

CURRENT TOPICS

A WASHINGTON dispatch to the New York World says: "Representative A. P. Gardner, of Massachusetts, made an epigram that convulsed the house committee on rules. He was arguing for a rule to bring his immigrant illiteracy bill up for a vote in the house when someone asked him if the members wouldn't vote such a rule down and satisfy their consciences by maintaining that the session was too short for its consideration. 'Some of us unfortunate persons find that our consciences aren't half as hard to satisfy as our constituencies,' returned Mr. Gardner. 'Let me congratulate you upon the best epigram of the session,' said Champ Clark, who is a member of the committee."

JOHN AUBREY JONES of Oakland, Calif., writes to the Philadelphia North American to say: "It is gratifying and encouraging to me to know that the North American is in sympathy with the movement within the republican party to bring the party back to republican principles and to conform governmental policies thereto, such movement being represented by the Progressive Reform League. Out here in California those of us who are not in league with the 'interests' which have, for these many years, held this state in political thralldom, rejoice that we have a governor—Hiram W. Johnson—who is one of the leading spirits in this reform league. In fact, we are proud of our governor, because he evidences the possession of LaFollette fighting qualities in the interest and behalf of making government responsive to the will of the people rather than obedient to the behest of privilege-seeking interests. I have been an ardent adherent and supporter of William J. Bryan in his crusade for political and governmental reform. And now am I ready to enlist under the banner of LaFollette in 1912; for it is my belief that if the democratic party, by its organization of politicians, suffers itself to be dominated by 'big business,' and its platform and candidates in 1912 shall have been dictated by the influences which controlled at the time of Judge Parker's nomination in 1904, Mr. Bryan's support would be given to LaFollette, should he be nominated for president, and especially would this be so, in my opinion, were Hon. Joseph W. Folk, say, nominated as LaFollette's running mate. And why should not this be? Are not both of these statesmen democrats, or, rather, democratic, in the same sense that Abraham Lincoln was a democrat or democratic? Party names or political designations should count for nothing, but principles only should count at all, in a crusade for political, economic and governmental reform having for its end and object the restoration of popular rights as against special privileges. Here's to the winning people's ticket in 1912. LaFollette and Folk, with Bryan its leading supporter 'on the stump,' and the North American its foremost journalistic supporter. Pardon, please, if too great liberty has been taken by this correspondent in assuming or presuming too much."

A WASHINGTON dispatch carried by the United Press, February 6, says: "Senator Lodge stirred the senate today by the declaration that in the proposition to give the states full control of the election of senators lies a danger that strikes at the foundation of government. While opposed to the election of senators by popular vote, he said he had never exaggerated the importance of altering the constitution to make such elections possible. 'To take the election of senators from the legislatures of the states and give it to the direct popular vote is simply a change in the mechanism of the government. It does not touch the principles upon which the government rests,' he said. 'Reduced to its simplest form, the amendment is merely a proposition to convert the senate into a second house of representatives, with two congressmen-at-large from each state, who are to be called senators and to hold office for six years. It is now proposed to put the United States government at the mercy of the states. It is proposed to take from the United States any power to protect its own citizens in

the exercise of their rights, no matter how great the need might be for such protection. If this amendment should become a law, twenty-three states, including perhaps only a minority of the population, could at any moment arrest the movement of the government and stop all its operations. This new proposition strikes at the very root of the national government. I cannot believe that the country would tolerate it if it were once understood. Too much has been sacrificed to preserve the union of the states, to maintain the national government, to permit any tampering with those clauses which guard its very life.'"

IN AN EDITORIAL entitled, "No Religious Lines in Politics," the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch says: "Archbishop Ireland made an address to the students of the Jesuit club at Detroit, Michigan, according to the reports printed in some of the newspapers, in which he urged them to be ambitious and to be possessed of laudable ambition, for the reason, among others, that there are too few Catholics in legislative bodies. He did not think that there were many Catholics in the legislature of Michigan, and there are only two or three Catholic senators at Washington. The archbishop said that he had 'no patience with the Catholic, who as an excuse for his slothfulness said that he could not rise above his circumstances because there is a prejudice against Catholics.' Then the archbishop said, what is true, that there is no prejudice against the Catholics today; that 'merit is the only thing that wins and demands attention in this republic.' If that be true, why should any suggestion be made that more Catholics, more Presbyterians, more Methodists, more Episcopalians should be elected to office? We do not care two cents whether a man is a Catholic or a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian so long as he is fit for the service to which the people of his state and community call him. Merit should be the test, not church connection, and we always regret to see any representative of this, that or the other religious body urge that men should be selected to public station because they are of this, that or the other religious school. Why not let the thing work itself out on healthy lines instead of making it possible for the narrow-minded to inject the religious element into political discussions?"

