

# CURRENT TOPICS

**THE BALTIMORE FIRE LASTED NEARLY** forty hours. Various estimates of the damage are made, but \$150,000,000 seems to be the figure generally agreed to. Of course, when one is told that the city has sustained a loss of \$150,000,000, it seems very large; and yet one may obtain a better idea of the havoc wrought in Baltimore from the fact that seventy-five blocks of property, or 140 acres, were completely destroyed. It is regarded as somewhat remarkable that only one life was lost, while not more than fifty people were injured as the result of this great conflagration.

**FIRE FIGHTERS FROM ADJOINING CITIES** were promptly sent to Baltimore's relief, and special credit is bestowed by the Baltimore authorities upon the members of the New York fire department, to whom is given the credit for the final checking of the flames. What is known as the financial district was practically destroyed. The Baltimore correspondent of the New York Times explains: "The financial district begins with about Lexington street on the north and extends from the court house, postoffice, and city hall on the east to German street on the south, some three blocks. On the west, Baltimore street bounds it, four blocks from the postoffice. Below this territory and down the hill lies, or did lie before the fire, the wholesale district, so much of that as extends from Liberty street to Jones Falls. Twelve blocks away was wiped out a district containing both the custom house and chamber of commerce. On the lower side of Pratt street the warehouses and lumber yards begin, and these within the same limits east and west were all burned to the ground."

**THE BALTIMORE AUTHORITIES DECLARED** a ten-day holiday and are making arrangements for a general extension of commercial and financial credit. The state militia is in charge of the police regulations. The best energies of the Baltimoreans are being exerted to the reconstruction of their magnificent city. It is said that a great problem confronts them in the matter of lumber supply. Many of the lumber yards were destroyed, and so in the work of reconstruction a vast amount of lumber must be shipped to the city. In spite of the terrible calamity that befell them, the people of Baltimore are displaying fine optimism, and are determined to make an unparalleled record in the reconstruction of a great city.

**THE FRIENDS OF SENATOR HANNA ARE** unable to longer conceal the fact that he is a very sick man. He has typhoid fever together with a number of complications. Several days ago a bulletin was sent very generally throughout the country to the effect that Senator Hanna was dead, and for several hours in many places it was accepted for the truth. His physicians now issue bulletins regularly, and, while they hold out considerable hope and, in fact, pretend not to regard the senator's illness as being very serious, it is not difficult for newspaper readers to conclude that the Ohio senator is engaged in a desperate battle for his life.

**GOTTLIEB A. LUIKART, PRESIDENT OF** the Citizens' National bank at Norfolk, Neb., died at his home Saturday, February 6. The funeral took place at Norfolk February 8 under the immediate auspices of Masonic organizations, a number of other fraternal societies to which Mr. Luikart belonged being represented on this sad occasion. Mr. Luikart was one of the best known democrats in Nebraska. He was devoted to democratic principles and a faithful worker for democratic victory. Referring to this good man the Omaha World-Herald says: "Epitaphs do not always tell the truth. But it may be said that among those who knew G. A. Luikart well, there would be none to question the accuracy of the tribute if, upon the marble slab that adorned this man's grave were written in paraphrase of Chalmers: 'He lived for something. He did good and left a monument of virtue that the storms of time can never destroy. He wrote his name in kindness, love and mercy on the hearts of hundreds with whom he came in contact year by year. At least, in the memory of those who,

knowing him well, loved him sincerely, his good name and his noble deeds will shine as the stars of heaven."

**DR. NICHOLAS SENN, THE FAMOUS SUR-**geon residing at Chicago, has offered his professional services to Japan free of charge. Speaking of his offer, Dr. Senn says: "I am holding myself in readiness to start instantly. I would like to take an ambulance corps from the United States. If some rich man or some benevolent society would give \$100,000 we could send over a full corps—two or three physicians, several nurses and orderlies. I have written Miss Clara Barton in regard to such a plan and am doing all I can to bring it about. But whether I succeed in that or not I shall go myself at my own expense if the Japanese government accepts my offer, for I think I could be of service behind the fighting lines. While in Japan I practically promised the officials that I would help them in case of war, and now that it has come I want to make good my pledge. Russia has no right in Korea and Japan will whip her terribly in the first few battles. In a long war, however, Japan might be worn out and need help from the outside."

**THE NOTES ADDRESSED BY SECRETARY** of State Hay to the governments of Great Britain, France and Germany, with respect to the eastern situation, are of the greatest importance; not only to eastern concerns, but also to the interests of the United States. Mr. Hay invites the powers named to join the United States in a declaration serving notice upon Russia and Japan that the war must be localized to Manchuria, and must not involve any other part of the Chinese empire. Many people doubt the wisdom of this government in taking the initiative in any of these eastern affairs, and some suspect that Mr. Hay's action on this occasion was prompted by British influences. Indeed, the Washington correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald says that the co-operation of Great Britain is already assured, and some other correspondents seem to entertain the opinion that that co-operation was assured in a very positive way long before Mr. Hay issued his notes. We are told that Germany takes very kindly to this proposition, and, while France has not formally made its position clear, it is not believed that France will stand in the way of the success of the Hay policy.

