

CURRENT TOPICS

THERE WILL BE sorrow in every land over the news carried in the following dispatch from Cleveland, Ohio: "Friends of Tom L. Johnson are worried concerning the condition of his health, which has grown worse. The former mayor is afflicted with liver and kidney trouble. Ever since his defeat for the mayoralty a year ago he has dodged the limelight of publicity and only on one occasion has he appeared in public. That was at the closing of the recent gubernatorial campaign here, when he appeared on the platform with Governor Harmon to urge his followers to support the democratic state ticket. Only his most intimate friends are allowed to see the former mayor and his friends despair of his recovery."

A WRITER IN THE Denver, News says: "Sunday, January 29, was the Chinese New Year, the first day of the year 4557. For 4557 years, according to their own records, China has had a continuous civilization, language, tradition and, to some extent, government. European scholars cast some doubts on this claim; but there is no doubt of a substantial basis of fact underlying it. What children the very mention of those figures makes us westerners feel! The last conquest of England dates back only eight and one-half centuries. The charter of English liberties is some 700 years old. The history of France is a thing of fourteen centuries, if you give it the most liberal possible interpretation. Even if you go back to the beginnings of western civilization in Greece, the first Olympiad was held in 776 B. C., and the Trojan war is supposed to date from about 1100 B. C. But the Chinese calendar harks back to 2646 B. C., a time when the pyramids were still new and shiny. Persistence of civilization like that argues a deal of character; and we believe the argument is exact. China has lived, not only because she had an unusually good chance to live, but also because she had a most unusual hold on social life. When the history of our own time is studied with the dispassionate exactness which we bring to the study of Rome, it may be the savants will decide China had quite as much to teach us at the beginning of the twentieth century as we had to teach her. Let us hope it will not be recorded that China was the better pupil."

MANY PEOPLE who hardly remembered the name of the vice president are paying considerable attention to that office since Mr. Sherman's vote carried ship subsidy through the senate. A writer in the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal says: "Now and then the vice president becomes more than a fifth wheel in our government. Last Thursday was such a time. Exercising his right to cast the deciding vote in case of a tie, Vice President Sherman saved the ship subsidy bill and set back the bill for the popular election of senators. Both votes were of importance. This does not often happen. Ordinarily so little is the vice president in evidence that his office is regarded as a political burying ground. Says Oliver's 'Alexander Hamilton': 'The vice president is not an active force in government. He is not even a member in this; but a sort of queen bee kept in reserve in a cell in case the acting monarch should die or be killed. His position is one of honor and dignity, but of no executive importance. He presides over the senate, and in earlier times was held to have a kind of reversionary interest in the presidency.' If such incidents as that of Friday occurred oftener it would make a difference in the selection of vice presidents. In general, under our system, a nominee for vice president never represents the views of the majority of his party nor of the president. It happens in this way. Each of the two chief parties is commonly divided into two elements, these being about as violently antagonistic to each other as to the opposing party. In every national convention these elements fight over the presidency. One element wins. Then to 'harmonize' the party the defeated faction is allowed to choose the vice president. In the last republican convention the element of the party led by Theodore Roosevelt named the presiden-

tial candidate. The element represented by Speaker Cannon and Senator Aldrich received the vice presidency as a consolation prize. Of course the most objectionable feature of this method is the chance it gives a minority faction of a party to inherit the presidency by the death of the elected president. Mr. Sherman's opportunity to cast a deciding vote on an important measure this week shows another direction in which the practice does not work to the accurate expression of popular needs or wishes. This inconsistency will vanish with the spread of direct primary methods of choosing delegates to national conventions and direct expressions as to presidential preference. The plan will naturally extend to the vice president, making both members of the ticket representative of majority opinion in the party."

A WASHINGTON dispatch to the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal says: "The success of Governor Woodrow Wilson in New Jersey in preventing the election of James Smith, Jr., to the United States senate, and bringing about the election of James E. Martine, who was the choice in the primary, has given Dr. Wilson additional support among the progressive democrats in congress. The New Jersey governor has many admirers among the progressive democrats at the capital. Their enthusiasm for him has been quickened by the performance with respect to the senatorship. A disposition has been manifest here to talk of Governor Wilson as learned in the theory of politics but short on the practice. His friends here say this sort of talk will be indulged in less than before in view of the way in which he has forced the election of Martine. That Governor Wilson will have to be reckoned with seriously as a presidential possibility is now clear. His boomers are expected to get extremely busy and to make capital of the Smith defeat. In the meantime, opponents of Wilson in congress are showing a disposition to say that Wilson has given Smith the 'double cross' and is not deserving of the presidential nomination and that if he is named he cannot carry New Jersey. An era of Wilson talk may now be looked for. Governor Judson Harmon has had the advantage of most of the talk and publicity thus far. But Governor Harmon is far from being nominated. Not only is he not going to have things his own way, but definite steps are being directed to head him off, and prevent him from getting hold of a lot of pledges. Some of Champ Clark's friends are busying themselves to this end. They do not propose to allow 'Uncle Jud' to go gumshoeing along and getting promises from prominent politicians in numerous states without trying to get some pledges themselves. At least, they want democrats to pause and consider and not let themselves get tied up to the Harmon chariot so they cannot disentangle themselves."

