

Current Topics

SOME OF THE LARGER CITIES ARE CONFRONTED with the problem of overcrowding in the public schools. The portable school house has been suggested as a solution. This plan is described by Harper's Weekly in this way: "The idea of portable school buildings first came from Paris. Then the idea reached the United States, about five years ago, and Milwaukee was the first to adopt it. In St. Louis, which next adopted the portable school house, the plan was a great success. Several large eastern cities have within the last year or so commenced on a small scale to have portable school houses as a part of the educational facilities. In St. Louis there has been a great influx of people on account of the world's fair. When the city schools opened a few weeks ago the increase was enormous, but the schools were well able to care for them. The portable school building, however, is all that saves them, and when in any neighborhood there is a likelihood of an overcrowding, a portable school building is at once moved in. At present there are twenty-seven school houses of this kind in the world's fair city, and all of them are in use."

ALTHOUGH IN MANY INSTANCES CONGRESSMEN who opposed Mr. Roosevelt's reciprocity treaty were re-nominated and re-elected the administration seems to have accepted the result of the election as an indorsement of the Roosevelt plans, particularly with reference to Cuban reciprocity. On November 12 a conference was held between Secretary of State Hay, Secretary of War Root and General Bliss. The Cuban reciprocity treaty was under consideration at this conference. The dispatches say that the objection of President Palma to the treaty as it stands is the insufficient rebate of 20 per cent proposed to be allowed on Cuban imports in the United States. It is stated that Secretary Hay is anxious to ascertain if possible how far he may yield to President Palma's wishes in this respect and yet rely upon the support of congress when the treaty is submitted. In spite of the administration claim that the results of the election is the complete indorsement of the president's policies, Secretary Hay does not appear to be at all confident of his ability to persuade congress to make any concessions on the line of the objection raised by the president of the Cuban republic. On the contrary, it is asserted that members of congress have bluntly told Mr. Hay that under no condition will congress submit to any substantial increase in the rebate to be allowed on Cuban imports into the United States.

THAT SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES WILL ARISE with relation to the Cuban question cannot be doubted when it is generally understood as it is known in Washington circles that the Cubans are not willing to accept an immaterial increase. An Associated press dispatch referring to the conference held on November 12 conveys the information that in the face of the great shortage in the European crops and a rising market the Cubans have acquired confidence in their ability to get along for an indefinite period without reciprocity with the United States, and this report declares that it is generally understood that the Cubans are displaying the indifference in the prosecution of the treaty negotiations. It is pointed out that President Palma makes the point that conditions have changed in Cuba so that whereas the 20 per cent rebate might have served when it was first proposed, it would at present afford so little relief as not to warrant the sacrifice of Cuban revenues that would be involved in its acceptance. According to these same dispatches Secretary Hay has determined to clear up that point and at the conference it was decided that General Bliss should visit Cuba and make a personal investigation of the industrial situation and the fiscal possibilities of the island.

A HIGH OFFICIAL OF THE GOVERNMENT, is quoted by a representative of the Associated press with respect to this interesting question. It may not be doubted that the statement made by this "high official" is a statement authorized by the administration. This "high official" explains: "The mission of General Bliss will be to clear up in the minds of the Cubans some apprehensions which they have regarding the effect of the concession offered by the United States and the various concessions which the United States

demands from Cuba. It seems apparent that the situation is not understood in Cuba and the negotiations halt on that account. There is no disposition to offer a greater concession to Cuba than 20 per cent, which will include all products of the islands, while the concessions demanded vary from 10 to 70 per cent. This is explained by the fact that concessions must be considered not so much upon percentages as upon existing tariffs." The tariff of the United States on all articles produced in Cuba is so high that a 20 per cent reduction will mean much to the island. This relates especially to sugar and tobacco. A single illustration is given: The present duty on sugar is about 100 per cent; a reduction of 20 per cent will give a rebate to Cuba of \$20 in every \$100 worth of sugar sent to this country. On the other hand, the duty imposed by Cuba on cotton manufactured goods is about 33 1-3 per cent, and the United States manufacturer shipping cotton goods to Cuba under a like 20 per cent rebate would secure an advantage of only about \$6.66 on each \$100 worth of goods. To equalize this sacrifice it was found necessary to pay the rate of concession of cotton goods going from the United States into Cuba at 60 per cent.

IS FURTHER POINTED OUT BY THIS AUTHORIZED statement that "it is thought here that the Cubans have not considered the matter from this point of view and that it will be in order to inform them of the basis of the demands of the United States. It is possible that the demands of this country may be modified slightly on an investigation of trade conditions in Cuba. It is not likely, however, that any greater concession will be granted Cuba as it is held that the high rate of duty on sugar and tobacco will, with 20 per cent reduction, enable the Cubans to either undersell all other foreigners or secure greater profits on their products than people of other nations. The reciprocity treaty is likely to be a separate document from any general treaty provided for under the Platt amendment. It makes no difference whether or not the treaty is negotiated with Cuba save on the subject of the Isle of Pines. The Platt amendment being a part of our law and a part of the Cuban constitution, it is held that it operates as a binding proposition, even if the provisions of the amendment are not embodied in a duty. The United States will secure the coaling stations and Cuba is bound to carry out the provisions of her own constitution. That the embodiment of the terms of the Platt amendment in a treaty would be well, it is not denied, but such action is not necessary save to establish closer and more friendly relations between the two governments from a diplomatic point of view."

