



A FEW days ago two members of the editorial staff of a huge metropolitan publication were discussing the approaching Christmas and its literature. One of them was of the opinion that Christmas had been so overworked that exhaustion was impending; that an endless repetition had already begun.

The other was rather more optimistic. He maintained that the Christmas theme, unlike most others, possessed the power of renewing itself; that it was endowed with unfailing inspiration.

"Why, man," he declared, warming

to his contention, "If I were the poet that you believe yourself to be I could find the material for a neat collection."

"Stop right there!" the other interrupted briskly. "That's the very point that clinches my argument."

"What?" his fellow demanded helplessly.

"The fact that I have done the Christmas poem stunt with unfailing regularity ever since I was able to hold a pen. The whole business is as stale as—"

"And what's the matter with Santa Claus?"

"Consummate old humbug—not a symptom of originality!"

"Hold!" The optimist flicked the ashes from his cigar and laid it on the edge of his desk. "Right there I take issue with you. The Santa Claus conception fairly bristles with originality. There are no two persons in the round world who have precisely the same idea of the personal appearance of the saint."

"Convince me," sneered the other, folding his arms and assuming an attitude of skeptical resignation.

"I'll do it—voluntarily!" He turned to the phone at his elbow and rang up the art department on the sky floor. "Mr. Michelangelo in? Oh, that you, Mike? Mike, I want you to do me a favor—no, no, not money this time. I want a Santa Claus symposium—and it must be impromptu."

"Better give him a liberal translation," advised the other sarcastically. "Mike isn't much of a linguist, you know."

"No, Mike, it isn't a new beverage, it's this—listen: Dante Burns and I

are having an argument over Santa Claus. He says there's only one of him—that everybody's Santa Claus is alike. Now, Mike, I want you to show him his mistake. Call in half a dozen or more of your artists and without a hint of your own have each of them sketch off-hand a picture of Santa Claus as he believes him to be. When each man has finished let him sign his name to his sketch and give it to you. When they are all in send them down to me. Now, get busy at this, Mike, and we'll reciprocate in kind.

"Anything in it?" Well, no—financially, that is. Lots of glory, though. The sketches will be bunched and will go into the paper. I'll see to that. If, that isn't enough, Burns'll turn you out an up to date obituary sonnet for your personal use. Be careful to have the performance entirely impromptu. How much time will we allow you? How much do you want? All right, make it half an hour. If you will guarantee me protection from Burns, whose attitude is threatening."

This is the way it happened, and the accompanying artistic symposium is the result. In half an hour Mr. Michelangelo sent the sketches—there were nine—to the editorial room.

Both sides claimed unqualified victory. The promoter of the scheme pronounced the sketches to be nine distinct species of the genus Santa Claus. The poet was just as positive that they were all but variants from the original stock.

At the conclusion of a discussion, which brought them no nearer together in the matter of the original contention, they agreed to refer the whole business to the general public, that impartial judge from whom there is no appeal.

FACTS ABOUT THE VOICE.

People who aspire to be either public speakers or singers should learn one or two simple facts in the physiology of the organs of voice. The range of the singing voice is seldom more than two and a half octaves, and for different voices this is in different parts of the musical scale.

When one is singing, and attempts to sing more loudly, by directing attention to the throat one only raises the pitch. The tighter the vocal chords are made the higher is the pitch, but loudness depends on the work done by the lungs—that is, on the blast of air sent out. Hence, a deep breath makes (when breathed out) a loud voice, but a strained throat makes a shriek.

Careful speakers make the lungs work and spare the throat. In fact, for a voice to be loud it is essential that the chords be not stretched.

One very foolish thing that some people do is to change the singing voice to a falsetto. That voice is apt to come back when one does not want it. By the way, although every one knows that we speak and sing with the outgoing breath, every one does not know that a ventriloquist speaks with the indrawn breath.

A JAPANESE WONDER.

