

lic. Submarine bells on the Republic aided in finding her in the fog. Wireless messages were being sent, in the meantime, by the Republic, to Boston, Newport and New York. The Boston message, which was a request for the revenue cutter Gresham, was "caught" by the Gresham at Provincetown, and in a moment she was under way. The cutter Acushnet started out from Woods Holl, and the Mohawk from New Bedford. In the meantime, with great good order, the 461 passengers were transferred from the Republic to the Florida, most of them in very scanty clothing, and saving absolutely no baggage. First cabin passengers and steerage passengers fared alike; cost of tickets made no difference in preference. Later, after the arrival of the Baltic, it was deemed advisable to transfer the passengers of both steamers from the weakened Florida to the Baltic. The Baltic steamed into New York harbor early on the 25th, and the lightened Florida arrived in the afternoon of the same day. Captain Sealby of the Republic, and its second officer, refused to leave their ship while she remained afloat. They were saved by the Gresham when the Republic finally went down in the evening of the 24th.

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#### No Extradition for Rudowitz.

Press dispatches of the 26th reported that Secretary Root had decided in the extradition case of Christian Rudowitz (pp. 6, 12) that his alleged offense in Russia was political and not criminal, and therefore that he must not be extradited to Russia for trial.

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#### The Traction Situation in Cleveland.

At the regular council meeting in Cleveland (p. 84) on the 18th, a motion hostile to Mayor Johnson, which proposed ordering the City Solicitor to frame a franchise providing for a temporary increase of fare throughout the city, was defeated. The public meeting of the committee of the whole, set last week for the 19th, did not convene until the 20th.

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When the public meeting convened on the 20th Mayor Johnson explained that at a conference with Judge Tayler, of the Federal court, it had been arranged that a committee consisting of Judge Tayler, City Solicitor Baker, John G. White and Mayor Johnson should endeavor to ascertain whether a certain plan of settlement proposed by Judge Tayler can be legally carried out, and if so to draft an ordinance. The cardinal points of this plan are that all questions of fixed rates of fare shall be abandoned, and the fares be so adjusted, varying automatically with earnings, as to yield six per cent to stockholders, and no more, the car riders to get the benefit of any financial improvement above that rate of investment

profit. As the Plain Dealer of the 21st summarized the principal details of the plan, it is to provide for "six per cent to the shareholders, city control over the bookkeeping methods of the street railway company," and "a rate of fare that will vary with the conditions of the times" so as to yield "the fixed return to the owners." In presenting this plan Mayor Johnson expressed his doubts as to its legality, but stated that he was "in entire accord with Judge Tayler's plans to limit any possibility of profit over 6 per cent," and had no present concern as to the method adopted to reach that result.

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Immediately following the public meeting, after questions had been put and answered, and the suggestions of Mayor Johnson approved, the committee of four met at Judge Tayler's home and discussed preliminaries. F. H. Goff and D. C. Westenhover were called into consultation on the 21st. No further progress is reported. The value of the stock was reported to have risen on the 22d to 84, but to have fallen to 80 on the 23d.

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#### Illinois Politics.

Since our last report (p. 84) seventeen ballots for Senator from Illinois have been taken in joint session. Five occurred on the 20th, when the vote for Senator Hopkins ranged from 84 to 89. The twelfth ballot closed the contest on the 21st, with 88 as the highest vote for Senator Hopkins. There was no further balloting until the 26th, when the 17th ballot stood as follows: Hopkins, 85; Foss, 17; Mason, 4; Shurtleff, 14; McKinley, 1; Calhoun, 1; Lowden, 1 (all Republicans); Stringer (Democrat). 74.

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#### The "Wide-Open" Tax Law of Minnesota.

By decision of the Supreme Court of Minneapolis, made early in the present month, the people of that State are freed from the restrictions upon taxation which have heretofore proved a shelter especially for privileged corporations with large landed interests. The court holds that the tax amendment voted upon by the people two years ago (vol. ix, p. 1091; vol. xii, p. 14) was adopted.