**SOME OF THOSE WHO SEEM TO BE IN** Mr. Hay's confidence say that he was prompted to issue these notes, not only because of the needs of China, but for the protection of the interests of the whole world. On this point the Washington correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald says: "Confidential information which he received some time ago showed that China was in a state of terror, that the Chinese court feared Russia under some pretext or other would seize Peking, and the presence of Russian troops there would be the signal for the immediate flight of the dowager empress, the young emperor and the court in general, to the interior, exactly as took place four years ago when the Boxer uprising occurred. With the flight of the Chinese court from the capital it was regarded as certain that massacres would take place in every part of the empire and that the great powers would be compelled to protect the lives of their subjects by sending armies into China. It is to avert this that Mr. Hay has suggested action on the part of the neutral powers. If this policy be carried out, the Chinese court will be impressed with the necessity of remaining in Peking and preserving a strictly neutral attitude."

**BUT THE SAME AUTHORITY ADMITS THAT** Mr. Hay's policy may have even more far-reaching effect. We are told that Mr. Hay's policy practically means a guaranty on the part of the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany to the neutrality and integrity of China; that China will be compelled to remain strictly neutral throughout the war, and as an offset to this neutrality the powers will not permit any invasion or territorial division of China outside of Manchuria, which, although nominally Chinese, is in effect Russian, and, of course, cannot be kept outside the sphere of military operation. This

correspondent adds: "The common action of the four powers named, if secured, will doubtless have a great effect upon what follows after the cessation of hostilities, because they will virtually take China under their protection. When the time comes to sign the treaty of peace between Russia and Japan the four powers will have to be consulted and will have some voice in the terms which the victorious nation may seek to impose upon the vanquished and which will naturally have vital effect upon the Chinese empire and its future. The question was raised by one of the powers interested if Russia should ignore the proposition of this joint action and attempt to enter Peking, or in any other way carry on military operations on Chinese soil outside of Manchuria, would the four powers be required to enforce their mandate? The reply was that the use of force was not contemplated, but that it was inconceivable that Russia would dare ignore the wishes of the four allied powers, or do anything but scrupulously comply with the terms of the edict issued by them jointly."

**AN INTERESTING RECITAL OF THE INCI-**dents leading up to the war between Japan and Russia is presented in a recent issue of the Chicago Record-Herald. It is pointed out by this writer that the trouble practically had its inception in 1894 when Japan and China fought for Korea. China had from time immemorial claimed a protectorate over the Hermit Kingdom, but in 1876, soon after the birth of modern Japan, the latter country obtained from China a formal recognition of Korean independence and surrendered the suzerain claims. In 1882 the Japanese legation at Seoul was attacked by a mob, and this was made the pretext for the importation of a small army from Japan. This invasion resulted in a protest from China, and the outcome was that a treaty was signed providing that both China and Japan should withdraw their troops from Korea and not send them back before official notification had been given to either power. A revolt in 1884 caused the Korean king to call on China for help, and Li Hung Chang, who was then in power, sent 2,000 men. Japan immediately hurried troops through the port of Chemulpo to Seoul, and demands for reforms were made. In the turmoil that ensued the Korean Queen Min was slain, and it was said at the time that she had been murdered by Japanese troops. The Japanese minister Otori seized the person of the king and then approached the Chinese government with two proposals: That China should recognize the mikado's plan of reforms for Korea and that Japan, in return would recognize the nominal suzerainty of the Peking government over the peninsula.

**IT WAS AT THIS INTERESTING POINT THAT** the hand of Russia was first noticeable, according to the writer in the Record-Herald. The czar demanded explanations as to the purposes of Japan, and the mikado's government replied that it had no designs on Korean territory. In answer Russia emphatically declared that she could not consent to any acquisition of territory by Japan. England, who also was unfriendly toward Japan, suggested a general intervention, but the powers hesitated and the tension increased. Meanwhile China was preparing for a conflict, and on July 20, 1894, sent 12,000 men to the Korean port of Asan. Then war was begun, resulting in a series of brilliant victories for the Japanese, and practically ending with the capture of Port Arthur fortress, November 20, 1894, and in the fall of New Chwang, the last Chinese stronghold, March 4, 1895. Then came the negotiations for peace and the more formidable appearance of Russia on the scene. Japan had demanded the whole of Manchuria, which is more than double the size of the Japanese empire, the island of Formosa the recognition of the independence of Korea as a sovereign state and an indemnity of about \$20,000,000.

**CHINA CALLED ON RUSSIA FOR AID AND** this time it was forthcoming with alacrity. The Record-Herald writer adds: "Germany and France also took the part of China and England advised Japan to yield to the powers. The result was that Japan had to be satisfied with an indemnity of \$20,000,000 and the island of Formosa,