

# CURRENT TOPICS

A REMARKABLE story is told by the LeSeur, Minn., correspondent for the Chicago Chronicle. This correspondent says that "Jacob Vardman, a farmer of Blake Township, in this county, and his wife and three small children were saved from death in a most remarkable manner recently. They were on their way home from town, driving a team of powerful horses, when the animals were frightened by a dog that ran out and barked at them. The horses sprang forward swiftly, and when Mr. Vardman attempted to rein them in both lines broke, leaving him without any control over the team. The animals realized this at once and ran at high speed down the road. The bridge is washed out at the Remison farm and the road fenced off at the first corner this side to make travelers drive around the other way, but the runaway team paid no attention to the barrier. They smashed through the light obstruction and rushed along, headed directly for the rocky thirty-foot gully that formerly had been spanned by the bridge."

MR. VARDMAN attempted to creep out on the tongue of the wagon, and thus to reach the horses' heads, but was prevented from doing so by his wife and the children, who clung to him so closely, in a paroxysm of fear, that he could not free himself from them. The gully was only 100 feet ahead, and the endangered family seemed to have but a few seconds more to live, when help came in a marvelous way. A storm was coming up and the heavens were shrouded in a black pall of clouds, rent now and again by vivid flashes of lightning, succeeded by deafening peals of thunder and just as the ragged chasm seemed yawning at their very feet a glittering lance of electricity shot down from the clouds and pierced the running horses through and through. They instantly fell dead, their bodies sliding along the road as far as their own momentum and that of the wagon would carry them, and came to a stop within less than ten feet of the edge of the ravine. Some persons who were not far away, and who were looking on at the time, ran at once to give what aid they could. They found the Vardmans all lying senseless in the wagon, but only prostrated by the shock, and all soon fully recovered. Mr. Vardman's horses were insured against lightning in a St. Paul insurance company, and the company has offered to pay him the loss, which is \$250, but he will not accept the money, holding that in so doing he would be showing the rankest ingratitude for the wonderful escape of himself and family.

IN AN EDITORIAL entitled "Sound at the Roots" the St. Louis Republic says: "Morals are just now possessing an almost sensational and dramatic interest for the American people. Popular discussion is getting down to the ethical question involved, in business, in politics, in government, with a peculiar and sharp zest which is eloquent of a strong, alert and at the same time fundamental moral sense. Whatever are the faults of conduct in various lines which the period exhibits, the country by its wholesome and keen interest for the moral consideration is demonstrating its possession of an essentially fine spirit and motive conducive of advancement in the right direction and upon which faith can not build too highly for future behavior." A distinguished Missourian who sends to The Commoner this clipping, says "Two years ago a man who talked thus was regarded as a sentimental dreamer."

THE distinction of being the oldest living thing, according to a writer in the Philadelphia Public Ledger, belongs to one of the giant trees. This writer says that many attempts to locate this tree and to determine its age have been made and he adds: "A century ago De Candolle found two yews—one at Fortingal, in Perthshire, and one at Hedsor, in Bucks—that were estimated to be respectively 2,500 and 3,240 years old. Both are still flourishing, and the older tree has a trunk twenty-seven feet in circumference. A gigantic baobab of Central America, with a trunk twenty-nine feet through is estimated to be not less than 5,150 years old. Mexican botanists believe they have now discovered a life-span even greater than this, and

from the annual rings a cypress of Chapultepec, whose trunk is 118 feet in circumference, is assigned an age of about 6,200 years."

FORTY-EIGHT of the fifty-one members of the Indian Territory statehood committee met recently at Muskogee. The committee agreed upon the name of "Sequoyah" for the new state. Referring to the selection of this name, a writer in the St. Louis Globe Democrat says: "Sequoyah was the Cherokees' Cadmus. He devised their alphabet, and in it a newspaper has been printed for many years. No other man of his race has conferred more credit on the Indian name, although many Indians have won a high reputation in war, oratory and statesmanship. Sequoyah deserves to have some permanent memorial erected to him, and a state which would carry his name would, of course, be a particularly high honor. But there is not the faintest chance to get the Indian Territory admitted separately. The leaders at the Muskogee convention of a few days ago knew this. Some of the rank and file of the Indian delegates may imagine that if they persist in their agitation for a state by themselves they will get it. But the chiefs of the Cherokees, the Greeks and the rest of the five tribes are aware that this separatist crusade is an iridescent dream. Congress would never admit the Indian Territory except as a part of the proposed state of Oklahoma. This has been shown so often and so plainly that no intelligent person in either of the twin territories has any doubt on this point."

