotiation of peace. In his description of the Jameson raid, reflections are cast on what he calls "the irritating policy of Chamberlain" in the negotiations. The book is certain to be interesting as it is written with all of Paul Kruger's old-time vigor.

THAT REALLY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS DO not always provoke the most discussion is a truth illustrated by an interesting account in the *New York Tribune* of recent date concerning the town of Reading, Mass. The *Tribune* says: "The question which Reading, a town about twelve miles north of Boston, is now wrestling with," said F. H. Cutler, of Boston, "is no less a problem than this—shall the Italian fruit dealer, whose store is on the main square of the town, be allowed to have a whistle on his peanut roaster, or shall he not? The citizens have taken sides on the question; a long list of them have signed a petition asking that the Italian's whistle, which was removed some time ago by order of the police, be restored, while many others are opposed to the restoration. So heated is the controversy that the selectmen of the town have set a date for a public hearing, when the citizens and the Italian will meet and discuss the grave question pro and con, and by public vote it will be decided whether the whistle shall shrill or be forever silent. The objection to the whistle is based on aesthetic grounds; it makes too much noise, its opponents say, and does not keep on the key when the band is playing on the common or the outdoor meetings of the local Young Men's Christian association break forth into a hymn. The Italian and

his supporters, on the other hand, urge that to abolish the whistle means to lose trade for the dealer, and is unfair. The sacred rights of man are in question. It surely is a matter worthy to be decided by that cherished institution of our republic—the New England town government." The part which "that cherished institution of our republic—the New England town government," has played in the formation of this government has not been insignificant, and the solution of this case will be watched with interest.

AN INTERESTING POLITICAL SITUATION has developed in Russell county, Kansas, where the democrats have nominated S. F. Rockefeller, a cousin and bitter enemy of John D. Rockefeller, for the lower house of the state legislature. Mr. Rockefeller is making the race on an anti-trust platform and promises to secure legislation which will drive the Standard Oil company out of business in Kansas. It is reported that the chances of his election are very good and he has pledged himself to introduce a bill in the legislature which will provide that trusts shall have no standing in the courts of Kansas and no power to collect bills in the state.

RIVERS OF INK, FORESTS OF CEDAR, and mines of graphite are reasonably "mild exaggerations" when applied to the total of clerical supplies for the government service, according to the Washington correspondent of the *New York World*. This correspondent points out that the war department annually uses 861,408 pens, 32,500 pencils, 1,927 quarts of mucilage, 4,634 quarts of black ink, 3,167 bottles of red ink and 7,000 gross of rubber bands of different sizes. There are used annually by the postoffice department 8,250 pounds of rubber bands, 300,000 facing slips, 3,500 dozen indelible pencils, 240,000 black and colored pencils and 13,225 gross of pens. There are 300,000 penholders used annually. Each of these is inscribed "property of the United States postoffice department." The headquarters of the postal service uses each year 12,000 quarts of black ink, 1,300,000 pounds of small jute twine, put up in half-pound balls, 9,500 steel erasers and more than 2,228,000 black carbon sheets. The interior department uses annually 146,000 lead pencils, 6,925 gross of steel pens, 5,000 quarts of black ink and 2,500 quarts of mucilage. Unestimated millions of pins and uncomputed reams of paper, with millions of envelopes, are used each year in the governmental service. The treasury department and other branches of the public service use supplies in proportion to the figures given for the war, postoffice and interior departments.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WOMAN'S court is advocated by a number of reformers in New York city. It is maintained that it is just as important to have a woman's court as it is to have the children's court that has been established and is operating so satisfactorily in New York city. Those that favor the plan urge that a woman's court would be the best incentive to reform because having less of publicity the tendency to recklessness which the gaze of the world gives would be minimized. One advocate of this new plan says: "It is only when a woman feels that respectability is irretrievable that she gives up hope, and any one who has watched the stream of men and women in a police court and measured the debasing influence will understand what I mean when I say that the separation of the sexes in criminal consideration would be for the benefit of society." Considerable criticism of the plan has been made by New York magistrates and there does not appear to be great promise that the new court will begin proceedings at an early day.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY MOODY IS JUST now wrestling with a great problem that involves the securing of men for the navy. Many sailors when their terms have expired have refused to re-enlist because of the strict discipline and the severe work on board a warship. It is not generally known that the navy department actually operates a literary bureau and sends in advance of its enlisted officers press agents whose duty it is to put the charm of a sailor's life before the public in the best possible light. More ships are being built and as a consequence many more men will be needed. It is admitted that the situation is a serious one and Secretary Moody is expected to recommend some radical changes in the laws relating to the navy and in the opportunities for enlisted men to advance upon merit.

THE READERS OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS were recently treated to a story relating to "Charles Rothschilds and his fleas." This story was thought to be of sufficient value to be cabled