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, is the first bidder for the democratic national convention of 1912. A Washington dispatch to the Courier-Journal says: "Louisville for the democratic national convention of 1912. The plan was suggested to Prospective Speaker Champ Clark today, and he is little less than enthusiastic about it. 'It is a first-rate idea,' said the next speaker. 'Going to Louisville will be like going home. All the Missourians are kin to the Kentuckians,' said Mr. Clark, 'and I would be glad to see the Kentucky metropolis get the convention. It is centrally located and easily reached and I believe its hotels would accommodate the crowds.' It was suggested to Mr. Clark that three years ago Louisville could have had the convention, but at the last moment the money necessary failed to show up and Denver was selected with its 100,000 golden dollars. 'I want to say,' replied Mr. Clark, 'that I, for one, am opposed to putting national democratic conventions on the auction block. I believe Louisville or any other city which wants the convention should not be made to contribute more than the expenses of the convention, and if the citizens of a city guarantee legitimate expenses this is all that they ought to be made to do.' All the members of the Kentucky delegation

are willing to go in and help if Louisville business men say the word. Baltimore is already conducting an active campaign, and Chicago, Denver and San Francisco are also expected to be bidders when the time comes. The democratic hosts were never better treated than at Denver, but it is recognized that the mountain city is too far away and that the fight will come for the selection of a city more centrally located. The democratic national committee, which meets here in December, will fix the time and place for the convention. National Committeeman Urey Woodson, of Owensboro, is the man for the Louisville people to get in touch with."

CONCERNING THE claim that the financial honor of the country was recently "saved by Morgan" the New York World says: "To be saved by J. Pierpont Morgan is one of the most expensive luxuries that a financial institution can indulge in. In the long run it is probably more expensive even than honest banking. Mr. Morgan is a dashing and melodramatic rescuer, but he always collects his Carnegie hero medal in advance. Yesterday Mr. Morgan saved the Twelfth Ward and Nineteenth Ward banks, which are allied with the Carnegie Trust company, by the benevolent expedient of taking over another allied concern, the Madison Trust company, and annexing it to his Equitable Trust company. During the panic of 1907 Mr. Morgan did considerable financial rescuing, as a result of which he added the Tennessee Coal and Iron company to his steel trust, turned the Metropolitan steamship line over to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad company, and gathered in the Port Chester road by way of good measurement. As for yesterday's transaction, the superintendent of banks says that 'every one is to be congratulated at the turn of events,' and doubtless he is right. Surely the wight that has just been scratched from a watery grave ought not to complain because the daring rescuer took his clothes by way of reward."

SENATOR HALE of Maine will retire March 4, after having served twenty years in the upper branch of congress. A Washington dispatch carried by the Associated Press says: "When Senator Hale and Senator Aldrich retire from the senate in March there will be only one senator left whose term of service in the senate began the same year as those of the two veterans from Maine and Rhode Island. He is Senator Frye, of Maine. All three entered the senate in 1881, Hale, March 4 of that year; Frye, March 15, and Aldrich, October 5. The only other senator whose term of service approaches these in length is Senator Cullom, of Illinois, who began his senatorial career March 4, 1883. Although Senator Frye entered the senate only eleven days behind Hale, Frye has been the 'junior' senator from Maine for thirty years. He is seventy-nine years old and Hale's senior by five years in point of age. He succeeded James G. Blaine in the senate and has seen seven presidents in the White House—Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, McKinley, Roosevelt and Taft. Senator Frye has been president pro tem. of the senate—the man who presides when the vice president is absent or after the death of a vice president—since the middle of the second Cleveland administration. Adlai E. Stevenson, of Illinois, was vice president when Mr. Frye was chosen president pro tem. He has held that honor by re-election ever since. When Vice President Hobart died in November, 1899, Mr. Frye presided over the Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh congresses. Again, after the assassination of Mr. McKinley took Colonel Roosevelt from the senate chamber to the White House, Mr. Frye became president pro tem. and presided over the senate in the Fifty-seventh and Fifty-eighth congresses. Colonel Roosevelt presided over the senate only five days—from March 4 to March 9, 1901, in a special session called to pass upon Mr. McKinley's first nominations. In the fifteen years that Mr. Frye has been the president pro tem. he has been the actual presiding officer for six years of that time in the place of Vice President Hobart and Vice President Roosevelt."