

CURRENT TOPICS

IT IS REPORTED THAT AN AGREEMENT HAS been reached whereby the government of the Philippines is to purchase the land held by the friars, paying for 403,000 acres the sum of \$7,250,000. Under the terms of the agreement, the Spanish friars, to whom the native population seriously object, will withdraw from the Philippines. The land purchased from the friars will be sold, the tenants now occupying the land being given the privilege of purchasing.

DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS MORE than \$600,000 has been expended on repairs to the White house. The Washington correspondent for the New York World says that the engineer officer of the army in charge of the grounds submitted an estimate of \$60,000 to build a stable for the president's horses. The estimates submitted to congress provide an increase of \$3,500 to apply to the care of the enclosed grounds about the White House; \$9,000 is asked for the care and maintenance of the conservatory and greenhouses of the White house, and \$6,000 for the erection and maintenance of additional greenhouses to supply the White house with flowers and plants.

SECRETARY ROOT HAS ENTERED INTO A contract for the erection at the National cemetery at Gettysburg of a memorial of the address delivered by President Lincoln on the occasion of the dedication of that cemetery. The Washington correspondent for the New York Tribune says: "In February, 1895, congress passed an act appropriating \$5,000 for a suitable bronze tablet containing the address referred to, and specified the portion of the address to be inscribed. The plans approved by Secretary Root called for a granite exedra, 22 feet wide, containing a granite pillar, surmounted by a bronze bust of Lincoln. On one side of the pedestal is a bronze tablet containing the address, and on the other a bronze tablet containing the legend of the memorial. The site selected is as near the spot where the address was delivered as is possible under existing conditions."

THE ARCHBISHOP OF VALENCIA, WHO died recently, left a legacy of 50,000 pesos to the first Spanish general who would land on the territory of the United States with an army strong enough to avenge the defeats of Spain in Cuba and the Philippines. Until that is done, the money will be in charge of the Bank of Spain. Commenting upon this statement, the New York Tribune is unkind enough to remark: "The archbishop was evidently a believer in the possibility of modern miracles, but was not desirous of the benefits of the New Testament doctrine of blessings for peacemakers. The Bank of Spain will have at least one permanent deposit among its treasures."

TUNNELLING THROUGH THE SIERRA Nevada mountains will be the next engineering feat of the Harriman overland route. A representative of the Chicago Chronicle says that speaking to a party of newspaper men at Reno, Nev., Mr. Harriman said: "Some day we hope to bore a hole through the Sierras and then we want to take you to the coast. There will be one tunnel five and one-quarter miles long and several others not a great while hence. Our surveying is all done. In fact, there have been several surveys made, and we have our plans, but are not just ready for it yet." Being asked how much would be saved by this, Mr. Harriman replied: "That's hard to say. There is a lot of lifting required to take traffic over the road west of Reno, and the cost is therefore enormous. Such things are hard to estimate. We will cut out most of the forty miles of snowsheds, leaving only about four." The long tunnel which Mr. Harriman referred to will start considerably west of Truckee, it is supposed, and it will result in an immense reduction of grade, the new roadbed being about 1,000 feet below the old line on the mountain above. According to an official of the engineering department the reduction of grade from Reno west will be about one-third or from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 per cent. The country west of Summit, which is 6,000 feet high, is rough and hilly, so that the task of mak-

ing the new road will require immense expenditure and the highest engineering skill. The construction of the tunnel system through the Sierras has been regarded as chimerical by many railroad men as was the Lucin cutoff over Salt Lake. The saving in expense and time by such a tunnel system would be immense.

MRS. HONORETTA MARSHALL OF WEBSTER, Mass., died in the Worcester hospital for the insane December 20. Mrs. Marshall was born in Poland, August 7, 1798, and was, therefore, at the time of her death, 105 years four months and twelve days old. Nearly sixty years ago she became a widow and distributed her considerable fortune among the poor. Several years ago she became insane and was committed to the hospital.

RECENTLY SENATOR DEPEW, addressing the Rockefeller Bible class, said that there are 100,000 millionaires in the United States. The New York Press says that if Senator Depew is correct in this statement, then an official of a great commercial agency and the president of one of New York's richest banks are decidedly in error. The Press adds: "Both place the number of millionaires in the entire world at 10,000. There are 7,000 in the United States and 1,000 of these live in New York city, whether they pay taxes here or not. The financial Red Book, a most carefully compiled publication, gives the names of practically all the persons in the United States who are supposed to be worth more than \$300,000. And there are only 15,000 names on the list. No claim is made that the name of every person worth that amount or more is given, but the proportion of those left out is extremely small, for a most exhaustive investigation has been made. 'There may be a few more than 7,000 millionaires in the United States,' said the official of the mercantile agency. 'I doubt it, however. I also doubt if there are more than 1,000 millionaires in New York. It is absolutely impossible to tell accurately. It may seem strange that we should not be able to tell, especially when we are engaged in finding out how much a man is worth and giving such information to our subscribers. So, while it is impossible for us to tell exactly how many millionaires there are, we would not take the number of those who are known to possess a thousand thousands at least and then multiply the number by 10. For that is what Senator Depew seems to have done in his anxiety to urge Mr. Rockefeller's young men to get rich.'"

