

## Current Topics

**A**N ORGANIZED EFFORT TO RAISE ALL freight rates in territory between Chicago and the Pacific coast is, according to Paul Morton, second vice president of the Santa Fe, soon to be made. Mr. Morton says: "Railroad freight rates are lower than they ought to be under the new scale of wages and the present cost of supplies. Some measure will have to be taken very speedily to readjust all our freight tariffs to meet the demands of the situation. Everything that the railroads need and deal in has been raised in price. The views I express are the views of others also and we are going to try to do something toward readjusting our rates."

**I**T IS BELIEVED BY MANY THAT THE recent increase in wages given by a number of railroads to their employes was for the purpose of laying the foundation for a radical increase in freight rates. Shippers do not take kindly to the proposed increase and they insist that it is not justified by the cost incurred by the railroads either in the purchase of supplies or the employment of labor. The proposed increase is vigorously denounced by the press generally. The New York World says that "by advancing wages and freights simultaneously it is now estimated that the railroads will put about \$50,000,000 more in the pockets of their employes and about \$120,000,000 more in their own, leaving them a clean net profit of \$70,000,000. The general public should be thankful that the railroads are not frequently seized with these fits of generosity." The Baltimore American points out that the demands of the railroads are very heavy and that their profits are correspondingly large and it adds that the railroad magnates are not making friends by increasing freight rates on a public convenience when such increase is not rendered necessary by an increase in the cost of operation. The Louisville Courier-Journal says that because the roads are overrun with traffic, shortage of cars being estimated at about 60,000, although 80,000 new cars have been added during the year, the situation is such as to put the railroads in a position where they can insist on an advance. But the Courier-Journal does not think the advance is justified. The Philadelphia Record says that the increase in wages of railroad employes is merely a shifting of the burden from the shoulders of the railroad magnates to the shoulders of their consumers. The Record adds: "Unless the iron and steel makers and the farmers shall be able to reduce the rate of wages paid by them they will have to pay the increased freight rates and make the best of it. The prosperity, therefore, that falls into the lap of labor the astute railway managers have merely acted as agents in transferring from other sources of supply. There is a suspicion that when the balance is struck there will be a superfluous left in their hands."

**G**ENERAL MILES, WHO IS IN THE PHILIPPINES, made public an interesting statement on November 24. In this statement General Miles said: "I have seen 13,000 of our troops and will inspect more before leaving. I found them to be in fair condition. This is a hard country for campaigning. I inspected the principal natural defenses of the islands and some of the harbors which the government may fortify. I found the people generally impoverished from the effect of the war and the pestilence which followed it, and I fear some may suffer from famine. The dearth of farm animals leaves the people no means of recovery."

**S**ENOR PEDRO ALVARADO IS THE MOST talked-about man in Mexico at this time. This man suddenly became famous because of a remarkable offer to the Mexican government. Alvarado was once a mine laborer and is now estimated to be worth \$40,000,000. In a telegram to the Mexican minister of finance, Senor Alvarado offered to pay the Mexican debt. In an interview with a correspondent for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch the senor said: "I stand ready to make my offer good at any time the government gives me the word. I have my millions. It all came out of the ground. I got my title to the ground which produced these millions from the government. Why should I not help my benefactor? The least I can

do is to pay the debt of my government. That would not be much for me to do. I hope it can be arranged." The minister of finance has thanked Alvarado for his generosity, but has declined to accept his offer on the ground that it is "an impracticable idea." Alvarado's offer should be accepted.

**T**HE EFFORT OF THE SCIENTISTS TO UTILIZE the sun's energy is referred to in the annual report of the Smithsonian Institution. Professor Langley, secretary of the Smithsonian institution, says that if all the coal deposits of Pennsylvania were burned in a single second it would not liberate one-thousandth part as much heat as the surface of the sun does in that unit of time. In the opinion of those who prepared this report the experiments that have been made indicate that sooner or later the sun's rays will be utilized in a practical way. Robert H. Thurston of Cornell university says that the rapidly increasing destruction of the stores of mineral fuel must sooner or later bring the world to a point at which it will be no longer possible to derive the power required from that source. "The period is likely to be ushered in before many generations," he says. "Some portions of the world are already presenting symptoms—difficulty in mining and increased price of fuel in the market, as well as the expressed anxiety of statesmen guarding the interests of the great manufacturing districts of Europe." According to Mr. Thurston the result will be the gradual extinction of the fuel supply and in his opinion if no substitute for fuel can be devised the civilized races must move to the tropics. Mr. Thurston says that the solar motor is a mechanical possibility beyond question and he declares that in future centuries when fuel supplies have been exhausted the sun's energy will be employed.

**T**HERE IS PERHAPS NO BETTER KNOWN song than "The Mocking Bird." Septimus Winner, the composer of this song, died at his home in Philadelphia on November 24. Mr. Winner was 76 years of age. It is said that he sold "The Mocking Bird" for \$35 and that out of this investment the publishers realized more than \$3,000,000.

