

**ACCORDING TO THIS AUTHORITY,** A guard who has been trained in the use of the signal code which is practically the African Morse alphabet, beats the message on his drum in the open air and the sound is carried across the valleys and glens to the next village where it is interpreted by another guard. Mr. Rideout explains: "There is always a guard on duty ready to receive these messages. He can tell at once whether the message is for his chief or the head man of his village, in which case he goes to the head man's hut and makes the communication verbally. If, however, the message is for a distant part, he repeats it on his gourd, and so it is carried from village to village, with very little loss of time, until it reaches the person for whom it is intended. During the war between the British and the Boers we who were hundreds of miles distant from the scene of hostilities got all the news with surprising rapidity. We knew of every victory and every reverse which took place in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, and I have known of several instances where the news came by the gourd air line hours ahead of the message by field telegraph. You can readily understand how this surprised the military officers. The same system is common in many of the African tribes, and the secret is always confined to the few trained men in each village, who are chosen for their fidelity to the head man or chief. Who first devised this system nobody seems to know. It has been used for centuries."

**THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY** IS practically the custodian of more than \$1,300,000,000 in cash and is responsible for financial transactions aggregating \$3,500,000,000 per year. But Frank A. Vanderlip, former assistant secretary of the treasury, writing in Scribner's Magazine, says that the control of finances is not the only important task imposed upon the secretary. Mr. Vanderlip says that the secretary is the head of the navy of revenue cutters, light house tenders, and the coast survey steamers. He is the arbiter of the admission of from half to three-quarters of a million immigrants a year. He is the head of the national public health system, of a great detective service, of a life-saving service with 272 crews patrolling 10,000 miles of coast, of a coast survey, a light house system, illuminating the shores of this continent from Maine to Alaska, and of an architect's office that has built and cares for 400 public buildings. He is the commander in all these activities of an army of 26,000 men—as many as were serving in the regular army of the United States before the Spanish war. There are some things even the secretary would like to reform, but cannot. There is one collector of customs who receives a salary of \$1,800 who in one recent year collected 20 cents. There are 12 customs districts officered at a total cost of \$15,578.14 whose total of collections in one year was \$275.26.

**THE TOWN OF DORCHESTER, MASS.,** claims the honor of having the first public school in America to be supported by direct taxation upon the inhabitants of a town. The Dorchester correspondent of the Chicago Tribune says that this school was established in May, 1639. During that year David Thompson had settled upon Thompson's island, off the coast of the colony town, and in 1638 he gave the island to the town on the payment of 12 pence yearly rental. Having transferred the island to the town, the town council met May 20, 1639, and adopted the following order: "It is ordered the 20th day of May, 1639, that there shall be a rent of £20 a year imposed forever on Thompson's island, to be paid by every person that hath propriety in said island, according to the proportion that any such person shall from time to time enjoy and possess there, and this toward the maintenance of a school in Dorchester. This rent of £20 a year to be paid to such schoolmaster as shall undertake to teach English, Latin, and other tongues, also writing. The said schoolmaster to be chosen from time to time by the freemen, and it is left to the discretion of the elders and the seven men for the time being whether maids shall be taught with the boys or not. For the levying of this £20 yearly from the particular persons who ought to pay it according to this order, it is further ordered that some man shall be appointed by the seven men for the time being to receive this, and on refusal to levy it by distress, and not finding distress, such person as so refuseth payment shall forfeit the land he hath in propriety in said island." Here, the first teacher was the Rev. Thomas Waterhouse.

**THE CREW OF THE UNITED STATES** Revenue cutter Seminole were recently treated to an inspiring scene. This vessel was lying in

The Boston harbor and one of the seamen indulged in a torrent of abuse upon things in general and finally referred to the United States flag as "a dirty rag." This remark was reported to Captain Rogers in command of the Seminole. The captain summoned all hands and after addressing them upon the seriousness of the offense committed by this seaman, compelled the offender to kiss the flag six times and publicly obligate himself never to speak disrespectfully of the flag or to allow any one else to do so in his presence.

**A STRANGE STORY COMES FROM THE ST.** Petersburg correspondent of the Chicago Inter-Ocean. It is related that in the vicinity of the village of Kovsovska, a father, mother and child were driving in a sleigh when they were overtaken by wolves. The father, seeing the situation was desperate, suggested to the mother that they throw the child out, and that while the wolves were satisfying themselves with its body they might escape. This the mother resolutely refused to do. The father, becoming desperate as the wolves were closing in, seized the woman and child and threw them out of the sleigh. By a miracle they tumbled into a ditch hidden by the snow. The wolves swept past where the woman and child lay, and a moment later had torn the horse and man to pieces. The woman, after awhile, emerged from her place of refuge. The wolves had gone and she and her child reached their village to tell the tale of their strange escape.

**THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS ABOUT TO** engage in the snake business if the Middletown, N. Y., correspondent of the Chicago Inter-Ocean is to be relied upon. This correspondent says: "Because of his extensive knowledge regarding snakes, Ichabel Crandall of Pike county, Pennsylvania, has been engaged to go to the Philippines and capture specimens of all kinds of snakes in the islands for the United States government museum at Washington. Crandall has spent all his life in catching snakes, and is believed to be better posted regarding the various specimens than any other man in the United States."

