

About People and Social Incidents.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

[From The Tribune Bureau.] Washington, Dec. 9.—The President had his luncheon this afternoon with Thomas H. Watson, Populist candidate for President three years ago. Mr. Watson had a financial relief plan which he wished to discuss with the President.

THE CABINET.

[From The Tribune Bureau.] Washington, Dec. 9.—The Secretary of State returned to the capital today from Clinton, N. Y., where he went to attend the wedding of his son, Elihu Root, Jr., on Saturday. Mr. Root will join him here within a day or so.

THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

[From The Tribune Bureau.] Washington, Dec. 9.—Baroness Hengelmueller, wife of the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, was hostess at a tea in the embassy yesterday afternoon, when she presented Count Szechenyi and Count Apponyi, two of her countrymen, who are visiting Washington, to a number of guests.

IN WASHINGTON SOCIETY.

[From The Tribune Bureau.] Washington, Dec. 9.—Mrs. William Sheffield Cowles, the President's sister, will come to Washington on Thursday from her summer estate, and will have her home in N street, put in readiness for the winter.

MRS. TAFT IN PERIL.

Passengers for the President Grant Have Narrow Escape. London, Dec. 9.—A wireless message from the steamer President Grant, which is carrying Secretary Taft and his party to the United States, gives the details of an exciting trip and narrow escape.

CLASSMATES FOR HUGHES.

John D., Jr., Excites Bible Students by Mention for President. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., aroused wild enthusiasm among the members of the Bible class of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church after the class dinner at the Murray Hill Hotel last night by suggesting the possibility of the election of Governor Hughes as President.

CONSUL GENERAL ULLOA ELECTED.

A cable dispatch received here yesterday from Mexico City, where the International Sanitary Congress is in session, said that the next convention of that body would be held in San Jose, Costa Rica, in 1909.

TRANSATLANTIC TRAVELLERS.

Among those who sail for Europe to-day are: Kronprinzessin Cecilie, for Bremen; W. H. Arnold, for London; and Mrs. Merton Smith, for New York.

AMERICAN CARS NEEDED IN INDIA.

From Daily Consular Report. Consul General William H. Michael, in the following report to the State Department, shows the desirability of the American railway train system in India.

public welfare, the police should learn this fact at once.

Turn, sinners, turn!—The Louisville Courier-Journal. Whither, colonel, whither this time? The statement that traffic conditions on the Brooklyn Bridge have actually been improved is to be received with something of the wonder and awe which are felt by a watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken.

The call for the People's Party convention in St. Louis April 2nd with the words, "Sound the alarm!" That's what the party's for. It has the Democratic party beaten into a custard at sounding alarms.

The Republican National Committee yesterday voted to hold the National Convention at Chicago, rather than Kansas City. What does this mean?—Washington Post.

THE TALK OF THE DAY.

After the performance of Wagner's "Rheingold," at Bern, Switzerland, the "Berne Fremdenblatt" contained an account of the performance which has caused much comment. One German paper, in reproducing excerpts from the remarkable criticism, says: "In reading it we could not quite determine whether the writer was a rogue or one of the Mark Twain school, who would enter the most sacred realm of culture with savage freedom."

GERMANY'S DEBT.

The old boast of the German Empire of its comparative freedom from debt can no longer be made. Instead the lament arises, to the considerable embarrassment of the Finance Minister, that the German debt now ranks among the very large ones, and that it is growing more rapidly than that of any other nation.

WHAT IS INSANITY?

The definition of insanity continues to be one of the favorite topics at medical, medico-legal and legal convocations. The most satisfactory definition is thus far reached describes insanity as a mental disturbance over which men go insane while trying to define it.

MOODY'S SERMONS "BEST SELLERS."

William E. Curtis, in The Chicago Record-Herald. Last summer I published an interview with Dr. A. R. Spofford, the venerable and beloved oracle of the Christian community. He said that printed sermons had gone out of fashion.

PRESERVING SHINGLES.

The Forest Service has studied the shingle problem along with that of the preservation of farm timber. It is found that shingles treated with creosote or a special process which the service has invented warp but little and decay slowly, because their roof will outlast two or three times as long as untreated shingles.

violates the statute because he knows it is a dead letter? Each contributes in his own fashion to bring law into disrepute by the practice of trace under which each has his own way and the city has strict laws and a liberal Sunday at the same time. If respect for law calls for self-restraint in violating laws once enacted, it equally calls for self-restraint in trying to get or to keep on the books in a country like this, where the majority has its way usually no matter what the statutes are, laws that do not command the assent of public sentiment.

