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CURRENT TOPICS.

Jules Verne, the author, has become blind.

Parisian cabmen are prevented from smoking when driving.

The Glasgow exposition has closed with a profit of \$499,000.

Seventy-seven thousand girls attend cooking schools in London.

The date for the coronation of King Edward has been set for June 25.

A penitent has just sent \$18,699 to the government "conscience fund."

Greenland is one of the very few countries where infectious diseases are unknown.

In Arkansas vast belts of forest lands still lie untouched by the ax of the woodman.

France's annual consumption of wheat (including seed wheat) is 346,236,000 bushels.

About 174,000 persons are employed in the postal department of Great Britain and Ireland.

Charleston will let the colored folks attend her exposition on the same terms as the whites.

A Philadelphia bank teller contracted smallpox by handling money that passed over the counter.

Vienna has a school for waiters with a three years' course. Among the subjects taught is French.

About 600,000 trees are planted each year by the school children of Sweden, under the guidance of their teachers.

At Salta in Argentina, a list of boys and girls who have failed to attend school is published in the newspapers.

The annual report of the controller of the currency shows a big increase in the authorized capital of national banks.

Scotch whisky is now being manufactured in New York and exported in large quantities to South and Central America.

The total sales at the art galleries of the Pan-American exposition at Buffalo amounted to less than \$15,000, for 27 pictures.

Since 1871 Japan has built nearly 30,000 elementary schools, providing room for 4,000,000 pupils, one-fourth of whom are girls.

The clocks which pass through the London clearing house in six weeks are more than equal in amount to all the coin of the world.

Dr. Daniel Freeman, of Beatrice, Neb., owns and occupies the first farm given away by the United States government under the homestead act.

The camel path which for centuries has formed the only connection between Jerusalem and Nablus (Sychem) has at last been made into a carriage road nearly 20 feet wide.

Among the pets of the sultan of Morocco are seven lions. These he permits to range the courtyards of the palace at night, to act as guards to the royal harem.

The Charlestonians are calling their exposition grounds and buildings the Ivory City on the banks of the Ashley. The work of preparation is rapidly nearing completion.

An automobile is being built in New York that will make 70 miles an hour on a level road. The next and most difficult task will be to find a level road 70 miles in length.

Indian caste rules necessitate the employment of extensive retinues. During the recent official tour of the viceroy, Lord Curzon, he had to carry with him a train of 150 native servants.

Abraham Slinger, of Waverly, Ia., has given his handsome home and surrounding grounds of ten acres to the Sisters of Mercy of Dubuque, to be used for the establishment of a hospital.

Rev. Dr. Daniel J. Haer, who died in Hanover, Pa., recently, was believed to be the oldest clergyman in the United States. He was 96 years old, and had been a Lutheran minister for 75 years.

So valuable is coal in the Ponchamp coal fields of France that it pays to mine coal at a depth of 3,313 feet. A steel cable, weighing seven tons and nearly a mile long is used. The coal is brought up in trains of six cars.

It takes 5,000 unladen bees to make a pound, that is, when the bee leaves its hive in search of honey it weighs only the 5,000th part of a pound. When it returns, however from the fields and flowers, it is three times that heavy.

Dr. Labordi has communicated to the French academy information about a new writing instrument for the blind, which will enable them to read correctly what is written and will probably supersede the Braille system altogether.

CONGRESS IN SESSION.

Economic Problems Both Serious and Perplexing Are to Be Solved.

The Fifty-seventh congress has convened. The long session with its six months of legislative labor lies before it. The time is all too short to dispose of more than a few of all the grave questions which await consideration and which it is the popular desire should be considered maturely and disposed of sagaciously.

The Fifty-fifth congress had a war on its hands soon after it met. The skies are clear now. In all human probability this congress will have no military problems to demand its attention, but there are economic problems which are both serious and perplexing.

The number of persons who believe that the great industrial combinations which have been organized of late years and which are portent of still greater combinations to come should be subject to some extent to federal supervision and control is increasing. Congress is expected to determine whether such control is lawful, and, if so, to provide for the exercise of it.

