

# CURRENT TOPICS

**RUTH CLEVELAND, DAUGHTER OF** former President Cleveland, died recently at Princeton. Miss Cleveland, who was about fifteen years of age, was the eldest of the Cleveland children. The Philadelphia Inquirer unquestionably reflects public sentiment when it says: "A dozen years ago the newspapers were filled with the doings of 'Baby Ruth,' and when the Clevelands entered the White house the second time there were two babies to prattle in the historic halls. Death never seems so heartrending as when it comes to the young girl just on the verge of womanhood, with all the beautiful things of life ahead of her. Death is never welcomed (in spite of our professed faith) and always abhorred. In the case in question we have another confirmation of the saying of Horace: 'Pale death with equal steps, knocks at the hovels of the poor and the palaces of kings.' There will be tears and sympathy go out toward the bereaved of Princeton in unmeasured flow."

**PUBLIC ATTENTION HAS RECENTLY BEEN** attracted to two judicial proceedings, seriously involving two members of congress. At Omaha, the federal grand jury indicted Senator Dietrich, republican, on several counts, one being the alleged acceptance of a bribe, paid by a candidate for postmaster in return for Senator Dietrich's influence. Another indictment was based upon Senator Dietrich's renting to the government for postoffice purposes a building, contrary to the federal law. Another indictment charged Mr. Dietrich and Mr. Fisher, the postmaster at Hastings, Neb., with conspiracy. A demurrer to the conspiracy indictment was promptly sustained, and the proceedings with respect to the bribery indictment were commenced. After United States District Attorney Summers had, in his opening statement to the jury, stated that Mr. Dietrich, officiating then as governor of Nebraska, was elected to the office of senator on March 28, 1901, and took the oath of office on December 2, 1901, Mr. Dietrich's attorneys raised the point that Mr. Dietrich was not senator until he had formally taken the oath of office, and that the offense charged, having been committed between March 28 and December 2, at a time when Mr. Dietrich was really not senator, although the records disclosed that he had drawn pay as senator, that Mr. Dietrich could not be held under that indictment. United States District Judge Munger and United States Circuit Judge Van Duvaner presided at this trial. They listened to arguments on this point raised by Mr. Dietrich's attorneys, and on the following day sustained the point and instructed the jury to return a verdict of not guilty.

**AS A RESULT OF THIS RULING IN THE** Dietrich case, by the federal court, the United States district attorney dismissed other proceedings against Mr. Dietrich and also the proceeding against Postmaster Fisher. In Nebraska, public opinion seems to be practically all one way. As soon as the indictments were brought against Mr. Dietrich, he repeatedly announced that he would meet the issue squarely, and many people were surprised when he resorted to technicalities. Many of his friends, of course, seek to excuse him, but it seems to be understood that public opinion in Nebraska very generally condemns him. Soon after being released by the federal court, Mr. Dietrich and his friends announced that he would ask for an investigation by the United States senate, but Washington dispatches say that in this effort Mr. Dietrich will receive little or no encouragement, republican senators very generally agreeing that this is one of the several republican affairs in which "let well enough alone" should be the controlling policy.

**ON THE VERY DAY WHEN MR. DIETRICH** was discharged in the federal court in Omaha, former Congressman Driggs was convicted in the federal court at New York. Mr. Driggs was charged with having used his influence as a congressman to secure for individuals certain contracts with the government. It developed in the evidence that whatever Mr. Driggs did was done after his election to the lower house, but prior to March 4, when his official term began. The federal judge ruled that although the offense

was committed before Mr. Driggs' official term began, he was amenable under the law, because he was indicted under the federal statutes which provides: "Every member of congress who directly or indirectly takes and receives, or agrees to receive any money, property or other valuable consideration whatever after his election as such member, for his attention to, service, action, vote or decision on any question, matter, cause or proceeding which may then be pending or may by law, or under the constitution, be brought before him in his official capacity, or in his place as such a member of congress shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor." It will be observed that in this section, it is provided that the "member of congress who directly or indirectly takes and receives or agrees to receive any money, property or other valuable consideration whatever, after his election as such member" shall be deemed guilty.

**THERE IS THIS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN** the Dietrich case and the Driggs case: Mr. Dietrich was indicted under the section preceding the one under which Mr. Driggs was indicted. Mr. Dietrich was indicted under the section providing punishment for a member of congress who accepts bribes for doing certain things. Mr. Driggs was indicted under the section which provides that any member of congress who "after his election" accepts money for his influence is amenable. Many lawyers think that the interpretation which Judge Van Duvaner made of the particular section under which Mr. Dietrich was indicted was good law, and it is pointed out by these that the result of the Dietrich trial would suggest to the national lawmakers the advisability of amending the section under which Mr. Dietrich was indicted and acquitted, in order that it may conform to the section under which Mr. Driggs was indicted and convicted.