**IT IS REPORTED FROM LONDON THAT MRS.** Florence Maybrick, whose trial and conviction for the murder of her husband, James Maybrick, has attracted general attention in America and in England for the past fourteen years, will soon be released from prison. This announcement is made by authority of the home secretary and has caused rejoicing among the many people in this country who, believing in this woman's innocence, have for years exerted their efforts in her behalf. Mrs. Maybrick was formerly Miss Florence Chandler, daughter of William G. Chandler, a banker of Mobile, Ala. She was born in Mobile in 1862.

**THE INTERESTING STORY RELATING TO** this unfortunate woman is told in a graphic way by a writer in the Chicago Record-Herald. William G. Chandler, her father, died in 1863 and the widow, accompanied by her daughter Florence, removed to New York and subsequently to Germany, where she was educated. Returning to America in 1878, Florence Chandler, then but sixteen years of age, met James Maybrick, an Englishman, who was visiting in this country. Maybrick was forty years of age, twenty-four years the senior of the girl whose hand he sought. Although the Chandler family vigorously opposed the marriage, the Englishman was successful in his suit and the marriage took place in London in 1881, the husband then being forty-three years of age and the bride nineteen. After spending several years in America, Mr. and Mrs. Maybrick returned to England and took up their residence in Liverpool. In 1887 Mrs. Maybrick, who had lived a rather retired life, began to go into society, but her existence was quite uneventful until the fatal occurrences in April, 1889, when Mr. Maybrick was taken ill and died in great pain from arsenical poisoning. Soon after his death Mrs. Maybrick was suspected of having poisoned her husband, and the suspicion was soon followed by an open charge preferred by the dead man's brothers, who moved heaven and earth to produce the necessary evidence. It was shown at the trial that the deceased was in the habit of using arsenic, and had always kept a supply of that drug by him. The day before his death he had attended the spring races, and had been caught in the rain. The drenching he received was followed by a fever, and he had been in bed but a short time when he died. The crown made out a strong case, and the accused was found guilty and sentenced to death. Public sympathy, however,

was so warmly exerted in the favor of the accused that the punishment was commuted to imprisonment for life.

**THE FRIENDS OF MRS. MAYBRICK IN ENGLAND** as well as in America at once began a fight to obtain for her a pardon. That fight has been waging for fourteen years, the services of the most prominent men in England and America being enlisted in Mrs. Maybrick's behalf. Thousands of petitions were received by the British authorities. Evidence throwing new light on the death of Mr. Maybrick was presented, but this did not move the authorities. An organization called the Florence Maybrick association was established by the leading women in England, with branches in the United States, the purpose of which was to secure Mrs. Maybrick's pardon, but Queen Victoria was obdurate, and it was finally concluded that so long as the queen lived all efforts in Mrs. Maybrick's favor would prove useless. On the accession of King Edward, however, hope revived and the work was renewed with increased vigor. The Maybrick case was the occasion of considerable diplomatic correspondence between the British government and the United States, in which Secretaries Blaine and Foster and Lord Salisbury figured. The last petition to Queen Victoria was made in 1899, at which time the home secretary declared that the queen would not interfere in any circumstances whatever with Mrs. Maybrick's sentence. Several months ago it was falsely reported that King Edward had pardoned Mrs. Maybrick, but it was understood at that time that the king had promised to use clemency at a later date. It seems that the British authorities were finally moved to promise release because of a number of law suits involving valuable lands in West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky in which suits Mrs. Maybrick is interested, and she is to be released in order that she may defend her interest in those proceedings. It is believed that her liberation will take place at the latest by July, 1904.

**AN ELOPEMENT OCCURRED RECENTLY AT** Morristown, N. J. The details of the affair were interesting, but they are not to be compared with the manner in which the Morristown correspondent for the New York World described the affair. Instead of writing a dry report of the elopement, this correspondent took his pen in hand and finally sent over the wires this graphic description: "Susie Hulbert, young and fair, with hazel eyes and golden hair, rosebud mouth and dimpled cheek, her whole appearance sweet and meek, has left the town with young Frank Dey, a youth of aspirations high, but barely old enough to wed; so village gossips all have said. She's sweet sixteen, he twenty-one, and now they're dodging pa and gun; for yester night they ran away, riding on the dapple gray. A church affair was in full swing, and Frank said, 'It's the very thing; we'll shake the town this very night, and give the old folk quite a fright.' So off they went upon the nag which papa used with plough and drag, and that's the reason he's so mad—it's knocked him out of farm-work bad. Susie's grand-mamma says she'll all forgive if they'll return and with her to live. She's sent that word to all near by, but up to date has no reply from either Sue or Mr. Dey."

**THE FATHER OF WATERS, A STREAM** that has frequently played pranks upon various communities, has once more condescended to permit the city of Vicksburg to become a river town. Vicksburg's interesting experiences with the Mississippi are related by a writer in Leslie's Weekly. This writer says that "until about the beginning of the last decade, all the geography classes in our schools were taught, and correctly, that the city of Vicksburg, Miss., made historic during the civil war, was situated on the bank of the Mississippi river. This statement, however, ceased to be a fact some ten or more years ago, when the Father of Waters, in one of his erratic moods, forced a new channel for himself and left Vicksburg perched on a high bluff, several miles inland. The town, which had been one of the most important steamboat ports on the big stream, was thus suddenly deprived of much of the traffic that had caused it to prosper. Strangely enough the misfortune was an echo of the famous siege of Vicksburg, and General U. S. Grant was primarily responsible for it. In order that the union gunboats might run past the shore batteries unharmed, Grant sought to divert the waters of the Mississippi away from the city by digging a new channel. The great river refused at the time to take the new course marked out for it, but it eventually did so, more than thirty years after such action could be of any use to the union army."