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This amendment was proposed in 1905 by William P. Roberts, in the lower house. It embodies the principles advocated at about that time by Lawson Purdy, now president of the New York tax department. As will be seen from its text, which follows, the amendment allows the legislature to exempt any class of property, provided that taxes upon any taxed class shall be uniform:

The power of taxation shall never be surrendered, suspended or contracted away. Taxes shall be uniform upon the same class of subjects, and shall be

levied and collected for public purposes. But public burying grounds, public school houses, public hospitals, academies, colleges, universities, and all seminaries of learning, all churches, church property, and houses of worship, institutions of purely public charity and public property used exclusively for any public purpose, shall be exempt from taxation, and there may be exempted from taxation personal property not exceeding in value \$200, for each household, individual or head of a family, as the legislature may determine; Provided, That the legislature may authorize municipal corporations to levy and collect assessments for local improvements upon property benefited thereby without regard to a cash valuation; and, provided further, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to affect, modify or repeal any existing law providing for the taxation of the gross earnings of railroads.

Adopted by the legislature and approved by the Governor against the opposition of the powerful corporations of Minnesota, this amendment was voted on by the people in the Fall of 1906. A majority of all the votes cast at the election was required for adoption. The State canvassing board declared the tax amendment carried by a small margin, and the good roads amendment (voted on at the same time) as having failed by a small margin. On appeal to the courts, promoted by the great mining interests, the District Court of St. Louis county decided that enough votes for the good roads amendment had been miscounted for the tax amendment to defeat the latter and carry the former. The miscount was due to some official negligence which had put the tax amendment first in order on the ballot, and the good roads amendment first on the tally sheets. The court based its decision upon a canvas of 654 voting precincts out of the total of 2,670. Appeal to the Supreme Court of the State has resulted, as stated above, in the establishment of the tax amendment as part of the constitutional law of the State.

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Meantime, the amendment had been again voted upon, at the election of 1908, when it was defeated for lack of a sufficient majority. This result is of no practical importance now. By the Supreme Court's decision the way is now open for progressive fiscal legislation. While the mining and other great landed interests are conscious of a severe defeat, the single tax agitators of the State are delighted. They express themselves as considering Minnesota as now "the brightest field for the single tax in the Union," because a favorable legislature may adopt land value taxation for State and local purposes, abolishing every other form of tax.

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#### **Last Annual Report of the Provisional Governor of Cuba.**

On the 28th the United States withdraws from Cuba and the provisional government dissolves (p. 82). In his annual report to the Secretary of

War of the United States, for the year ending December, 1908, Governor Charles E. Magoon says in regard to Cuban finances:

While on the establishment of the provisional government in Cuba there was apparently \$10,000,000 in the Cuban treasury, yet of this amount the Cuban congress had by special laws appropriated approximately \$9,000,000 for various public purposes in addition to the regular budget. All indebtedness of the provisional government up to and including November 1 has been paid and discharged in full, and it is believed that the provisional government will close its administration without leaving a floating indebtedness and with a substantial balance in the treasury. There have, however, been undertaken during the existence of the provisional government, after the fullest consideration of the subject by the President, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War, of the United States, two large projects affecting the sanitation of the island of Cuba, involving an expenditure of probably \$15,000,000. These works are the sewerage and paving of the city of Havana, and the installation of a water and sewer system in the city of Cienfuegos. The expenditure made by the United States for the intervention and the extra cost of the army of Cuban pacification, maintained in the island during the existence of the provisional government, amounted on June 10, 1908, to \$5,311,822, and this amount will be materially increased before the termination of the provisional government, and will be further increased by the withdrawal and distribution of the troops now in Cuba.

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Governor Magoon makes the following plea and recommendation in regard to the wreck of the battleship Maine, still lying in Havana Harbor (vol. i. no. 1, p. 9):

The sunken battleship is a serious menace to the shipping of the harbor, as it occupies a portion of the best anchorage. The obstruction has increased annually during the last ten years by causing a shoal. But more important than any obstruction to navigation is the fact that this wreck, although it contains the bodies of sixty-three American seamen, or what is left of them, is apparently abandoned and forgotten by the government and people of the United States. Thousands of Americans and thousands of other nationalities annually enter the harbor of Havana, and probably not one omits to express regret and censure for the deplorable spectacle. It has become a national reproach and an international scandal. The neglect to remove the wreck is attributed by many, especially the large Spanish contingent in Cuba, to the fear that its removal will disclose the fallacy of the popular belief that the Maine was destroyed by a torpedo or mine instead of an interior explosion. So generally does this opinion prevail that I believe the Cuban government was deterred thereby from dealing with the wreck as an obstruction to navigation of its coastal waters and destroying it. I earnestly recommend that the United States government take immediate steps to accomplish the removal without further delay.