

CURRENT TOPICS

THE LONDON correspondent for the Philadelphia Public Ledger sent to his paper a cablegram, from which the following extract is taken: "William J. Bryan's state of mind with respect to those who criticize his observations touching the democratic platforms of 1896 and 1900 was clearly manifested in remarks he made just before leaving London. About the recent editorial expressions regarding him in the New York Times he said: 'The advice of the New York Times accords well with the sentiments of many of my critics who advise me to abandon my convictions for the sake of securing popularity. If I have any standing among my fellow countrymen it is because my convictions are not prepared to suit. You have doubtless heard the story of the American orator who made an impassioned speech which thrilled his hearers and then remarked: "These, gentlemen, are my convictions. If they are not satisfactory they can be changed to suit." While I welcome criticism and suggestions, it is impossible to renounce or recant for the purpose of gaining the support of any one. The six million democrats who supported me for president can not be expected to grovel in the dust in order to gain accessions to their ranks. It is a long time before the next national convention. If, when the nomination time comes, it is found that there is a democrat better suited to the situation than I am there will be no protest on my part. There are other things in life beside officeholding. I can, perhaps, be of greater service to my country out of office than as president. While I respect the New York Times, I can not blindly follow its leadership.'"

WILLIAM H. BELCHER, mayor of Paterson, N. J., disappeared from his home August 1, 1906. Investigations disclosed that Belcher was a defaulter. No trace of him could be found until July 30, 1906, when he surrendered to the Paterson authorities. He says he will accept whatever punishment the court sees fit to give him. The Paterson dispatches say: "Belcher knew for weeks that the detectives were closing in on him. They had recognized him in Boston two months ago, and had followed him to Bartlett, N. H., and points in the White Mountains, where he had gone in the hope of burying himself under an assumed name and recovering from the rheumatism which had crippled him since his flight from Paterson. He came from Bartlett to New York nearly a week ago, and apparently hesitated about giving himself up as he drew near the city where he had fallen from popularity to public condemnation. His boarding place was found out, and last night, feeling that further delay would lead to his arrest and prevent surrender, he determined to come to Paterson at once. It was shortly after midnight when he stepped off the train. Shunning the streets which led to the City hall where he had presided, he made his way to the jail by back streets so that he would not be recognized before reaching the prison. Morrison, the night keeper, opened the door, the former mayor walked in, told who he was, and asked to see Sheriff Bergen. Belcher told the sheriff that he had been wandering over the country and that he was glad to get back and take his punishment. 'I am sorry,' he said, 'not for myself, for I am wholly to blame, but for the poor persons who lost their money. I want to serve my time and then start over again.' Belcher had only \$17.40 and a gold watch in his possession. His clothing was worn, the trousers being badly frayed, and his hair and mustache were unkempt and bristling. He had aged greatly while a fugitive, and his hair, merely streaked with gray a year ago, was almost white."

MR. I. R. HERMAN, writing to the Denver News, says that the most important legislation enacted at the recent session of congress was the free alcohol bill. In Mr. Herman's opinion, by the enactment of that law, the high protective tariff maintained for the benefit of the few and at the expense of the many, received a death blow. Mr. Herman says: "Even so slight a change as the removal of ninety cents per gallon on alcohol, will revolutionize many industries and be of material interest to the country. Alcohol that now costs from \$2 to \$3 per gallon, if

allowed to remain on the free list, can be made to sell for fifteen to twenty cents per gallon as it does now in France. Think what this one item alone means—there is scarcely an art that alcohol does not enter into. It enters into your chemistry, into the coloring of your clothing, into paints of all kinds, and when it comes to using it for fuel it is a competitor of gasoline, and in that capacity its uses are limitless; it will be used to run automobiles and for cooking—for everything gasoline can be used for and many things it can not be used for, it is more harmless and healthful. But the great lesson that it will teach is the monumental fallacy that protection protects; that we need protection in order to stimulate infant industries—when as a matter of fact the removal of restriction from this one item will start a whole line of industries, which would otherwise be unknown. Only today a gentleman told me he intended to organize a company to engage in the manufacture of alcohol from the sawdust now going to waste in Colorado. When potatoes get cheap at Greeley they can turn them into alcohol; the same can be said of the fruit. At any rate they can convert all of their waste product to profitable use. Manufacturers have for years been trying to compete with Germany in the manufacture of aniline dyes, but the ninety-cent tax on alcohol shut out the manufacturer of dyes in the United States besides giving Germany a monopoly of the trade, thereby compelling us to pay trust prices for the manufactured article. The value of this one article consumed in the United States is from \$3,000,000 to \$5,000,000. The manufacturing of this article in the United States will employ American workmen, the pet hobby of the protectionists."