IN BULGARIA RECENTLY A CHURCH erected as a memorial to the Muscovite and Bulgarian soldiers who fell in the storming of the Shipka was dedicated. During the services a telegram was made public by the Bulgarian authorities which telegram purported to be a message of congratulations from Emperor Nicholas to General Count Ignatieff, the Russian ex-minister of state and ex-ambassador, who, as president of the Pan-Slav community of Moscow and an active head of the Pan-Slav movement, was a conspicuous figure in the festivities. A writer in the Chicago Tribune says that this telegram excited no end of attention and comment by reason of the extravagant praise lavished on Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who was referred to repeatedly therein as the "dear and beloved brother" of the writer. This writer adds: "Now the word 'brother' is only used by sovereigns in ceremonious reference to brother monarchs of equal rank. For instance, King Edward would never dream of addressing the king of Serbia as 'brother,' and Napoleon III. embarked France in the costly Crimean war because Czar Nicholas declined to accord it to him. The fact, therefore, that Emperor Nicholas should have referred to Prince Ferdinand, who at the best is a vassal of the sultan, as a 'brother,' created no end of comment, being regarded as an intimation to the effect that Russia regarded the prince of Bulgaria not merely as an independent sovereign, but as a ruler of the highest rank. It now turns out that the writer of the telegram was not Emperor Nicholas of Russia, but Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, and the Bulgarian government has been forced by a peremptory demand from St. Petersburg to publish an intimation to this effect, late in the day and rather humiliating to Prince Ferdinand."

AN INTERESTING STORY RELATES TO THE recent resignation of John H. Baker as United States district judge in Indiana. About a year ago Francis H. Baker, Judge John H. Baker's son, was appointed judge of the federal court in the Hoosier state. The appointment of the young-

er Baker was resisted on the ground that it would not be well to have two members of the same family on the federal bench in the same state. It now develops, however, that an understanding was had that if the younger Baker should be appointed, the elder would resign. This promise has been fulfilled.

THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE DISTRICT of Columbia recently rendered a decision in a case involving the right to sell and dispose of liquors at the capitol. Proceedings had been commenced against the Capitol restaurant proprietors charging them with violating the liquor laws of the district, and further with ignoring the regulation which prohibits the sale of liquor on a government reservation. The court of appeals holds that congress, being a self-governing body, may regulate the affairs of the capitol building according to its own pleasure.

AN INTERESTING STORY CONCERNING THE Great Salt Lake at Utah is presented by a writer in the Chicago Record-Herald. This writer declares that this body of water known as America's Dead Sea is gradually passing away. It is pointed out that a few years ago what is known as Garfield Beach was surrounded by water which was from four to five feet deep, but during the last summer it was necessary to walk half a mile lake-ward before water could be found of sufficient depth for bathing. It is said by this writer that the resort authorities are considering two schemes to preserve the place for bathers. One is to build an artificial lake around the present site, and wall it in, and the other is to move it further out into the receding body of water. If the latter project is undertaken it may be found necessary to "keep moving" from year to year, as the lake is growing smaller at a phenomenal rate. This dead sea once occupied the entire Utah Valley. The "water line," which is visible along the mountains bordering the valley, reaches as high as one thousand feet above the present surface of the lake. The salt deposit on the shore extends at some points miles inland, thus proving a remarkable recession of the water in recent years. In 1861 a writer said of the Great Salt Lake and vicinity: "Not a tree flourishes on its border, nor on any of the adjacent plains." But this history has been outdone, for today the adjacent plains abound in groves, fruit trees and fields of grain, all of which has been made possible through a system of irrigation. The discovery of the magic influence of water on this supposedly barren soil is causing the mountain streams to be diverted from their accustomed paths and the lake to be robbed of its supply. Meanwhile evaporation is steadily reducing the level of the lake. Snow does not fall in the mountains as heavily as in past years, hence the streams are not fed so bountifully. Farmers and municipalities clamor for increased quantities of the precious fluid and the hand of law is invoked to settle the question of ownership, while the great lake is forgotten and is actually dying of thirst.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSARY general of the United States army presents some interesting figures. This report shows that \$227,284.98 were spent for meals for recruiting parties and recruits and that \$26,902.15 was spent for "liquid coffee for troops travelling." The interesting sum of \$233,569.17 was spent for ice and \$366,749.72 was spent for wages to inspectors and "miscellaneous small employees." The report also shows that the department sold to officers goods to the value of \$21,538.22 and to enlisted men goods to the value of \$65,000. This report shows that among the stock "kept on hand for sale to officers and enlisted men," may be found the following articles: Candy, can openers, chamois skins, cheese, cherries, chocolate, cigars, cinnamon, clothespins, cloves, cocoa, coffee, lobster, lye, macaroni, matches, needles, nutmegs, oatmeal, pins, pipes, plum pudding, polish, preserves, tapioca, thread, tobacco, toilet water, tongue, tooth powder.

AN IDEA OF THE ENORMOUS QUANTITY of mail that is never claimed is given in the annual report of the dead letter office for the last fiscal year, which report was submitted on October 14 by Acting Postmaster General Wynne. This report shows total receipts 9,300,351 pieces of mail matter of all kinds, an increase of 9 per cent over last year. The ordinary unclaimed letters numbered 6,446,600; ordinary unclaimed returned from foreign countries, 620,235; letters and parcels held for postage, 156,831; domestic letters undelivered at hotels, 306,232; letters and parcels with fictitious address, 150,307; bearing no address 81,068; originating in foreign countries, 838,805.