

CURRENT TOPICS

A RESIDENT of Castle Valley, Pa., has a vine, that, according to the Portland Oregonian, shows itself to have, if not a brain a substitute of equal value. The Oregonian says: "This vine, a young one, grew in a clay pot. A stick stood in the middle of the pot and the vine curled up it. It was about two feet in height; in length, uncurled, it would have measured four feet. Usually the vine was placed in a south window every morning, where it absorbed all day the benefit of the sun's rays. It happened, however, through an oversight, that one afternoon a shutter shaded half the window and the vine was set in the shutter's shadow. A foot away was the sunlight, warm, glittering, life-giving, but where the plant stood there was nothing but gloom. During the four days the vine stood in the shadow with the sunlight near it it did something that proved it to have a faculty akin to intelligence. It uncurled itself from its supporting stick, and, like a living thing, it crawled over the window ledge to the sun. This vine, to be sure, did not uncurl itself and crawl with the rapid movements of a snake. Its movements were, indeed, so slow as to be imperceptible. Nevertheless, looking about, it overcame every obstacle and finally it lay basking in the sun."

DR. HUGO GANZ, writing in the Neuer-Montagos-Blatt of Berlin, throws light in an interesting way on the assassination of M. Plehve, the Russian minister of the interior. Dr. Ganz says: "Rarely has a Russian minister been so universally hated. Not only did Finns, Poles and Jews abominate him, but even the staunchest Moscovites disliked him intensely, distrusted him and cast it up to his face that he was not a Russian. Dr. Ganz had rare opportunities for study and observation, and his conclusions, though not very favorable to his subject, are, nevertheless, apparently impartial. Plehve began his career as a spy. In 1880 it happened that thirty-five Polish socialists, among them twenty Russians, were arraigned in court for revolutionary propaganda in Cracow, Galicia. It was noticed that each prisoner was led through a certain door on his way out, a proceeding which the spectators did not quite understand. Upon close observation, however, it was noticed that beside an Austrian officer there stood a Russian spy, who was there to spot "his" men. That spy was Plehve, and, although at that time already occupying the position of procureur of Warsaw, he had not hesitated in demeaning himself to such low espionage. Plehve was, during his forty years of service, always associated with the secret police, and so saturated did he become with the spying system that when he got into power he carried on the internal government of Russia by one gigantic system of espionage. Dr. Ganz seeks thus to partially justify Plehve's character by explaining that he had spent his entire life in contact with spies and criminals, which had naturally distorted his normal view of things."

PLEHVE'S character, according to Dr. Ganz, presented many interesting phases to the student of human nature. He was not avaricious, he was not very rich. Not even his bitterest enemies would accuse him of ever having accepted a bribe. What stimulated him in his zeal for the government was an intense, morbid craving for power. This was the keystone to his character—the ambition of controlling the destinies of 120,000,000 men. His method of keeping the upper hand over the czar was well known. He would always keep about his person revolutionary manifestoes and proclamations, and, when the occasion required it, he would intimidate the czar into acquiescence. Or, again, by means of his spies, he would raise "fake" riots and conspiracies, and then "discover" them. A curious instance of what he would regard as a conspiracy was shown a few months ago, when the students of the university of Warsaw refused in a body to raise a fund for the war in the east at the request of a committee of public spirited citizens. Plehve ordered the students arrested and tried for high treason, but, as even the members of the committee refused to appear against the students on such a preposterous charge, the case fell through. Plehve controlled all publications through the censorship.

On one occasion a metropolitan paper was suppressed for several months because it had printed a revolutionary song. But the editor was informed by a petty official that the ban would be lifted if he should write to the minister of the interior to the effect that a Jew had sent the poem in. The story, gravely related by Dr. Ganz, is almost humorous in its malignity. Dr. Ganz does not hesitate also in relating the fiendish story that the assassination of Alexander II was not an accident, happening as it did just about the time that the constitution was to be granted through the agency of Loris Melikoff; Plehve was a type of man that could not flourish in the open light of a constitutional government, and the story is current among Russian patriots that Plehve, then a subordinate of Melikoff's, informed the revolutionists of the exact whereabouts of the czar.

PLEHVE was raised by a family of distinguished Poles whom he repaid later by betraying them to the infamous Muravieff. Their fate was not an enviable one. He was in nowise a brilliant man; he was a plain "chinovnik" (civil official) who pushed himself higher and higher till he reached the goal of his ambition. Because everyone tacitly doubted his loyalty to the czar and his fidelity to the Holy Greek Catholic church, he outdid himself in zeal for Russia, and in fanatical adherence to the church. That he was the czar's right-hand man there can be no doubt, and that there will be difficulty for him in finding another such strong-charactered adviser there also can be little doubt. It is rather ironical to note that the government of Russia spent \$800,000 annually in protecting the person of Plehve. Dr. Ganz concludes his article with the relation of how he put the following question to a great Russian nobleman: "Would it be better for Russia if Plehve were to be removed?" The answer was that all true Russians would rejoice in his removal, but that there were many to take his place. The condition of affairs called forth the peculiar kind of men it needed, he said; the able, honest men of Russia would accept ministerial portfolios only when the system of affairs would be changed. "A government of gallows needs a hangman."

