

# CURRENT TOPICS

IN THE COMMONER of July 8, there appeared an article under the caption "Origin of 'Me Too, Platt.'" This article copied from the Pittsburgh Dispatch credited Miss Olive Elwood of Otsego county, New York, with being the author of "Me Too Platt" which has for twenty-three years been applied to Thomac C. Platt of New York. Mr. S. H. Newman of El Paso, Texas, writes to say: "I claim whatever credit may attach to the christening of this New Yorker the title that has for more than half a generation been recognized as his first, if not his strongest, claim to fame."

AT THE time Messrs. Conkling and Platt resigned from the United States senate, Mr. Newman was the editor of a semi-weekly newspaper published at Las Cruces, New Mexico, 44 miles north of El Paso. The name of this paper was "Thirty-four." Mr. Newman was engaged at that time in a law suit with a former partner in which the ownership of the paper was in question. After each issue of the paper, Mr. Newman was enjoined against the use of the name that, for the time being, appeared at the head of the paper, so for several weeks, each successive issue appeared under a different name. The issue of May 21, 1881, was widely known before and afterwards by its real name "Thirty-four" other names being as it has been said, assumed for each successive issue in order to evade court injunctions.

IN THE issue of May 21, 1881, the first issue after the receipt of the news of the resignations of Conkling and Platt, which resignations occurred May 16, Mr. Newman published in his paper an editorial under the headline "Abdication of Prince Roscoe." This editorial concluded as follows: "There is another man who is acting a kind of sub-secondary part in this matter, and his name is Platt. His letter of resignation following that of his lord and master, Prince Roscoe, reminds one of an old woman and little girl who sold huckleberries in the old Baltimore market. The voice of the old woman could be heard above the din, and yards away, calling out: 'Nice fresh huckleberries, ten cents a quart!' and, on approaching nearer, the subdued tones of the little girl could be just distinguished adding to the announcement of her companion and model, the pitiful, tremulous words, 'Me too!'"

MR. NEWMAN sends to the Commoner a copy of the newspaper referred to in which the facts appear as stated. He further says that the New York World and Sun were on his exchange list and one of these newspapers reproduced the editorial referred to. Then "Puck" took it up and came out with a cartoon of Conkling as a large mastiff with the name "Conkling" inscribed on his collar and a bit of ribbon tied to his tail upon which was inscribed the words "Me Too, Platt." Mr. Newman says: "This seemed to meet the public sense of the situation. The name stuck and 'Me Too, Platt' he has been to this day. As but four days elapsed between the announcement of the resignation and the issue of my paper, containing the article herein referred to, there is no possibility of my having gotten the idea from any eastern exchange, even had it been possible at that time to have received a New York paper in four days." It seems that Mr. Newman has fairly established his right to be known as the author of "Me Too, Platt."

WRITING in the August number of the Atlantic, George W. Alger, draws a contrast between the American and English methods of dealing with confidence men who swindle investors on a large scale. Referring to Mr. Alger's article, the Chicago Record-Herald says that "it will at least tend to revive discussion of the obvious inadequacy of the penalties that are meted out by our criminal courts." The Record-Herald adds: "In these days when the man who steals a door mat is more apt to serve a term in the penitentiary than the prominent 'promoter' who swindles hundreds in a fraudulent undertaking public interest is attracted to any appeal that may be presented for a more vigorous handling of modern 'business vampires.'"

REFERRING to the trust company closely associated with the American Ship Building swindle Mr. Alger further calls attention to the fact that the New York state bank examiner shows that the directors of this trust company made illegal and practically unsecured loans of enormous amounts and permitted the president to use his position and the money of stockholders and depositors "to gamble in floating a so-called trust of the most flagrantly fraudulent character." Mr. Alger further calls attention to the fact that the greatest bank wrecker in American criminal history now lives undisturbed in New York. He never served a day in jail for defalcation of six million dollars. If the friends or relatives of a man who steals in this country repay the amount of the theft it is quite often the end of the whole matter. It is also interesting to learn that while Whittaker Wright, the notorious promoter in London was sentenced to seven years in prison, under the New York law the penalty would have been one year's imprisonment or a \$500 fine.

AS TO the effort being made to devise some plan whereby improvements would be obtained in the matter of railway accidents on the railways of the United Kingdom, Sir Herbert Jekyll, chief of the railway department of the London Board of Trade says that there is small promise of results. A writer in the Chicago Record-Herald makes an interesting comparison between the railroad accidents in the United Kingdom and the railroad accidents in this country. This writer says: "During 1903 the railways of the United Kingdom killed 1,159 people and injured 6,787. Out of this large number, however, only 34 were killed in tram accidents and 919 injured. Of the killed 25 were passengers and 9 were employes, and of the injured 769 were passengers, and 146 were employes. There was a total of 235 train accidents, collisions and derailments on a train mileage of 393,703,000 miles. The British report states that the number of passengers killed was at the ratio of one in every 47,793,320 passenger journeys, and the passengers injured were at the ratio of one in every 1,540,745 passenger journeys. This was exclusive of journeys made by season ticket holders. Like the American roads, the British roads made a worse record in 1903 than in 1902, for during the latter year they killed at the ratio of one passenger in every 138,036,454 passenger journeys and injured one in every 1,623,250."

