

CURRENT TOPICS

THE CHARTIERS BRANCH OF THE PAN-handle railroad of Pennsylvania is said to be one of the shortest as well as one of the most profitable railroads in this country. This road is 32 miles long and was constructed in 1871. It derived its name because of the fact that it ran along Chartiers creek. During the past year this little railroad carried 1,642,500 passengers. It is estimated that its revenue amounts to \$3,000,000 a year. The road runs through a very thickly settled portion of the country and in a distance of 23 miles there are 16 towns along the line of this railroad.

WHILE DR. LORENZ, THE FAMOUS VIENNA physician, was operating in Philadelphia, he delivered an interesting address to the assembled surgeons in which he explained how he came to adopt his plan of operation for congenital dislocation of the hip. In this address Dr. Lorenz said: "Seven or eight years ago, I operated upon the hips of a child. There was the congenital deformation. I cut through the skin and the flesh, and bared the bones. The femur or the thigh bone had never been joined with the hip. The leg had been pressed out and up and the little sufferer was unable to walk. She was seven years old when I found her. Some of the muscles were contracted and much shortened. I found it necessary to cut some of the tissues of these muscles before I could bring the thigh bone down to its proper position. Then I found that the head, or ball, of the femur would not fit into the socket for which it was intended. The socket, or acetabulum, had not been in use and had developed none since the child was born. The head of the thigh bone had in the meantime been growing and was much too large now to fit. I took an instrument and dug out the socket until the ball of the femur would fit into it. Getting everything into place, I closed the wound and sewed it up. I performed about 300 of those operations. I discovered that they were very dangerous. Many of my little patients died. Parents, I found, hesitated to permit me to operate upon their deformed children. I could not say that I blamed them. The so-called 'bloody method' of treating congenital hip disorders is very dangerous. The deformity itself does not cause death. It merely causes a lifelong suffering."

THESE EXPERIENCES SUGGESTED TO DR. Lorenz the advisability of adopting the method now known as bloodless surgery. Describing his first operation in this line Dr. Lorenz said: "The condition of the child's deformity was much the same as was the first one I operated on. But I went at the operation without a knife. I knew that the contracted muscles would have to be stretched or torn. I was at first frightened at the strength it took to do the work that the knife had done. Yet I had decided that force should be my instrument. I had to tear the tissues of the shortened muscles. The limb, at first resisting all my efforts, finally became pliable. I found that I could stretch the muscles a great deal, but when they would not stretch I would have to tear them. Finally the little leg was brought into its normal position. But, as in my first case, the head of the femur would not fit the hip cavity. Under the 'bloody method' I had gouged out that cavity with a knife. I could not do that now. So I took the thigh bone and by main force bored it into the cavity. This was shallow and of insufficient depth to admit of the whole of the ball of the femur. I found that when the leg was at right angles with the body the head of the thigh bone would hold close into the socket, but that when I placed the leg in its normal position the ball would slip out. The socket was too shallow to hold it. So I placed the leg in that position in which the ball of the femur fitted most accurately into the cavity. Then I bound it, and made it rigid with a plaster of paris cast. As soon as the soreness of the torn muscles and stretched ligaments had disappeared, I encouraged the child to walk. An iron stilt had to be placed on the sole of the little one's shoe, and with the thigh of her leg held by the plaster of paris at right angles with her body, she walked about for five months. Nature, in the meantime, had been performing the operation I had once done with an instrument. The hip socket, through the constant pressure of the child's weight, had been deepening. The outer ridge of bony tissue

had been spreading across the ball of the thigh bone and forming a joint such as the normal child has. Finally, I removed the plaster cast. As I had expected, I found that the leg remained in the same position as it was before I removed the cast. Gradually, with a little outside assistance, it came around in its correct position, and two years afterwards that child did not even limp."

THE FACT THAT THOMAS B. REED WAS offered the nomination for vice president on the ticket with William McKinley in 1896 and declined it reminds the New York World that there are four instances in our history in which very eminent men missed the presidency by refusing the second place on their party's national ticket. Daniel Webster refused to run with William Henry Harrison and again with Zachary Taylor. His not immodest estimate of his own merits would not permit him to be the tail of any lesser man's kite. Hence we had Presidents Tyler and Fillmore when we might have had President Webster. Benjamin F. Butler, of Massachusetts, declined to run with Lincoln in 1864, and that gave us President Johnson, while Butler lived to spend a considerable fortune in vain efforts to reach the position which, not knowing it, he spurned. Roscoe Conkling was given an unrestricted liberty to name the vice presidential candidate by the Garfield leaders in 1880, and instead of taking it himself bestowed it on Chester Alan Arthur, who thus became president. President Roosevelt, it is interesting to remember, would not be in the White house today if he could have had his own way at the Philadelphia convention in 1900, where he protested to the last moment against being "shelved in the vice presidency."