At Nishima, in Japan, there is a wonderful castle possessing a gold lined well, which affords the garrison an abundant water supply. Not only does gold line the well, but it is also fashioned into two great golden dolphins which glitter on the castle roof. These dolphins are centuries old, and one of them was once taken down and sent for exhibition to Vienna as a rare example of antique Japanese craftsmanship. The fate of Cleopatra's needle befell the dolphin, as the ship on which it was sunk, and the ornament remained for many years at the bottom of the sea. Numerous attempts were made to raise it, and at last one was successful, and the golden dolphin was reinstated in its original place, never (it is to be presumed) to leave it again.

GOOD MATHEMATICS.

In East Indian schools mental arithmetic is a vastly more serious matter than it is in the schools of England. Pupils of ten years are taught to remember the multiplication table up to 40 times 40.

President Roosevelt's Cabinet as It Is Today; With a Few Observations on the Decline of Precedent

THESE are rather trying times for those of us who are not yet emancipated from the influence of precedent. There are those among us—a fair sized and certainly highly intelligent minority—who have been experiencing a series of more or less disintegrating shocks ever since the president began to manifest his apparent lack of veneration for political tradition. Their present condition is that of bewildered wonderment—they realize that the ship of state has escaped shipwreck thus far, but they cannot comprehend the reason therefor.

Yet that reason is far from mysterious. It may be found in the fact that the American state is not dependent for its perpetuity on anything that has happened in the remote past. It may be true in a sense that "all law and order are the result of carefully hoarded tradition," but the American commonwealth is a law unto itself. The iconoclastic nature of no single member of its composite nationality, be he president or recently naturalized citizen, can work great and permanent injury.

More than that, we have the reputation of being precedent smashers. Our interest in tradition is not a very serious matter, and precedent is quite likely to appeal to our sense of humor. We follow the common government through the abyss crypts in which so much of the history of Britain lies buried, but we are not so overcome by the environment that we cannot extract a modicum of amusement from the pilgrimage. Few of us are ever so impressed that we fail to smile when the solemn and unlettered guide recites his perfunctory speech over the tomb of the Scottish queen whose sad fortune and many indiscretions resulted in the loss of her head.

So it is that the unconventional method of any of our executives is more likely to inspire amusement than disquietude. Our national stability and elasticity have been revealed to all the outside world in this way, if in no other. We have not patterned largely after the tradition of others, and it is becoming very evident that we do not purpose to depend on our own past as a model for present and future conduct.

The United States senate is reputed to be the one particular adjunct of our national legislative system that is still wedded to precedent. It is fortunate perhaps that it is so, for our tendency to swing to the opposite extreme it is well to be met by a restraining conservatism. It is the senate that still reserves for itself the privilege of being properly indignant at any attempted infringement of its rules of established order. No man, be he "way up" or "way down," may venture to ignore the etiquette which precedent has saddled upon this august body.

From time immemorial—as immemorial, that is, as our comparative age as a republic will permit—it had been the custom of the president to withhold his nominations of cabinet appointees until his message had been sent in to the congress. This time, however, Mr. Roosevelt sent in his list for confirmation on the first day of the session.

"Why did he do it?" was a question that found itself in many a senatorial mind and found utterance from more than one senatorial lip. It was not that he was unfamiliar with the practice,

for he had conformed to it on former occasions. It was not because the case was urgent. To suspect the president of any ulterior motive was equally untenable. There was little cause to regard it as an executive joke. What was it?

Nobody ventured an opinion—openly. It furnished the minority an opportunity to say some rather witty things, and the majority not only laughed when the laugh came in, but contributed to the entertainment. The senate

had no pressing business on hand and might have confirmed the nominations at once, but it didn't. It could at least maintain its reputation for conservatism, and it did. Because the president had seen fit to violate precedent there was no reason why the senate should become his accomplice in such an unheard-of lapse from the traditional. The nominations were held over, and the dignity of the nation's "house of lords" was preserved for future usefulness.

