

CURRENT TOPICS

IT SEEMS to be the general opinion that the fall of Port Arthur will not by any means terminate the war between Russian and Japan. A Berlin cablegram carried by the Associated Press says: "The highest diplomatic opinion here is that the surrender of Port Arthur makes it impossible for any government friendly to Russia to advise peace or to unite with any other government for mediation. The feeling at the Russian court, it is asserted here, is so absolutely for continuing the war that probably not one person who has access to the emperor of Russia could be found who, even privately, favors Russia accepting defeat. German military opinion, while acknowledging the large moral effect of the fall of Port Arthur, inspiring the Japanese and depressing the Russians, regards it as only an incident and as having little relation to the immense field operations that will begin in the spring. General Kouroupatkin, it is asserted in official circles, has 600,000 troops east of Balkal, of which more than 400,000 are already at Mukden. It is impossible, the German military men aver, for the Russians to cease fighting with that army in being, which by spring, they add, is likely to number all told 700,000 men. The Japanese, being fully informed of Russia's preparations, are putting forth every resource to surpass them. Field operations of a magnitude not before seen in the war it is believed will begin in a few weeks."

THE terrors and the pathos of war are shown in two reports. General Nogi describes the situation at Port Arthur in this way: "Order is maintained at Port Arthur by the officers. The people are quiet. Our minute investigation was not finished until Tuesday night. The total number of inhabitants is about 35,000, of whom 25,000 are soldiers or sailors. The total number of sick or wounded is 20,000. Common provisions and bread are plentiful, but there is a scarcity of meat and vegetables. There are no medical supplies at Port Arthur. The Japanese are strenuously succoring the people. The capitulation committees are pushing their respective works." General Stoessel, after making his gallant fight, wired the czar of Russia as follows: "We shall be obliged to capitulate, but everything is in the hands of God. We have suffered fearful losses. Great sovereign, pardon us. We have done everything humanly possible. Judge us, but be merciful. Nearly eleven months of uninterrupted struggles have exhausted us. Only one-quarter of the garrison is alive, and of this number the majority are sick and, being obliged to act in the defensive without even short intervals for repose, are worn to shadows."

THE defense of Port Arthur made by General Stoessel has commanded the admiration of the military world. Lord Roberts, speaking to a London correspondent, said: "It has been a magnificent defence. What a splendid soldier he is to be sure, how all the world must admire him." Other British soldiers spoke enthusiastically of the fine stand Stoessel made and General Miles, writing to the New York World, says: "The defense made by the Russians was the most sublime in history. There is nothing since the siege of Troy to which it can be compared. No garrison ever was subjected to such tremendous destructive offense night and day from land batteries and ships of war, as well as by cunningly placed mines by skilled engineers. In spite of the terrible havoc wrought by heavy guns and mines charged with the most powerful explosives known to man, the gallant garrison under General Stoessel has maintained its position nearly a year."

REFERRING to the probable effects of the fall of Port Arthur General Miles says: "The main effect of the surrender is that it promises the Japanese fleet time to prepare for the reception of the Russian Baltic squadrons now on the way to the Far East. At the same time it assures to Japan a strong base on the mainland. While this loss and capture is not in any essential decisive, as the results have for some considerable time been expected, it is, however, a severe blow to the Russian arms. It not only deprives Russian of a port of refuge in that part of the world, but it wrests from her a most important winter harbor."

THE estimated loss at Port Arthur is 11,000 men. The loss in killed, wounded and missing during three days at Gettysburg was 43,339. The New York World says that the following figures roughly computed from press reports and occasional official reports will give some idea of the frightful loss of life on land and sea:

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| Russia had in Port Arthur..... | 40,000 |
| Transferred from war vessels for shore duty | 16,000 |
| Able-bodied men on duty when Port surrendered | 5,000 |
| In hospitals | 15,000 |
| Unaccounted for | 36,000 |
| Japanese operating against Port Arthur.... | 200,000 |
| Estimated Japanese losses at Port Arthur.. | 75,000 |
| Russian naval losses around Port Arthur... | 4,000 |
| Jap. losses, including sinking of transports | 5,000 |

THE sieges famous in the world's history are presented by the New York World as follows: Troy, seventh century B. C.; 10 years; result, fell; attackers, Greeks; defenders, Trojans. Rhodes, 304 B. C.; lasted 1 year; result, fell; attackers, Greeks; defenders, Rhodians. Constantinople, 1453; 53 days; result, fell; attackers, Turks; defenders, Greeks. Gibraltar, 1779-83; lasted about 3 years; result, held out; attackers, Spanish and French; defenders, English. Genoa, 1800; lasted 2 months; result, fell; attackers, Austrians; defenders, French. Saragossa, 1808-9; lasted 4 months; result, fell; attackers, French; defenders, Spanish. Antwerp, 1832; lasted 19 days; result, fell; attackers, French; defenders, Dutch. Sebastopol, 1854-55; lasted 11 months; result, fell; attackers, English and French; defenders, Russians. Delhi, 1857; lasted 4 months; result, fell; attackers, English; defenders, Sepoys. Vicksburg, 1862-63; lasted 13 months; result, fell; attackers, union army; defenders, confederates. Metz, 1870; lasted 2 months; result, fell; attackers, Germans; defenders, French. Strasburg, 1870; lasted 1 month; result, fell; attackers, Germans; defenders, French. Paris, 1870-71; lasted 4 months; result, fell; attackers, Germans; defenders, French. Khartoum, 1884; lasted almost a year; result, fell; attackers, Mahdi's; defenders, English and Egyptians."