The subject of the enlargement of foreign markets for American products is one which all farmers, and cattle raisers, and a steadily increasing number of manufacturers are deeply interested in.

That congress finds upon the statute books taxes which are producing revenue far in excess of the legitimate needs of the government. It finds these taxes which were imposed to meet the expenses of a war which ended three years ago.

The murder of President McKinley has brought to the front a new and difficult question. How shall anarchy be dealt with? What can be done to protect the man at the head of the American government from assassination because he is at its head?

Congress has on its hands the isthmian canal question. The ratification of the new Hay-Pauncefote treaty will remove the last obstacle in the way of the construction of a great work. It has also to deal with the Chinese exclusion question.

Congress has more than enough subjects to occupy all its attention, and to put to the test its ability to legislate wisely. The republican party is in the majority in the senate and in the house. It will be held responsible if anything is done wrongly or if anything which ought to be done is left undone.

Mistake of the Democrats.

The free traders who are shouting for reciprocity under the impression that it means the overthrow of the protective tariff and claiming the late President McKinley as their champion seem not to have read his last speech carefully. In that speech he did not favor an indiscriminate extension of favors to other nations, but "sensible trade arrangements which will not interrupt our home production," and a "system which provides a natural exchange of commodities."

These free traders who are extolling the late president for his advanced views cannot have read the following from the speech they so loudly extol: "If, perchance, some of our tariffs are no longer needed for revenue or to encourage or protect our industries at home, why should they not be employed to extend and promote our markets abroad?"

Mr. Richardson, the minority leader in the house of representatives, has announced what he thinks should be the democratic programme during the coming session of congress. Summed up, it is simply this: Oppose everything the republicans favor. There is a discouraging lack of force or originality in this. When has the democratic party done anything else? —Troy Times.

THE SAME OBSTRUCTIONISTS.

Democracy Will Continue Its Old Tactics of Blocking Measures for Public Weal.

The resolutions introduced in the house democratic caucus at Washington a few days ago prove that the democratic congressmen will continue to be obstructionists against every measure that will be helpful to the labor and business of the people of the United States.

There is no indication of any thought of the responsibility of the government for the welfare and safety of the people of the islands whose inhabitants have come under our protection and care by the fortunes of war, which is the chief problem connected with those islands.

TARIFF TINKERING OPPOSED.

Main Resolution of the Reciprocity Congress Favors a Protective Tariff.

At the first glance it may seem that the reciprocity convention which met a few days ago in the city of Washington accomplished nothing worth mentioning, since it made two specific recommendations—that the congress create a department of commerce and industries, and that a reciprocity commission be established.

One of the resolutions adopted by the convention declared, in effect, that the assembled delegates were opposed to any reciprocity not compatible with the true conception of a protective tariff. The wording of the resolution was that "this convention recommends to congress the maintenance of the principle of protection for the home market and to open up by reciprocity opportunities for increased foreign trade by special modification of the tariff in special cases, but only where it can be done without injury to any of our home interests of manufacturing commerce or farming."

In other words, the convention declares that while there should be no modification of the principle, modifications of the manner of its application would be unobjectionable provided that the result would be beneficial to American trade. In what specific manner it may be possible to carry out the general recommendation made in the resolution the convention wisely left to the study of the congress.

The essential feature of the convention's recommendations is the declaration that there should be no tinkering with the tariff.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"Reciprocity must be treated as the handmaiden of protection."—President Roosevelt's Message. The Reed rules will stand. In other words, the house will transact business.—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune. The last thing a democratic correspondent has found the president doing is the building up of a machine of his own.—Indianapolis Journal. The democrats in congress promise to be so divided that they cannot even obstruct unless they obstruct one another.—Indianapolis News (Ind.). There are no signs that David B Hill has as yet been impressed by the advantages which the present political situation has to offer him.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

THE HOUSE COMMITTEES.

Speaker Henderson's Announcement—The List of Chairmen.