THE ELECTRIC POST IS THE INVENTION of Count Taeggi, an Italian. The count recently visited London for the purpose of explaining his system. The count's plan is described by the New York Evening Post in this way: He proposes to forward letters at the rate of from 200 to 250 miles an hour. Wires will be erected at an altitude corresponding pretty nearly to that of the telegraph wires at present. They will be in the form of aerial railways, two wires forming a track. On these lines will be run miniature carriages propelled by electricity. The whole apparatus will be inclosed. The wires are to be supported by posts. To avoid collision between the cars and the poles the wires will rest on arms projecting from the uprights. There will be two main lines, one for incoming and the other for outgoing letters, and all large cities and towns would be served by them. Radiating from the large towns there will be lines to the smaller towns in direct communication with the main line."

WHEN THE ELECTRIC POST INVENTION has been perfected, the only formality required, according to this same authority, is for one to drop a stamped letter into any one of the many posts and the invention will do the rest. Within the poles there will be an apparatus to stamp the letters—i. e., impress the locality and the time of posting—and on the approach of the "electric tram" the box containing the letters will be automatically raised to the top and the correspondence emptied into the "carriages." They will then be carried to the central office in the district, be automatically deposited, and by a mechanical process conveyed to the sorters' tables. After they have been sorted they will be again taken to the top of the building and forwarded to their destination.

THE JOURNALISTS OF THE OLD WORLD are considerably agitated because of the "dissolution" by the shah of Persia of his harem. The shah recently made a trip through Europe and on his return he dissolved his harem containing 1,700 women and retained sixty of the number. Commenting upon this fact these journals state that the Persians were very much troubled since no predecessor of his majesty possessed less than 1,500 wives. The St. Petersburg correspondent of the London Mail, however, makes an interesting if not important contribution to this discussion. This correspondent says: "This news is hardly correct, for even those shahs under

whose reign the harem flourished, such as Nasr-ed-Din, never possessed more than 350 to 370 wives. This shah added one wife yearly to his harem on the occasion of his annual hunting excursion to the mountains. After his death every woman in his harem received £200 and married a subordinate official. The harem of the present shah is not very numerous, as it contains at the most twenty to thirty women."

THE DEATH OF SAGASTA, FORMER PRIME minister of Spain, removed one of the most interesting figures that has ever moved upon the world's political stage. Sagasta served as prime minister during the Spanish-American war and retired from public life several months ago. At the time of his death he was 75 years of age and for more than fifty years he has attracted more or less public attention. The Madrid correspondent of the Chicago Tribune, referring to the dead statesman, says: "A shifting man, unreliable and uncertain, he had time and again risen to power, fighting now for monarchy, again for those seeking its overthrow, at one time forced to flee his native land, an exile, and again the closest counselor of the ruler. Among all the diplomats of Europe perhaps Sagasta was the most glaring figure for fifty years."

THAT THE LIFE OF THIS SPANISH STATESMAN was full of wild tales of adventure and reads as a romance is the statement of the Tribune's Madrid correspondent: "Sagasta was born at Torrecilla de Comeros, July 21, 1827. He was educated at the school of engineers at Logrono, afterwards at Madrid. He practiced his profession at Valladolid and Zamora. As a lad of 18, at school in his home town, with schoolboy companions, he was in open rebellion against the Nervaez. He fought against O'Donnell in the streets of Madrid in 1856 at the head of a regiment of militia and won renown for bravery. He was forced to flee from Spain and spent his exile in France and England. In the revolution of 1856, when his companions were massacred in the streets of Madrid, Sagasta was condemned to death by the garrote, but escaped."

ALTHOUGH SAGASTA WAS REGARDED as a fearless and cunning man, he had yet to learn the tricks of politics and diplomacy when he entered upon his first active work in politics in 1834. At that time he was elected as a delegate to the constitutional convention from Zamora. The Madrid correspondent says: "Sagasta soon became leader in reality, though not in name, of the party headed by the duke de la Torre and General Prim. He was in most of the intrigues and plots against the ill-starred queen, the second Isabella. In 1866 he led the plotters who, two years later, succeeded in driving Isabella II. from the throne. Events made it safe for him to return to Spain and secure from punishment Sagasta, plotting all the time, was editor of the organ of the liberal party, La Iberia, and was professor in the school of engineers at Madrid. Again he incurred the suspicion of the government and was again forced to flee to England. In 1868, when Topete and the fleet with most of the army had been won over, Sagasta and Zorilla, with General Prim in livery as their servant, departed London on the steamer Delta and led the insurrection which resulted in the exile of Isabella."

IT WAS IN JANUARY, 1870, THAT SAGASTA was named minister of state. He then proclaimed Barcelona and many of the other Spanish cities in a state of seige. In November, 1870, when Prince Amedee of Italy was chosen king, Sagasta declared in favor of the monarchy and by way of reward was made minister of war. It is pointed out by the Madrid correspondent that in 1873 Sagasta aroused hatred among Americans. It is said that it was Sagasta's direct act which resulted in the massacre of nearly a hundred American soldiers, the act of Captain Burrell who in one day shot eight Americans and four days later shot General Ryan, Captain Frye and fifty-eight men, being directly attributable to Sagasta.

THE FORTUNES OF THIS STRANGE MAN took another turn when in June, 1875, in the words of the Madrid correspondent, "Sagasta by another sudden somersault of convictions,