After adjournment the speculation over the president's action was carried to the cloakrooms. In these safe and cozy retreats many unofficial reasons were suggested and numerous witticisms sprang into being.

"How do you like our kindergarten?" asked a venerable minority humorist of one of his fellows who is high in administration favor.

"Immensely," was the reply. "I hope you folks will improve your opportunities. You've lots to learn."

"To unlearn, you mean. How about yourself?"

"Are you prepared to turn your back on the country's most sacred traditions and begin again de novo?"

"Well, I don't object to a thing simply because it's new," was the guarded reply.

"Not even to a third term?" persisted his interrogator.

"As an alternative—no. Better that than to step down and out."

The old wit shrugged his shoulders with a dexterity that was almost Gallic.

"It is evident that you are an apt pupil," he said.

It was expected that the nomination of Charles J. Bonaparte to be attorney general, Victor H. Metcalf to be secretary of the navy and Oscar S. Straus to be secretary of commerce and labor would be sent in early in the session.

No one, however, had any idea that the appointments of George B. Cortelyou as secretary of the treasury, George von L. Meyer as postmaster general and James R. Garfield as secretary of the interior would be announced at present. Leslie M. Shaw, the present incumbent in the treasury office, has threatened so often to retire that the public had ceased to take him seriously. Ethan A. Hitchcock, who is a holdover from the first McKinley administration, having succeeded Corne-

lius N. Bliss as secretary of the interior, had given no intimation of his intention to retire before the conclusion of his term in March.

Of course the present officers will not be ousted by the mere fact of confirmation of their successors by the senate. The senate confirmation simply gives the president the right to issue the commissions to the new men, and not until a cabinet officer receives his commission can he be a full fledged member of the administration. So that Mr. Garfield's nomination and confirmation need not prevent Mr. Hitchcock from remaining until March if he so desires.

Mr. Bonaparte has conducted the affairs of the navy department with as much success as may be attained by a civilian, but he has always been desirous of trying his hand at the management of the government's legal business, and he makes the shift with great cheerfulness. Mr. Cortelyou has made himself so necessary to the administration that he is in a position to

make his own selection of a cabinet position. He has served a long and trying apprenticeship at Washington, having been head of the department of commerce and postmaster general, in which office he is succeeded by George von L. Meyer.

Messrs. Meyer, Straus and Garfield furnish the new blood for the cabinet. The last, however, James R. Garfield, son of the murdered ex-president, is not new to Washington. He has been a protegee of the administration from

1900, having been appointed United States ambassador to Italy in that year. He was afterward transferred to the Russian mission. He is an especial friend of Mr. Roosevelt, and his appointment to a cabinet position is due to the president's desire to have him within companionable distance. Mr. Meyer is a Bostonian, was graduated from Harvard a year in advance of the president and is a man of large means.

Oscar S. Straus, the new secretary of commerce and labor, is also a diplomat, having been minister to Turkey from 1887 to 1889 and again from 1897 to 1900. He was born in Georgia in 1850, is an alumnus of Columbia and has had degrees from several American institutions. Mr. Straus is also a philanthropist, an author of repute, a successful merchant, an author of considerable note and a member of a host of exclusive societies and clubs. He has the distinction of being the first Hebrew to become a cabinet official.

Secretaries Taft and Root remain undisturbed in their departments of war

Washington chose Jefferson for his first secretary of state. When Jefferson became chief executive he lost no time in securing the services of his capable fellow Virginian, James Madison. Monroe offered the position to John Quincy Adams as a consolation prize, and Jackson extended the same courtesy to Van Buren. There were no more secretaries who afterward became president until the administration of Polk, who appointed Buchanan to the department of state.