Washington, Dec. 11.—Speaker Henderson yesterday announced the house committees. The chairmen are as follows: Insular Affairs—Cooper, of Wisconsin. Judiciary—Ray, of New York. Banking and Currency—Fowler, of New Jersey. Merchant Marine and Fisheries—Grosvenor, of Ohio. Rivers and Harbors—Burton, of Ohio. Military Affairs—Hull, of Iowa. Naval Affairs—Foss, of Illinois. Immigration and Naturalization—Shattuck, of Ohio. Agriculture—Wadsworth, of New York. Foreign Affairs—Hitt, of Illinois. Post Offices and Post Roads—Loud, of California. Public Lands—Lacey, of Iowa. Indian Affairs—Sherman, of New York. Territories—Knox, of Massachusetts. Public Buildings and Grounds—Mercer, of Nebraska. Irrigation of Arid Lands—Tongue, of Oregon. Census—Hopkins, of Illinois. Coinage, Weights and Measures—Southard, of Ohio. Invalid Pensions—Sulloway, of New Hampshire. Pensions—Loudenslager, of New Jersey. Education—Grow, of Pennsylvania. Labor—Gardner, of New Jersey. Militia—Dick, of Ohio. Patents—Reeves, of Illinois. Election of President, Vice President and Representatives in Congress—Corliss, of Michigan. Elections Committee No. 1—Taylor, of Ohio. Elections Committee No. 2—Olmsted, of Pennsylvania. Elections Committee No. 3—Weeks, of Michigan. Pacific Railroads—W. A. Smith, of Michigan. Railways and Canals—Davidson, of Wisconsin.

SEVEN LIVES LOST.

A British Ship Is Driven Ashore on the Coast of Washington State.

Aberdeen, Wash., Dec. 11.—Wednesday night the British bark Pinmore, owned by Clink Bros., of Greenock, Scotland, bound from Santa Rosalia, Mexico, to Portland, in ballast, went into the surf at the mouth of Raft river, north of Gray's Harbor. The crew of 30 abandoned the ship and took to the boats, one of which was capsized shortly after leaving the vessel, and six men were drowned. The other boat reached shore safely after being out 36 hours. One man died from exposure.

The crew made their way by land to Oyebut, where the tug Ranger brought them to Hoquiam. One of the seamen, P. Pearson, is nearly dead from exposure, and is in the hospital at Hoquiam. The crew report that the vessel disappeared, but it is believed she has been towed off by a tug from Astoria. Capt. James says he was off the Columbia river November 22, but the gale blew him north. He worked back to the Columbia on December 2, and was close enough for a tug or pilot boat to reach him, when another gale blew him north and he was powerless.

A TERRIFIC EXPLOSION.

Nine Men Injured and Much Property Wrecked at South Sharon, Pa.

Sharon, Pa., Dec. 11.—An explosion that shook the earth for miles around, shattered windows in hundreds of houses at South Sharon, moved adjacent buildings from their foundations and caused the injury of nine men, two perhaps fatally, occurred at the Sharon Steel Co.'s plant Tuesday.

The explosion occurred in the casting department of the "pig mill." The metal was being poured from the ladle into the casting machine, when it came in contact with some water, which caused a blast which was felt a great distance. The casting house was completely wrecked. Large strips of heavy corrugated iron beams and other material were hurled hundreds of yards by the explosion. The casting machine and conveyor were damaged almost beyond repair. A part of the conveyor was blown several hundred feet, while not a vestige of the iron roof of the mill remains. Windows in the office of the steel company, several hundred yards away from the explosion, were broken and in Sharon and South Sharon the shock was felt like an earthquake.

Will Construct a New Tunnel.

Philadelphia, Dec. 11.—The Pennsylvania Railroad Co. awarded contracts yesterday for improvements involving an expenditure of more than \$1,000,000. The contracts include the construction of a new single track tunnel through the crest of the Auquehny mountains at Gallitzin. The tunnel will be 3,600 feet long and will contain a single track, the object being to relieve the present tunnel of one of the tracks now running through it.

Schaefer Is Champion.

New York, Dec. 11.—Jacob Schaefer, of Chicago, and George F. Slosson, of this city, met in the deciding game of the international 18-inch billiard championship tournament at Madison Square Garden concert hall last night, and the Chicago man won by a score of 400 to 355.