THE Nebraska legislature met and organized Tuesday, Jan. 6. George L. Rouse was elected speaker of the house and William Jennings president pro tem of the senate. In the caucus preliminary to the organization a desperate fight took place between the Nebraska railroads. The Union Pacific and the Elkhorn championed the candidacy of Mr. Douglas of Rock county. The Burlington railroad organized the opposition and brought about the nomination of Mr. Rouse. It seems to be generally agreed that in the senate the organization is controlled by the Union Pacific and Elkhorn railroads while the entire house is controlled by the Burlington. The entire contest was one between two rival railroad factions and no other element seems to be seriously considered.

AUSTRALIA is a continent without an orphanage, according to a writer in the Chicago News. The News says: "Each waif is taken to a receiving house where it is cared for till a country home is found. The local volunteer societies canvass their neighborhoods and send to the children's committee the names of any families they have found where children may be placed. The children's committee selects the home which it judges is best adapted to the development of the child in question. No child is placed in a family so poor that the child might suffer. The foster-parent receives a sum averaging \$1.25 per week for the care of the child and for proper clothing. When of school age the child must be sent to school. The local volunteer committee looks after its care and culture and zealous neighbors often assist in watching the growth and education of these happy children. When the child is fourteen years old he begins to work. His earnings are placed in the postal savings bank, and at the age of seventeen or eighteen he goes out into the world independent. Thus the state at an expense of about \$60 a year has raised a man or woman to contribute to its

wealth and prevented the manufacture of a criminal and the expense of courts, prisons and reformatories."

INTERESTING railroad statistics are presented by a writer in the Kansas City Journal. According to these statistics, the number of tons of freight carried one mile was 90,522,000,000 in 1893, and 171,290,000,000 in 1903, the increase in ten years being 80,768,000,000 tons, or close to 90 per cent. The average rate received per ton per mile in 1893 was .893 cent; in 1903 it was .781 cent; showing an average reduction per ton per mile of .112 cent, or a little over a mill per mile, amounting to a total rate reduction of over \$171,000,000. The gross income of American railroads in 1903 was \$1,998,000,000; operating expenses, \$1,316,000,000; net earnings, \$682,000,000; fixed charges, \$560,000,000; leaving \$122,000,000 available for dividends.

COMMENTING upon the proposition that nearly \$120,000,000 be appropriated for the maintenance and extension of the navy during the ensuing fiscal year, Samuel D. Cloak, writing in the New York World, says: "Is such an expenditure necessary? Is it not true that a wise government, like a wise man, will spend its money where it will do the most good? Is there any need of rushing ahead and adding ship to ship without limit? Whence comes the threat of war? The armament of a republic should consist in large part of the intelligence and wisdom of its citizens. How much do the uneducated negroes of the South add to the strength of the nation? Is there no call for the enlightenment, not only for their own good, but for the benefit of the whole people? To be sure, the federal government has a commissioner of education, William T. Harris, but how many people have ever heard of him. His services are reckoned so valuable that he is paid \$3,500 a year—the salary of a captain in the navy or of a new-made colonel in the army. Let us have millions for education and as few cents as possible as tribute to war."

I. S. VANN, of Leesburg, Fla., is curious to know "why the northern people misrepresent the motives of the southerners." Referring to the proposed reduction of representation of the southern states in Congress, Mr. Vann, writing in the New York World, says: "In Florida we have no educational test even. We use the Australian ballot system, and any one having sense enough to mark his ballot properly, which consists of placing an X before the name of the voter's choice, can vote. In addition the law requires any man between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five years to pay a poll-tax of \$1 per year, said tax going to the public school fund of the state. Not a negro in a hundred pays his poll tax, and this disfranchises himself. Negroes in Florida do not pay as much as one one-thousandth of the taxes for schools, while they receive one-fourth the total school disbursements. You will readily see that we have a very simple method of voting, and also pay the expenses of educating the negroes how to vote."

POSTMASTER General Wynne was once a newspaper correspondent at the capitol city. A good story concerning Mr. Wynne is going the rounds. It is related that President Roosevelt once asked Mr. Wynne: "How does it feel to attend a cabinet meeting after having spent so much time on the outside trying to find out what occurred at similar gatherings?" "Oh, it is not so much how he feels," said Secretary Wilson, "as how the rest of us feel." Wynne was Irish blood in his veins and ready wit at the tip of his tongue. He came back in this fashion: "That reminds me of what Secretary Foster said when he took charge of the treasury department. I was his private secretary. One day he remarked to me: 'Wynne, when I first came to Washington as a member of the cabinet I gazed in awe at the distinguished men who were my colleagues and wondered how I got there. After I had been in the cabinet three months I wondered how my colleagues got there.'"