CLARENCE W. WATSON, one of the new United States senators from West Virginia, attracted widespread public attention by absenting himself from the senate at the time the vote upon ship subsidy was taken. The Monroe Watchman, published at Union (W. Va.) gives this description of the new senator: "Mr. Watson is a cold and taciturn man of business who has devoted himself to the amassing of millions and has not hesitated, according to the best evidence obtainable, to knife the democratic party whenever he fancied it stood in the way of his interests and those of his financial allies. There is excellent testimony from various sources that he aided in the election of McKinley and well known democrats from his own section have denounced him in the public prints as disloyal, a helper of the republican ticket whenever it suited him and unworthy of the confidence of the democratic party. To this arraignment Mr. Watson has attempted no word of defense. Mr. Watson is the president of the Consolidation Coal company, one of the greatest coal corporations in the world, the consummation of years of financial intrigue. He has amassed a fortune of many millions, has participated in the squeezing of his business competitors by the most approved Standard Oil methods, has formed an alliance with the Baltimore and Ohio Railway company, the immediate effect of which was to place other coal companies at his mercy and to stop the building of a competing railroad, and has contracted with the Baltimore and Ohio Railway to ship all the output from all the coal mines controlled by the gigantic corporation of which he is the head over that road. These are not the charges of some irresponsible partisan, but are set out in a report in 1907 of the inter-

state commerce commission, published by the United States government and entitled 'Report on Discriminations and Monopolies in Coal and Oil.' The members of the legislature were familiar with these facts, for copies of this report were scattered all over the state and placed in their hands. Mr. Watson is a brother-in-law of ex-Governor A. B. Fleming, the chief attorney in West Virginia of the Standard Oil company. His associates and allies in New York and elsewhere are men identified with some of the greatest trusts in the world, hoary in the arts of monopoly building. Mr. Watson has had no experience or training whatever for service in a public capacity. He has lived in princely style in Baltimore. He has taken an interest in horses, having carried off numerous honors in the New York horse shows—but it will hardly be contended that these successes qualify him for service in the United States senate. He has mixed little in the social life of West Virginia and is a stranger to the most of the people of his own county of Marion. What earthly reason could there be for the selection of such a man to represent the democratic party in the United States senate?"

"THE STORY OF THE first redbird" is told by a Kansas City (Mo.) Post reporter in a way that entitles it to rank as a classic. Here it is: "First of the year, a redbird sang in Kansas City yesterday. It had been raw and rainy and chill. A gray drizzle had been dispelled by the sun breaking through a great rift in the clouds, when the redbird hopped upon a spray of bare hazel in a ravine. He seemed to catch the heat of the sunshine in his heart, for he lifted his head blithely. 'Wheatee; Wheatee; Wheatee;' he sang. Not a trace of February dampness or hoarseness in the tone. It was as clear and flute-like as if he were capolling to his mate in the sunshine of June. 'Wheatee! Wheatee! Wheatee!' If you had one guess, where would you say the first redbird of the year made his debut? Out in the fashionable residence district? In the hedge or preserves of some millionaire? At one of the parks, where lawns even now are smooth and sightly? Wrong, every guess of them! A negro cabin in a hollow was the only human abiding place near the hazel twig where the first redbird perched and sang his first song of spring. Just off of Gillham road, and near the old rock quarry, where the boulevard curves around the edge of the cliffs is a ravine. It is almost a hole in the ground. At the bottom of it, completely hidden by the foliage of the thicket in summer time and only barely visible through the leafless twigs in winter, is the cabin. There is not a quieter or more secluded place in all Kansas City. And it was away down in this ravine at a place the sun's rays almost struggled to reach, that the first redbird of the year 1911 yesterday sang his first: 'Wheatee! Wheatee! Wheatee!'"

DOES WALL STREET control the magazine field? Benjamin B. Hampton, a magazine publisher, says that there are only three magazines that are not controlled by Wall Street. He says his publication is one of them and has been subject to constant pressure to force him to change his policy. Mr. Hampton adds: "First this took the form of a withdrawal of advertising. Then we were notified that if we printed an article relative to a certain great corporation the president of that corporation would make trouble with our stockholders. Within a month various magazines and newspapers and 'news bureaus' began to attack our story. We were advised that 'no bank with Wall Street connections' would have anything to do with this corporation, so long as it remained under its present management. Also stockholders advised us they had been approached, apparently by agents of Wall Street brokerage houses, who endeavored to secure their proxies to vote at the meeting. The current issue of Hampton's Magazine is being held up because it contains an article that offended the Standard Oil. The Union News company has ordered its agents not to sell it and on February 20 the copies will be returned unsold."