BACON'S observation that a wife is an impediment to enterprises of mischief received support according to the New York Evening Post in the yearly record of the New York district attorney's office. The Post says: "Only 718 married men, as against 1,579 bachelors were found guilty of crime. Once you are married, Stevenson said, there is nothing left for you but to be good. 'You have wilfully introduced a witness into your life . . . And your witness is not only the judge, but the victim of your sins.' Most crooks are single: they may play confidence games on their own sex, but not on the other. (Even in bigamy the ratio of female to male offenders is 1 to 4, whereas, in the total, all kinds included, it is only 1 to 13.) Burglary is peculiarly the occupation of men who have not domesticated the Recording Angel. In this county the record was 280 single, seventy-seven married. Under other heads the account stood: Stealing, 828 to 303; rape, 16 to 8; murder, etc., 20 to 14. Strange to relate, the opposite holds true of women. The married were the chief offenders! The tables show six to nothing in favor of the spinsters, as to abduction; 35 to 25 as to stealing; 2 to 1 as to manslaughter; 4 to 1 as to forgery. A husband and child seem to have been no hostage to fortune, nor any adequate means of discipline."

MR. ROOSEVELT'S remarks at Chautauqua, N. Y., have attracted more than ordinary attention. The New York Evening Post says that Mr. Roosevelt's remarks on that occasion show that he is not nearly so sure of his ground as formerly. The Post adds: "Mr. Roosevelt betrays a nervousness and irritability on the subject, quite new to him. No longer is he for the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill to fix rates. All that he asks now is power to 'remedy the abuses in connection with railway transportation.' Not yet, it appears, has he looked to see if existing law does not furnish adequate power, provided that it were used. And how, after having refused to allow his chosen investigators to prosecute Paul Morton, can the president rage, as he does, against those rich men who knowingly violate the law? He may be sure that the Morton case will be thrown in his teeth many times at Washington next winter. How unconsciously Mr. Roosevelt drops into the language of a benevolent autocrat, is seen again and again in this speech. He says that it is 'impossible' for him longer to show 'leniency' to offenders against the anti-trust laws. But that is the tone of a gracious monarch. A constitutional president has no business to be either lenient or merciless; his sole duty is to enforce

the law. And what could be more futile than the president's begging the corporations to acquiesce in the 'mild kind of governmental control' he proposes, lest some agitator come to power and deal with them in a far more 'drastic' manner? Sensible men will consider his proposals on their merits; as they will those of the wilder confiscator when he turns up."

M. DE MARTENS one of the Russian delegates declared, during the peace conference, there was no precedent in history where a country whose territory was not occupied in whole or any part by the enemy had paid war tribute upon the conclusion of peace. He said: "Should Russia consent to pay tribute to Japan in any form, it would be her political death. The powers would understand that she accepted the proposition of President Roosevelt, not because she was desirous of an honorable peace, but because her power had been annihilated and she recognized that it was impossible for her to continue the war. It would mean a public confession that Russia is at Portsmouth helplessly kneeling before Japan, imploring peace, and ready to accept any terms imposed. No one will seriously contend that the Muscovite empire is in any such position."

MANY interesting historical examples were given by M. de Martens. He pointed out that in 1807 when Napoleon imposed the peace of Tilsit, French troops occupied practically all of Prussia, and the Prussian royal family had fled to Russian soil. France could dictate terms. She exacted a war indemnity of \$3,000,000 and garrisoned several Prussian towns with French troops at the expense of Prussia as a guarantee of payment. She required that the Prussian army should be reduced to 40,000 men. In 1815, when Napoleon was annihilated at Waterloo, after the famous "100 days," and the second treaty of Paris was concluded, the allied powers occupying Paris, as the Prussians did later, in 1870, imposed, in addition to other conditions, a war indemnity of \$500,000,000, to be paid in five years, during which time the allied troops were to hold a portion of French territory. That sum, however, was considerably reduced by Wellington at Aix-la-Chapelle, and France completed the payment of the indemnity in three years. The largest war indemnity ever exacted was imposed by Prince Bismarck, upon France, in 1870. It amounted to \$1,000,000,000. But Napoleon III had fallen. Gambetta was powerless. Prussia was at Paris. The third republic succeeded in liquidating the indemnity in two years, while, according to the treaty, she had five years' time in which to pay.

IN OTHER CASES where even a portion of the territory of the fated country was occupied, M. de Martens said that no indemnity was exacted or even asked. For instance Russia in 1856 was not asked to pay tribute. Neither did Austria in 1859, after having been defeated by the Franco-Piedmontese and having lost Lombardy, or in 1866, after having been beaten by Prussia, pay an indemnity. Denmark in 1864 lost Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia, but paid nothing. "A new precedent was made by America," added M. de Martens, "in her war with Spain. Although victorious and in a position to claim indemnity, she ended the war on principle and actually paid \$20,000,000 to the Madrid government for the Philippine islands." Independent of all these considerations, M. de Martens said, Russia's objection to the payment of an indemnity, under no matter what form, comes from the fact that in all her history she never paid a cent in tribute to a foreign power, not even during the time of her worst defeats under Peter the Great, when a large portion of the country was in the hands of the invaders.

AT THE MEETING of the Grange held recently at East Plymouth, Ohio, resolutions introduced by L. W. Stevenson were adopted as follows: "Whereas we have been having bank failures for the past forty years or longer, and our legislatures have taken no steps to protect the people. Of late they are getting so frequent