AS A MORE satisfactory basis for comparison with accidents on American railroads, the Record-Herald suggests the ratio of killed and injured to the number of passengers carried one mile, and adds: "During the year ended June 30, 1903, the American railways killed 164 passengers in train accidents and injured 4,424. The number of employes killed in train accidents was 895 and the injured were 6,440, making the total killed in train accidents 1,059 and the total injured 10,864. Taking the basis of passenger journeys for comparison and the results are not in favor of the American railways. During the year mentioned the railroads here carried a total of 649,878,505 passengers, and the number killed, therefore, was at the ratio of one in every 4,000,000 passenger journeys, approximately. The number injured was at the ratio of one in every 100,000 passenger journeys, approximately. Comparisons, however, will not assist either the managements of railroads here or in the United Kingdom to make improvements in operating methods. It may be true that so long as excessively fast schedules are maintained and the density of traffic constantly increases the British record represents, approximately, perfection in train operation. It is to be hoped, however, that such is not the fact, and, at any rate, American managements agree that there is ample room for improvement here."

WILLIAM PITT KELLOGG, well known as an old-time republican politician, suggests that there is some resemblance between the presidential situation in 1904 and that of 1892, so far as concerns the republican candidate. Mr. Kellogg explains: "You will remember that Harrison secured the nomination in opposition to the combined efforts of the leaders of his party. President

Roosevelt has nominated himself, contrary to the desires of all of the old guard who have struggled in season and out to build up the party organization. In addition to President Roosevelt's unpopularity with the party leaders, there is much uncertainty about the policy he is restless under his administration of public affairs, and conservative business interests would welcome a change such as they believe would come with the election of Judge Parker."

THE tune "Dixie" is popular everywhere and this fact was explained recently by a southerner, who, speaking to a reporter for the New York World, said: "There's something about that bundle of notes different from any tune that was ever written in the history of music. An Englishman applauds 'God Save the King;' a Frenchman goes wild over the 'Marsellaise;' the Germans respond to 'Die Wacht Am Rhein,' and the good American of all parts of the country cheers 'The Star Spangled Banner.' But everybody applauds 'Dixie.' Half of them, too, when they don't know anything about it being southern. No, it is something infectious, this tune; there is in it that mystic something that sets the blood tingling and makes you dance in spite of yourself. Let a restaurant full of people be as dull as a Quaker meeting, and when the band strikes up 'Dixie' they're off. The tune makes people applaud, and they don't do it to make others think they are southerners, either. It's the tune, that's all."

A RADIUM clock, which is expected to keep time indefinitely, has been constructed by Harrison Martindale of England, and is described by the Scientific American. This clock, according to the American, comprises a small tube in which is placed a minute quantity of radium supported in an exhausted glass vessel by a quartz rod. To the lower end of this wonderful little tube which is colored violet with the action of the radium, an electroscope formed by two long leaves or strips of silver is attached. A charge of electricity in which there are no beta rays is transmitted through the activity of the radium into the leaves, and the latter thereby expand until they touch the sides of the vessel, connected to earth by wires, which instantly conduct the electric charge, and the leaves fall together. This very simple operation is repeated incessantly every two minutes until the radium is exhausted, which in this instance it is computed will occupy thirty thousand years.

ROBERT E. PATTISON, who died at his home in Philadelphia, August 1, was a delegate at large to the national democratic convention at St. Louis, where he served as a member of the resolutions committee. Governor Pattison's friends say that the strain of the week's work told upon him and that his death was due to acute pneumonia complicated by an affection of the heart. A Philadelphia correspondent says: "Governor Pattison was born at Quantico, Somerset county, Md., Dec. 8, 1850. His father was a Methodist preacher who held prominent pastorates in Philadelphia many years. His mother was a granddaughter of Colonel Thomas Woolford, of a famous revolutionary line. Mr. Pattison was graduated in the law in 1872, and three years later entered politics as a candidate for clerk of the courts in Philadelphia. He was defeated, and two years later, in 1877, was defeated for auditor general of the state. The same year, however, he was elected comptroller of Philadelphia, and made so good an impression in the reform of a hitherto corruptly administered office that in 1882 he was made his party's candidate for the office of governor, to which he was elected on his record. At the end of his term the constitution not permitting the chief executive to succeed himself, he retired to become president of the Chestnut Street National bank, declining the office of auditor of the treasury, offered him by President Cleveland. Soon thereafter he accepted the position of commissioner of the Pacific railroads, and in course of that service wrote one of the strongest papers extant concerning the relations of the railways to the government. In 1890 Governor Pattison was nominated for governor the second time, and again