BIBLES ARE SAID BY DETECTIVES TO BE more rarely stolen than any other object. The Chicago Tribune says that this is not because Bibles are worthless to a thief, but because few criminals are sufficiently depraved to steal the good book. A detective said recently that in an important case which he had followed up some years ago a thief had entered the house, stolen some valuable jewels, and left untouched a Bible bound in white chicken skin and studded with pearls. The detective caught the thief, and the man who had been robbed, a dealer in "curios," visited his despoiler in jail, took an interest in him because he had not taken the Bible, and eventually reformed him and got him a good job. "I knew," the thief said, "that if I took that Bible it would do me harm, and if I didn't take it it might do me good. I let it alone, and now, thank heaven, I'm an honest and a righteous man." The detective added that in another case where a thief had stolen a Bible the book had been returned. "Another thing few thieves will take," he added, "is a child's savings bank."

CLEOPATRA RECEIVED EGYPT AS A PRESENT from Julius Caesar, and a writer in the Kansas City Journal presents a number of other instances where countries were used as presents. Lucullus, Sulla and Pompey each gave away half a dozen kingdoms. Antony gave the little kingdom of Judea to Herod. One of the excellent stories of the past is that the Emperor Constantine gave Rome and all Italy to Pope Sylvester, who cured him of leprosy. King John, called Lackland, being excommunicated by Pope Innocent III., gave to that pope and his successors the kingdom of Ire-

land and England. The deed reads: "Not constrained with fear, but with my full consent and the advice of my barons, for the remission of my sins against God and the church, I resign England and Ireland to God, St. Peter, St. Paul and our lord, the Pope Innocent, and to his successors to the apostolic chair." Julius II. gave the states of King Louis XII. to the Emperor Maximilian. Sixtus V., Gregory XIV. and Clement VIII. were ready to make a present of France to whomsoever Philip II. would have chosen for the husband of his daughter, Clara Eugenia. Alexander VI. presented the East and West Indies to Spain and Portugal, which was like giving almost all the earth. Speaking of the gift of England and Ireland by King John: He declared himself the pope's farmer, or tenant, and paid down in cold cash \$40,000, with a promise to pay \$5,000 more every year. The first year he paid in advance and stood to lose all in the event of failure to meet his installments. It is said that the pope's legate, Pandolph, departed with the money and forgot to remove the excommunication.

LITERARY AND ANTIQUARIAN CIRCLES in London, according to a correspondent for the St. Louis Republic, are agitated by the report that J. Pierpont Morgan has offered \$250,000 for the original manuscript of the first book of Milton's Paradise Lost. The Republic's correspondent says that this book is about to be sold to the highest bidder, also that Mr. Morgan's London representative refuses either to deny or affirm the report. The Republic's correspondent adds: "The Times warns Englishmen that the manuscript 'may well be expected to flutter the susceptible purse strings of American 'novi homines' (newly rich).' While laying stress on the remarkable historical, literary and sentimental interest of this relic, the Times mentions the fact that the document is not in Milton's handwriting, and compares unfavorably with the rich Miltonic mementoes in the library of Cambridge university. At the same time, it shows that the copy was licensed for the press and bears hundreds of precious indications of the personality of the blind poet. It is stated that, while the English museums are full of antiquities, particularly old manuscript poetry, and while the famous library of Trinity College, Cambridge, contains in Milton's own beautiful writing the original drafts of 'Lycidas,' 'Comus,' 'Arcades' and many of the shorter poems, the nation should realize its duty to preserve for the poet's native land the unique object which is about to be knocked down to the highest bidder."

ACCORDING TO A LONDON CABLEGRAM, there will be no more experiments in radium for a while. The London correspondent for the St. Louis Republic says that the Austrian government controlling the source of supply has effected a corner in radium and as a result, it is now quoted at \$17,000,000 a pound. A few days ago it was quoted at \$3,000,000 per pound. The Republic's correspondent says: "By an order of the Austrian government, the further exportation of refuse from the uranium oxide works at Joachimthal, a town of Bohemia, is prohibited, and as that is about the only source of supply in the universe scientists in all parts of the world are saying unkind things of the monopolistic tendencies of the Vienna government. With radium costing \$17,000,000 a pound and difficult to get even at that price, many scientists will be compelled to cease experimenting with it, for obvious reasons, unless they secure the co-operation of multimillionaires. Even then, it is pointed out, they must be sparing in its use, for even so rich a man as John D. Rockefeller, with all his wealth, could buy only about four pounds at the current market price. Efforts are now being made in many parts of the world to find supplies of the ores from which radium can be secured, but the results are not hopeful. It was recently believed that a large supply of such an ore had been found in Colorado, but Sir William Ramsay, the eminent British chemist, and others have tested the ores and have found them absolutely worthless."

THE MEMORY OF DAVID KENNISON, LAST survivor of the Boston tea party, was honored December 19 by the unveiling of a huge