CONGRESS DID NOT remove the tax for the benefit of the Filipinos, but it imposed a new and odious tax. The New York Evening Post says: "A bill imposing a tax of 100 per cent upon the cheap grade of cottons which the Filipinos most use, was reported to the house on January 25; on February 9 it was called up and passed without a division; in the senate, it was sent to Lodge's Philippine committee, and on February 22—fitting day!—was reported out and passed without question or division. Now, who originated this legislation, and with what motive? It was not proposed by the Philippine government. It was stoutly opposed by our own collector of customs at Manila. But certain cotton manufacturing 'interests' of New York asked for it. On what ground? Frankly and brutally, on the ground that they could not compete with Englishmen in making this particular kind of cotton, as their looms were not adapted to making 'splits'; therefore the poor Filipino must be forbidden, practically, to buy them, and compelled to purchase the more costly American product. No meaner, greedier piece of legislation has ever been enacted, but congress passed it without debate, and the president signed it without a protest. Yet, we know, of course, that we are treating the Filipinos with a generosity unparalleled in the history of colonization—or of cant!"

DR. MARY E. WALKER, who was honored with a commission in the union army during the civil war, has tendered to the county of Oswego, N. Y., her beautiful country home with a tract of 230 acres, the same to be used as a place to maintain persons under twenty years of age convicted of violating the law. An Oswego dispatch to the New York World says: "All that Dr. Walker asks in return is that the county petition the legislature in January to give up its county jail and to legalize the method she suggests for reforming prisoners. Dr. Walker established a sanitarium for consumptives several years ago at 'Bunker Hill,' and treated all who applied and were without means to pay free of charge. She urged state institutions along similar lines and with their advent refused longer to treat charity patients, but offered to provide them transportation to the state institutions. 'My latest desire is again to try to better humanity,' said Dr. Walker in reference to her offer to give "Bunker Hill" to the county. 'Our penal institutions for old and young are, in my judgment, worthy of the days of the rack and the stake.

Two hundred years have modified these conditions somewhat, and now we take our offenders against law and society, enclose them behind thick walls and strong bars, leave them there working a little each day under taskmasters, until long years of sentence have expired, when they are turned out upon the world, if not mental and physical wrecks, more hardened and toughened than when they entered. It would be more humane to execute such criminals when they are first sentenced than to treat them as we do. I don't care how bad a boy is there is a lot of good in him if the right person will develop and bring it out. First it would be necessary to enclose "Bunker Hill" to insure confinement to the tract. Suitable buildings of ordinary construction for housing the prisoners would be necessary, but they should contain as much light and sunshine as possible. Each inmate should be compelled to work a certain number of hours each day in the fields, and the remainder of the day should be spent in class-rooms under the direction of the best teachers. Good clothes, neat linen, wholesome food, and plenty of it, should be furnished. The man should be taken when he enters and educated from the beginning to the end. If the county will accept my offer I will give \$10,000 in cash to help rebuild the place and pledge myself to raise as much more for the same purpose.' The value of the estate is \$20,000. The offer will be considered by the board of supervisors of the county at its annual session in November."

SAMUEL BYERLY is a clerk in the American Express company's offices in New York City. When Secretary of the Treasury Shaw called for bids for Panama canal bonds, Byerly sent in his bid. In the terms of the bond call, no deposit was required as an evidence of good faith, so all that was necessary for Byerly to do was to write his bid, address it to the secretary of the treasury, and spend two cents for a postage stamp. In the award Byerly was given the canal bonds, amounting to \$5,806,000, and was notified by the treasury department to have his money forthcoming August 1. He sold his option to a New York firm, reaping a profit thereon, amounting to \$20,000.

THE WAR DEPARTMENT in inviting bids for \$1,000,000 Philippine certificates, specifies that "each bid must be accompanied by a certified check of one per cent of the face value of the certificates bid for, as a guarantee, such check to be returned, after the making of the award, to the unsuccessful bidders." Referring to the war department's call for bids the Wall Street Journal says: "This is what ought to have been specified in the case of the Panama bonds. Such a rule shuts out 'postage stamp bidders,' irresponsible speculators having everything to gain and nothing to lose, and people who like to obtain a free advertisement at the expense of the government."

IT IS NOT AT ALL strange that the New York clerk engaged in the enterprise which netted him \$20,000. The wonder is that the precaution taken by the war department was not long ago adopted by the treasury department. Byerly is not the first enterprising man to profit in these bond transactions. In 1893 when Mr. Carlisle made one of his bond offers during the Cleveland administration, several persons adopted the Byerly plan. One man in Boston, as we remember it, cleared \$150,000, so it was reported in the newspaper dispatches of that day, by making a successful bid and then selling his option. This Boston man attracted a great deal of attention at the time because he made a trip to the national capital and made his negotiations in person. At the same time, a New York bootblack adopted the same plan, expended only a two cent stamp, clearing, so we were told by newspaper dispatches of the time, \$15,000.

HUDSON MAXIM, the inventor of smokeless powder, speaking to a representative of the Washington Post, said: "There will be need of guns just so long as there is a man left to covet the property of another man. We may have