REFERRING to the report made by Commissioner Wright leading to the increased costs of living and the alleged advance of wages of the laboring classes, a reader of the Chicago Record-Herald writes to that newspaper to say: "The report, if correctly quoted, is a bald misrepresentation of facts. Commissioner Wright selects 2,567 families with an annual income of \$827, making them representative of the laboring class of this country. He could pick 2,500 families which have a better income than that. But the laboring man, the wage-earner, the man who works by the day or hour, be he skilled or unskilled, knows that the average income of those who are working full time does not exceed \$500 per year at a liberal estimate, and that if the gross income of all the wage-earners were equally divided among all the men of their class who are willing and able to work, each would receive less than \$1 per day. The laboring man knows further that the general tendency is toward a reduction of wages all along the line. That report, if used as a campaign document as suggested, would prove a boomerang to its author."

BISHOP FELLOWS of the Episcopal church, delivered a sermon in Chicago recently, in which he said: "Miss Jane Addams in a recent interview is reported as giving an opinion that the laboring community holds the ministers as well as the lawyers to be on the side of the so-called capitalistic class. I can speak with sufficient authority to say that the great majority of the ministry, both in the Protestant and Catholic communion, have a profound sympathy with the workingmen of all classes. They can not, as in the stock yards strike, set themselves up as judges and declare who is right and who is wrong. 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.' It is a palpable violation of these principles on the part of employers who have been amassing millions through the toll of their fellow men to pay men having wives and families to support an average of \$5 or \$7 a

week the year round. I found this to be the case in a personal investigation of several strikers, if their statements were to be relied on. It is a serious impairment of the American home, and an assault upon the inalienable rights of childhood to force the wife and children of tender age to work with the husband and father. The employer must live, but he must let live or be untrue to God and man. The employed must live, but if for any reason he will not work he must let the men live who will work. I know fully the value of unionism. It is the very salvation of labor. Let the workingmen live, I say to every employer. Pay him enough to have a home worthy of the name. It is not Christ's political economy to buy human flesh and blood in the lowest labor market and sell its products in the highest demand market. That is the devil's political economy, no matter who may teach or practice it."

RUSSIA paid Count Leo Tolstoy the compliment of an official answer to his indictment of the war. A correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald says this reply was given out by the minister of the interior at St. Petersburg, and its text has just arrived in America. The reply among other indictments says: "Leo Tolstoy is a force tending, fortunately without success, to disintegrate the Russian empire. It was just on such disintegrating internal forces that the Japanese calculated when they rushed headlong into an unequal conflict with the Russian Colossus."

BISHOP HENRY C. POTTER has been severely criticized because he officiated at the opening ceremonies of the Subway Tavern in New York. Replying to his critics, the bishop says: "I have publicly stated that I never dreamed of regarding the present saloon as either a blessing or a necessity, and no word of mine, whether uttered recently or at any other time, warrants any such inference. I have simply regarded it as an inevitable and necessary evil until it is displaced by something better. My controversy is simply with those who have no other aim in dealing with a mischievous institution than to suppress it, whereas the only hope of reform here is in displacement by substitution."

THE "inordinate and ostentatious" display of wines in our public and private entertainments is in Bishop Potter's opinion "a species of national barbarism, if not an illustration of national vulgarity. The bishop adds: "Treating customs of clubrooms are the hideous 'freemasonry' of drink, as some one has not too strongly described it, wherein the symbol of friendship consists in calling for what one does not want and drinking when one is not thirsty. This is a usage in which barbarism and vulgarity are fitly married. We can disown such abuses and rebuke them by our refusal to share in them. We can set at our own tables an example of moderation such as shall not be mistaken or misunderstood. We can reward sobriety in our dependents and deal sternly with the absence of it, whether in other people or ourselves. When we came to deal with those among whom intemperance most widely and largely obtains we can do something to protect them from the harpies who prey upon their labor and whose unlicensed gains are a curse and a dishonor to the community that permits them. One kind of man goes to a saloon to get an intoxicant and for no other reason. Another goes there for any one of a half dozen purposes—refreshment, amusement, information, physical ease, business appointment or mere change—for which last you, my brother, go next door to a club which all sensible people regard as wholly innocent. Now, then, the saloonkeeper has been keeping these different wants together. The wisdom of those who antagonize him will be in separating them."

THE Canadian authorities declare that they intend to lash out of Canada, the American Tobacco company trust, which is just now stamping out competition in Canada. The Ottawa correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald says that a bill has passed the house of commons and the senate and is now awaiting the royal assent. As soon as this assent has been given, it is said.