

of many in this country and abroad "that in our dealings with the state of Colombia we have violated and are about to violate the rules of international law, and that we are adopting a line of conduct toward that country which we would not have taken against a stronger power." The petition further says that the fact of Colombia's comparative weakness should make us the more careful to avoid the suspicion that we are making an unjust use of our great power and that the mere existence of such a suspicion is injurious to our honor and self-respect. It concludes by saying: "We therefore respectfully ask that before final ratification of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla treaty our action in Panama be carefully and deliberately investigated, to the end not only that the Republic may do no wrong, but that its good reputation in the world, which is dearer than any gain of lands or trade, should suffer no loss."

One report on the Iroquois theater fire in Chicago (p. 632) was made on the 12th. It is the report of a committee of experts—builders and architects—appointed by Mayor Harrison to answer the following questions: (1) What was the primary cause of the fire? (2) Why did the fire extend? (3) Why did it spread to the auditorium? (4) What caused the loss of life? The inquiry by this committee has been made with evident skill and care, and the report appears to be conscientious and candid. Yet there is a plain minimization of the fact, which can be proved by abundant evidence, that the fire was attended by an explosion so tremendous that it rose in a pillar of fire-flash through the stage skylight to a distance of 70 or 80 feet above the stage roof. The experts' report does, indeed, account for the spread of the fire to the auditorium in part by "air pressure producing friction against brick wall, due to expansion of air or gases resulting from burning of scenery"; but it does not appear to have considered whether this "expansion of air or gases"—of sufficient force to break through the skylight and rise high in the outer air explosively—may not also have flashed into the auditorium explosively. Again, in assigning causes for the deaths, no account appears to have been taken in this report of the apparently reasonable sus-

picion that the expanding gases may possibly have been of such a character as to suggest the advisability of organizing a supplementary expert committee composed of chemists. The causes of death suggested by this report are panic, asphyxiation, and burning; and it is implied that these resulted from flame, smoke, and gas produced by the natural progress of quick combustion in a confined place. Yet there is reason for grave suspicion, at least, that many of the deaths were caused by the fumes of an explosion produced by other causes. This is a view of the catastrophe that ought not to be neglected by the coroner's jury. The facts that give rise to the suspicion may not lead to important results, when considered by experts; but they are facts, highly significant facts to the non-technical mind, and their significance or lack of it ought to be clearly disclosed by competent expert witnesses.

Great disasters to civilization are predicted by the London Spectator as the possible outcome of the possible discovery that experiments with radium may lead to the transmutation of metals. As quoted by a Canadian paper, it ruminates in this wise:

If it became possible simply and expeditiously to transmute lead and iron into gold or silver, the basis of our civilization would disappear. Wealth in kind would become the only form of riches. The stores of bullion at the banks would become simply heaps of scrap-iron. The great financial centers of the world, which owe their importance to their gold reserves, would lose the basis of their preeminence. A sovereign would become no more than a dishonored bank note, representing, it is true, a certain amount of labor or produce, but incapable of realization in any known value, because the basis of values had fallen. Banking would come to an end; reserves of capital would cease to have any practical meaning; all forms of investment would cease; the gold-producing countries, like the Transvaal and West Australia, would be bankrupted; and the elaborate system of commerce which mankind has built up during a thousand years would crumble about our ears, for there would be no standard, no little rod, by which to measure prices.

One must hesitate to deal seri-

ously with that paragraph, it has so suggestively the flavor of a satire upon the "gold bug" fanatics. Yet it may be well, even at the risk of falling a victim to a subtle joke, to observe that so long as there are men to do the work that they themselves want done, and no legal obstructions are interposed between them and the natural sources of supply nor between them in their mutual trading, they will manage to get along very comfortably though gold becomes as cheap as dirt.

New York's genial and eccentric district attorney, William Travers Jerome, a man-about-town-turned-reformer-of-other-folks, who is so suggestive of a paper-bound and slightly reedited edition of Roosevelt, has blown through Chicago with the mild cyclonic force of a Manhattan gale, and like a wandering comet has left behind him a dizzy dazzle in the civic atmosphere. If this rhetoric is flamboyant and mixed and perhaps incoherent, it is for that reason all the better adapted for its descriptive purposes. For a public character more flamboyant and mixed and incoherent than Mr. Jerome, it would be difficult to find anywhere within the generous covers of "Who's Who in America."

Mr. Jerome is a stickler for enforcement of the law as it is, regardless of whether it is right or not. Indeed, he is rather contemptuous of the idea of rights, as being youthfully academic. But he holds that laws must be enforced, wherefore he devotes his energies to the suppression of illegal gambling, illegal prostitution, illegal beer-drinking, etc., which is all very proper and commendable for an administrative officer as such. Not district attorneys, but legislatures, are responsible for the wisdom of laws. Yet Mr. Jerome, an administrative officer, confesses to encouraging the police in brutal crimes against persons charged with crime; and this is at least as illegal as dealing faro to men who want it dealt