The Sunday question will never be settled to the entire satisfaction of the whole community. Views of the proper use of that day vary all the way from the treatment of it as a religious to the treatment of it as a secular holiday, according to the origin of the various elements in our cosmopolitan population, but every one will agree that no good is accomplished by putting strict Sunday laws on the books and then tacitly ignoring their violation. Here the discredit falls. If you believe that your moral yearnings should prevail, or the city will go from bad to worse, the fight for the enforcement of the law will express them, not for their mere preservation as dead letters.

THE ASHOKAN INQUEST.

The inquiry into the awarding of the contract for the Ashokan Dam is ended and the official judgment upon it is awaited—the public feeling, meantime, much surprised at the meagreness of the case which was presented against the Board of Water Supply. A widespread sentiment is, we have no doubt, that if nothing more could be added against the propriety of the award it was not worth while to hold the inquest at all. That view of the case will be strengthened by keeping clearly in mind what the real question at issue is. It is not whether the Water Board had a legal right to give the contract to any other than the lowest bidder. Of that there can be no question. The board was specifically and liberally authorized by law, after full discussion of that very point, thus to award it.

THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE.

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CONGRESS.—Senate.

Several resolutions providing for an inquiry into recent Treasury issues were introduced. House. It was announced that the committee will not be appointed this week.

FOREIGN.—The final stage of the court martial of General Stoeness will begin in St. Petersburg to-day. Mrs. Tatw was among the passengers for the steamer President Grant who were tossed about in a disabled tender in Bonaventure harbor.

DOMESTIC.—Senator Foraker wrote to the chairman of the Ohio Republican State Committee asking that delegates to the state convention be chosen at a primary election.

CITY.—Stocks were lower. It was learned that negotiations were in progress for the consolidation of the Ohio National Bank with one or more national banks of this city.

THE WEATHER.—Indications for to-day: Fair. The temperature yesterday: Highest, 52 degrees; lowest, 41.

END THE TRUCE.

The old truce between the lawbreakers and the lawbreakers was violated Sunday, and the lawbreakers, as usual upon such occasions, were filled with consternation and dismay, cowering before and reckoning up their numerical strength; while the lawbreakers, self-approved, thought of how little avail even in a democracy mere numerical strength may be and how often these three armed is he who has—or thinks—his quarrel just. By the old truce we mean that tacit agreement by which a minority without question enjoys the satisfaction of putting laws on the books or keeping them there provided the majority, equally without molestation, possesses the privilege of breaking them. The system works very comfortably under ordinary circumstances. It has in it those elements of compromise by which society usually gets on in this give-and-take world. The minority—for we feel sure there is only a minority in favor of such rigors as this city endured on Sunday, whatever division of opinion there may be upon some details—the minority enjoys freedom from interference in enacting into laws what Mr. Jerome happily called its "moral yearnings." The majority usually has full freedom from interference in gratifying its physical or aesthetic yearnings. It cares not who makes the laws, so long as it may break them.

THE AUTOCRATIC CZAR.

The hot dispute over the retention of the word "autocratic," as descriptive of the Czar, in which the Russian Douma has recently engaged savors partly of a mere wrangle over words, though perhaps more of differences in their interpretation, and most of all of the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of promises and expectations. Also it is reminiscent of the attitude of Russian parties toward the imperial manifesto of October 17, 1905, which forms the basis of the whole matter. The Czar's manifesto, as it will be recalled, provided that uttermost with dismay and indignation, as a wicked surrender of imperial autocracy, and insisted that it effected per se a profound and irremediable change through counter-revolution—change in the government of the empire. The Liberals, on the other hand, regarded it dubiously and insisted that in itself it changed nothing, and at most merely suggested an opportunity of doing something. Yet now the Conservatives are insisting that it changed nothing, while the Liberals are equally positive that it changed everything! The fact seems to be that the October manifesto was somewhat equivocal in terms, or in potentialities. No doubt it did strongly imply the termination of the autocracy, for it surrendered the power of legislation to the elective Douma, conceded to that body a veto on legislation by the Crown, and agreed that the Douma should grant the "four liberties," to wit, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of meeting, and freedom of the person save through judicial process. Moreover, the system thus established was never to be changed without the assent of the Douma. Thus far we should say the decree was the death sentence of autocracy. But then it was also provided that the organic law of the empire should remain unchanged and should be the basis of the new government. The October decree did not itself grant the "four liberties," but merely promised that the Douma would be permitted to enact them. As for the immutability of the new order of things, it is to be observed that had not yet been formulated, wherefore that was a pledge that a thing not yet made should be unchangeable after it was made. As a matter of fact, that "unchangeable" thing was completely changed and transformed last summer, by the autocratic act of the Czar, without saying so much as "By your leave!" to the Douma.

THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE.

There are perhaps some fine metaphysical questions involved in the case. Can autocracy renounce itself? If the autocrat has power to divest himself of autocracy, has he power to resume it? So long as by the organic law he remains autocrat, can he do more than hold

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