And Buchanan was the last secretary of state who ever became president. There was plenty of first class presidential timber among those who followed, but none of them succeeded in reaching the goal. Many of them were candidates, some of them more than once. Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Edward Everett, Lewis Cass, William H. Seward, Thomas F. Bayard, James G. Blaine—what a galaxy of intellect!

No secretary of the treasury ever became president of the United States. Some of them seemed to be billeted for the supreme honor, but it was not so ordained. U. S. Grant was the only president who had held the office of secretary of war, although Jefferson Davis was Franklin Pierce's head of that department.

And these are the only presidents who were cabinet ministers. Grant, in 1867, who held the office for a few months during the administration of Andrew Johnson, was the last.

THEODORE TILTON.

Theodore Tilton has resided in Paris for many years and is among the well and hearty. You can frequently see his white head towering over the crowds of Parisian and American as-

sembles. He is a good lover of art and never misses the opening day of a picture exposition, or a salon. He walks along with a most serious expression until he meets a friend, and then his face relaxes and his greeting is most cordial. His words are uttered slowly, but they always mean something, and that is not faint praise in times of nonsensical verbiage. In the beginning of his life in Paris, Theodore Tilton resided in an old fashioned

barometer is 31.53 inches. That was, at Barnaul, in Siberia, and on the same day there were 36 degrees of frost.

The first entry of a member of parliament with two Christian names occurs in 1552. Thomas Maria Wingfield sat for Huntingdon.

Before the invention of printing the price of a small Bible was \$150. Today the New Testament may be purchased for a nickel.

India has 25,000,000 acres of irrigated land.

An oarsman during a race puts forth

erful navy would maintain during a day's work.

John was far the commonest of British Christian names in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thomas came next.

Guslav Jovanovich, the Russian cat's king, owns 400,000 acres of land, 1,000,000 sheep and keeps 24,000 sheep dogs.

The spirit of St. Sildwell's church, Exeter, England, was covered with copper taken from the bottom of an old man-of-war broken up at Exeter.

highest in Paris and Prague of any European towns, but London is rapidly closing the gap.

The funnels of the Great Eastern were a hundred feet in length.

The existing weight of silver money is about 100,000 tons.

There are 2,000,000 native Christians in Africa.

Queen Victoria coined 65 per cent of all the gold coined in England in the past 600 years.

There are four Scottish breeds of cattle—namely, Polled Angus, Galloway,



BITS OF NEWS.

An agent at Algiers has shipped to Paris a cargo of roots that are exactly like carrots, except that they are all black outside and striped or mottled black when cut in sections. They grow freely in Algiers and are declared to be better than red carrots.

A doctor called in to attend a Spanish constable who had been injured by a fall at Seville discovered that the man was a woman. She adopted the masculine dress at an early age and

then emigrated to Spain. For many years she acted as "chef" to the civil governors of Seville and finally ended the police force.

During the year 1904-05 233 vessels, of 158,081 tons, belonging to the United Kingdom, were lost at sea, a decrease of sixty-two as regards number, but an increase of 22,107 tons when compared with the previous year. Wrecks and casualties caused the deaths of 759 members of crews and twenty-two pas-

wrecks on England's coasts numbered 1,899.

The nut trees of the world could, it is calculated, provide food all the year round for the population of the globe, Brazil nuts grow in such profusion that thousands of tons of them are wasted every year.

A Brazilian spider spins a web of which the total length of the strands has been estimated at two and one-quarter miles.

German, which is spoken by upward of 75,000,000 people, ranks third in num-

ber of speakers, the first being English, of Europe, the first being English, of the second Russian and the fourth French.

In Germany over 8,000,000 persons are insured against sickness at an average premium of \$3.75 a head.

The frame of the "Virgin Child" in Milan cathedral is of pure gold and lapis lazuli and is valued at \$125,000.

The largest mail in the world is that which leaves Cannon street, London, on Friday nights for China, Japan and other parts of the world via Brindisi.

The Australian birth rate is 7 per cent below that of England.

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