**T**HE REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION IS face to face with a problem concerning which little has been said in the newspaper dispatches. In one of the departments at Washington a white clerk aged sixty years married a negro woman. This was the clerk's second marriage and he was immediately repudiated by his two grown children. This clerk purchased a house in one of the residence portions of Washington and when he installed his family therein his new neighbors expressed great indignation because the family consisted of one white man, his negro wife and several negro children. Many tenants of the neighborhood announced that they would surrender their leases and move away and it is said that complaint will be made before the department in which this clerk is employed. As there is no law in the District of Columbia against miscegenation some say that the administration has nothing to do with the matter.

**O**N THE OTHER HAND THE CRITICS contend that the department will find it necessary to deal with the problem. The Washington correspondent of the Des Moines Register and Leader says: "If a clerk's conduct, although violating no statute, defies local public sentiment in such a matter as marriage involving both the fortunes of posterity and the general social order, his fellow clerks may refuse to associate with him, and the government's work be put at a serious disadvantage thereby. And while there is nothing in the civil service rules making miscegenation a cause for dismissal, neither is there any rule limiting dismissals which would interfere with the exercise of the discretion of the head of the department in such a case. The whole question is open for decision on its own merits. Only a few days ago a clerk was dismissed for lack of personal cleanliness. He felt, or pretended to feel, that he was the victim of gross oppression, but out he went in spite of his protests. The ground commonly taken by the appointing powers in such an instance is that the government is not bound, legally or morally, to retain in its service a person who ignores the decencies of life and thereby renders himself offensive to those who have to associate with him during working hours. On its face, the case of a white clerk who marries a negress is not precisely parallel to that of one whose un-

cleanliness of person is the cause of offence; and it is rendered all the more embarrassing locally by the fact that Frederick Douglas, a negro citizen of the District of Columbia, held public offices of large responsibility and dignity for years after his marriage with a white woman."

**F**ROM THE STATISTICS OF THE CENSUS OF 1900 the Washington correspondent of the Chicago Inter-Ocean has prepared a most interesting statement. According to this showing the "death months" are March and April for adults and July and October for children under five years of age, the mortality for both males and females being greatest during these periods. The "health months" for both adults and children are October and November, when the mortality is at a minimum. Vital statistics show in practically every instance the greatest mortality among the males, evidence, the scientists assert, that the males are becoming weaker physically and more susceptible to disease and death, while the females are growing stronger and are constitutionally better equipped to battle for life. In the children's class, known technically as the group "under 5 years of age," the largest percentage of deaths per 100,000 population was in July, when the figures show males 675.9, females 570.5, and in August males 583.7, females 512.5, and was lowest in October, males 330.6, females 309.4, and November, males 334.9, females 290.3. Between five and fifty-nine years the rates for both males and females were highest in March, males, 100.8; females, 87.7, and in April, males, 98.4; females, 85.6, and were lowest in June, males, 79.4; females, 63.4, and in September, males, 73.5; females, 61.9. All the figures show March to be the most fatal month in the year.

**I**T WOULD APPEAR FROM THIS SAME SHOWING that suicide is the most prevalent during April, May, August and January. The proportion of suicides has been greatest during the first decade on the Pacific coast, where the deaths were 15.6 per 1,000 of population, with the South Atlantic coast, including New York, ranking fourth, with a percentage of 0.7. In states where suicides were recorded by the registration method the death rate from this cause was the highest in Maine, 10.8; New York, 10.6; Connecticut, 10.5, and lowest in Michigan, New Jersey and Rhode Island, with 9.1 each. The total number of deaths reported as due to suicide in the United States during the census year was 5,498, of which 4,313 were males and 1,185 were females. The proportion of deaths from this cause in 1,000 deaths from all known causes was 5.5, while in 1890 it was but 4.5. Shooting was by far the most popular method of ending life, with poison and drowning in the order named. The percentage of suicides was highest among those whose mothers were born in France, with Germany and Russia-Poland second and third. The death rate from suicide of those whose mothers were born in the United States was much lower than in other countries. Suicide is on the increase, especially among the married males. The death rate of married males, from 15 to 44 years of age, was greater than in unmarried males. After 45 years of age the rate was much greater among the unmarried males. In females, unmarried, between 45 and 64 years of age, the rate of death from suicide was greater than of those married or widowed. Males, between the ages of 35 and 39 years, were in the majority of those who committed suicide during the census year of 1900, while among woman the greatest number who killed themselves were between 20 and 24 years old. Suicide is decreasing among the younger generation. In cities April and May are the months selected by a greater percentage of the persons to kill themselves, while in the rural districts May and July are generally chosen.

**I**T IS REPORTED FROM LONDON THAT Joseph Chamberlain's visit to South Africa will much resemble the tour of a king. A new first-class cruiser has been set aside for Mr. Chamberlain's use and the vessel set sail November 25. Mr. Chamberlain is accompanied by a large military staff. He will visit Pretoria and other South African towns and make a close inspection of the wreck which resulted from his policies. It is said that Mr. Chamberlain "feels his oats" these days. Although holding a subordinate office he is practically a free lance. The London correspondent of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch says that Mr. Chamberlain does not pay his colleagues the courtesy of even appearing to consult their views and they are quite ready to give him a free hand to extricate the colonies from the terrible condition to which his policy has reduced them. This correspondent further says: "If the South African war has been