Four Sailors are Drowned.

Halifax, N. S., Dec. 11.—Four seamen belonging to the Norwegian steamer Ella, lost their lives Monday in an attempt to reach shore for assistance for their ship. The Ella was bound to Sydney and when off Scatterly Island lost her propeller. The captain called for volunteers to man a boat to go to Louisburg for assistance and five of the crew responded. The boat was provisioned and put off. A high sea was running and the men could make but little progress. A sea filled the boat and one by one they sank until but one remained. He reached the shore.

BUYS COSTLY PAINTING.

Boston Museum of Fine Arts Secures Frans Hals' "Portrait of a Woman."

The Boston Museum of Fine Arts has just purchased for \$30,000, from Mr. T. J. Blakeslee, of the Blakeslee galleries, New York City, the important Frans Hals' "Portrait of a Woman." It is undoubtedly one of the best of the few genuine examples of Frans Hals' in this country. The sale was completed the other day, and was made after the unanimous vote of the board of the trustees of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to purchase it. The dimensions of the "Portrait of a Woman" are 40 inches by 50 inches. It was probably painted about 1650. Originally, it was one of the treasures of the duke of Buckingham's collection. Some years ago it became the property of Mrs. Whatman, of Maidstone, England, and then passed into the hands of Messrs. Lawrie & Company, of Bond street, London, from whom Mr. Blakeslee purchased it. The portrait will hang in the main gallery of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Hubby Yielded a Point.

Gilbert—I believe in a man being the master of the house. He should have the say in everything. Mason—How about the naming of that baby of yours? Gilbert—My wife gave way to me in a very proper and wifely manner. She said she didn't care what name I gave the little fellow so long as it was Henry. So that's the name I gave him. You know, I felt, after the hearty manner in which she deferred to me, I ought to yield a point out of appreciation of her humility.—Tit-Bits.

In the millennium, of course, a woman will be only as old as she thinks she looks.—Town Topics.

He who rules must humor full as much as he commands.—George Eliot.

Some smiles look as though they had been soaked in vinegar.—Chicago Daily News.

Most of us waste most of our time standing around talking about nothing.—Washington (La.) Democrat.

All of us think that we show a great deal more consideration for other people than they do for us.—Indianapolis News.

Desirable Furniture.—"But these chairs," she said, "however fashionable they may be, are very uncomfortable." "Ah!" replied the salesman, "that's the beauty of these chairs, madam. When a caller sits in one of these chairs, madam, she doesn't stay long."—Philadelphia Press.

Loaned.—"Borrowit, didn't you get my lawn mower last summer?" "Borrowit—" "Yes, I'm the man." "Loanedit—" "Are you thinking of bringing it home this winter?" "Borrowit—" "Hadn't I thought of it. I'm going to lower the knives in that machine and use it to shave the ice off my sidewalk."—Indianapolis News.

The Best He Could Do.

There was a clergyman in Tangipahoe, La., let us say) who was much annoyed by the mischievous boy of a neighbor. He reasoned with the boy, but with no effect. He laid the case before the boy's parents and they showed him the door. One day he told his brother—a rough and vigorous man of worldly habits—all about this persecution. The brother bolted out of the door and presently returned with the cheering word that the boy would make no further trouble. "I told his father," said the wicked brother, "that I would come blankety near kicking the blankety stuffing out of him and his blankety-blank-blankety boy if he ever bothered you again." "But I hope you did not let even that wretched creature hear such language as you have repeated. Brother, you did not really swear at him, did you?" "Oh, not at all," said the wicked one, "but I gave him such a close imitation of swearing that the whitewash on the walls looked like blue calcimine before I was half through."—N. Y. Mail and Express.

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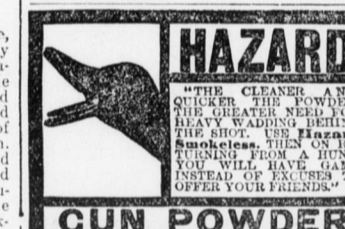
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