**ALTHOUGH NEWSPAPER OPINION** throughout the country generally condemns Senator Dietrich and in Nebraska public opinion is very generally against him, men who are in a position to know freely predict that in spite of the methods to which he was required to resort in order to escape from the clutches of the federal court, Mr. Dietrich has sufficient strength with the national administration to secure the political scalp of United States District Attorney Summers. At this time, Mr. Dietrich is bending all of his energies in order to persuade Mr. Roosevelt to discharge the man who prosecuted him, and Washington correspondents very generally agree that the probabilities are that Mr. Dietrich will succeed in these efforts. In spite of the fact that Mr. Dietrich seems to have lost none of his influence or standing with the national leaders of his party, it is generally admitted that in Nebraska the republican party has suffered a severe blow because of the Dietrich affair. Mr. Dietrich was admittedly chosen as the republican nominee for governor by the railroads of the state, and he has been known as a partisan of the Burlington and Missouri railroad, and as such, was chosen to the United States senate when the two railroad factions in Nebraska came to divide the senatorial honors. The representatives of the B. & M. have been very active in Mr. Dietrich's defense and former United States Senator Manderson, who is the chief attorney for the B. & M. in Nebraska, has written for the public prints a letter in which he defends Senator Dietrich not only on the merits of the case, but also justifies Mr. Dietrich's resort to technicalities.

**THE ROCHFORD, ESSEX, ENGLAND, COR-** respondent for the Baltimore Sun says that "the whisper court" is an interesting observance held annually at that place under the superintendence of the steward of the manor. According to this correspondent, the business of the court is carried out at midnight in the open air; the absence of a tenant is punishable by a fine of double his rent for each hour he fails to be in attendance. No artificial light except a firebrand is permitted and the proceedings are recorded by means of one of the embers of the brand. The roll of 14 tenants is then called over and answered to in a whisper and then they kneel down and swear allegiance. Very many years ago the lord of the

manor, after an absence from his estate, was returning home by night. On the way he accidentally heard some of his discontented tenantry plotting his assassination. Thus warned he returned home by an unexpected route. Then he ordered that each year his tenants should assemble at the same time to do him homage around a post which he erected on the spot where the plotters met.

**IT IS POINTED OUT BY THIS SAME CORRE-** spondent that "the castor whip tenure" is even more remarkable. This correspondent explains that on Palm Sunday, a servant from the Broughton estate attends service at Castor church, England, with a new cart whip, and, after cracking it three times in the porch, marches with it to the manorial seat. When the clergyman begins the sermon he quits his seat with his whip. A purse containing 30 pieces of silver is fixed on the end of the leash, and, kneeling on a cushion, he holds the purse suspended over the head of the clergyman until the end of the sermon. At the conclusion of the service the purse and whip are left at the manor house. At Clingford, in Essex, an estate is held by a very curious condition. Whenever it passes into new hands the owner, with his wife, man servant and maid servant, comes on horseback to the parsonage and pays his homage by blowing three blasts upon a horn. He carries a hawk upon his fist and his servant a greyhound in a slip, both for the use of the rector for that day. He receives a chicken for the hawk, a peck of oats for his horse and a loaf of bread for his greyhound. After dinner the owner blows three more blasts and then with his party withdraws from the rectory.

**IN THE MOUNTAIN DISTRICTS OF NORTH** Carolina, near Waynesville, a remarkable tree was recently felled. The Charlotte, N. C., correspondent for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch says: "This tree has an estimated value of \$1,500, and contains 25,000 feet of first-class lumber. It is worth more than the average farm in this section, in which it was cut. A part of the tree has been engaged for exhibition at the St. Louis exposition this year and will be placed among the North Carolina lumber exhibits. The tree is a curly poplar and 12 horses were required to haul away the butt cut, which was 12 feet long. The lowest limb was 80 feet from the ground. The wood will be used as veneering and will be shipped to eastern markets for sale."

**REFERRING TO THE DIVIDEND AND** interest disbursements paid in January, 1904, by the leading railroad and industrial companies, local banks, trust companies, and traction corporations, together with the interest payable on the government debt, a writer in the New York Journal of Commerce says that these disbursements will reach a total of \$134,000,000. This writer says that "this sum is about \$2,000,000 greater than the total payments of January, 1903, but a decrease compared with the semi-annual payments in July last, which were \$136,000,000, the highest on record. Interest payments by railroads would have shown a much heavier increase had it not been for what seems to be a general effort to make payments on new issues falling due at some other season of the year, this being done to avoid disturbance to the money market."

**AT MANILA RECENTLY SEVERAL MEN** were condemned to death on the charge of murder. The garrote was used on four of the condemned, one being put to death outright, another dying later, but with the remaining two the instrument of death failed to work successfully. The Washington correspondent for the Chicago Tribune says that the war department has received reports of these executions and attempted executions. The Tribune correspondent says: "The official had practiced with the strangling machine until he thought he was perfect. The pressure was applied to the cords for eight minutes, and then the bodies were left in the machine, according to custom, for four hours. Afterwards they were removed to a nearby church, physicians made out death certificates, and the court affixed its seal. Then the relatives were