

the documents were complete and rather clumsy forgeries.

With the question of wrong-doing by United States Senators out of consideration, the question that remains is whether or not the Mexican Government sought by illegitimate propaganda to influence opinion in the United States. Mexican officials have denied *in toto* the charges and the existence of the documents.

A special Committee of the Senate, headed by Senator Reed, of Pennsylvania, has undertaken a thorough investigation. If this Committee finds that the documents were forgeries, it can clear the reputation, not merely of the four Senators, but of a neighboring Government. If the Committee should find that the documents are genuine, it may be able to do nothing about it.

Involved in this affair, however, is another matter of very grave import. It is that of the freedom of journals and journalists to traduce the good name of public men.

Mr. Hearst, the first witness to be brought before the Committee, testified that he did not believe the Senators named received any money, yet that he did believe the documents were genuine. The practice of conscientious journalism, one would think, would have impelled Mr. Hearst to see that a similar statement was made in his newspapers when the documents were published.

If the work of this Committee does anything toward curbing irresponsible journalism in the United States, one Senatorial investigation, at least, will have been worth while.

Death Revives a Thrilling Story

THE recent death of Ellen M. Stone calls vividly to mind American excitement and indignation when, twenty-six years ago, the news came that Miss Stone, an American missionary-teacher, had been seized, with another woman, a Bulgarian pastor's wife, by brigands near the line between Macedonia and Bulgaria.

The two women were hurried into a mountain fastness. Miss Stone asked why they were seized. The answer was: "We have taken you for money. We need money for our revolution, and you come from a rich country which will pay a large ransom."

They asked \$100,000, and got, in the end, about \$65,000, raised by popular subscription in America. During their six months' captivity Miss Stone and



Wide World

Colonel Lindbergh being greeted by Governor Alvarez on his arrival in Mexico City
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Mrs. Tsilka (who gave birth to a child while a prisoner) were treated kindly and well fed. The head bandit said: "You were both very well when we took you, and we intend to keep you so. Besides, there is no ransom for a dead captive."

In this case the safety of these women was the paramount feeling in all hearts. We said, in effect, "Get the women out, and demand reparation later."

Almost anything could happen in the Near East in those days; but when Morocco heard the ultimatum, "Perdicaris alive or Raisuli dead," we got Perdicaris, we paid nothing, and we recovered damages.

At Fifty and at Seventy-five

THE statement has been made many times in recent years that American newspapers have become standardized, as alike as the proverbial peas in a pod. And that is true—but not quite.

The city of Washington, surfeited with excitement, recently had in addition to all the rest two newspaper birthday anniversaries within a week.

The "Post," fifty years old, got out a special edition of somewhat more than two hundred pages, with pictures unnumbered and endless columns of recounted exploits.

The "Star's" birthday, coming half a

week or so later, was celebrated in a one-column box which said:

75 Years Ago

Today

The Evening Star
Began Publication
In Washington.

The fringe of boastful youth persists at fifty, but sedate achievement speaks at seventy-five.

A Comet for Christmas?

GAMBLING ahead of time on the future performance of a comet, the most fickle of all heavenly bodies, is what the editors are forced to do several days before the recently discovered Skjellerup's Comet swings up into position where it may be seen from the northern hemisphere. If by the time this issue of The Outlook has reached the reader the comet has turned out to be a fizzle, it will be the reader's turn to laugh. For comets are quite as temperamental as opera singers—they often flatly refuse to perform in the manner predicted. A comet may approach the sun with a perfectly good tail, and then, after passing round the sun, curl up that showy member and sulk, showing to no better advantage than a small star. Or it may reverse that action—or even fall into the sun.

Skjellerup's Comet, so called because

an amateur astronomer of that name discovered it from Australia on December 3, must go through life in future with an unpronounceable name—unpronounceable, that is, for those who do not know that the “j” is sounded about like a “y;” for it is the rule among astronomers that the discoverer of a new comet, be he astronomer or otherwise, may write on it a “keep off the grass” sign for all time; no other name will ever be substituted for his.

There are a number of self-schooled specialists in comet finding, not all professional astronomers by any means, who spend hours and hours at the telescope sweeping the sky in great systematic arcs in search of these intruders.

Comet seeking is one of the few remaining cases in which the modern astronomer uses his eye instead of the photographic plate.

What's in a Comet ?

THE newspapers have kept the reader in daily touch with the comet which is now speeding away from the sun at a rapid rate.

Usually a comet consists of three parts: a comparatively small nucleus of loose matter; a very large visible head or coma, chiefly of luminous gases, surrounding that nucleus; and a tail, generally millions of miles in length.

Everybody knows that a comet's tail is about as near to nothing at all as could be imagined, but the actual nucleus is almost as much of a vacuum. Imagine a cubic mile of space peopled only by a dozen pebbles of stone or metal no larger than cherries—that is a sample cubic mile of a comet's nucleus. Yet if one gets down to figures, it works out that a “traveling gravel bank” of that sort, say the great Halley's Comet, whose nucleus was twenty-five miles in diameter, would contain enough of these lumps to weigh 25,000,000 tons! For long years millions of these little companionate bodies have been moving in general unison through space, but occasionally the particles have bumped one another, a tiny bit has been bumped off each piece, and these particles travel along with the rest, since there is no air in space to check their progress, until they approach the sun.

Then a striking thing happens: those of the particles which are so small that the pressure of sunlight against them outbalances their gravitative force are literally pushed out behind, forming the tail; and the odd thing is that when the comet gets around the sun and re-

turns toward outer space again these tail particles are “blown” out in front of it, not behind, by the same force. It is as if a running man's coat-tails were to fly out in front of him.

For more information about comets the interested reader may well turn to some text-book, like the new and detailed astronomy of Russell, Dugan, and Stewart, of Princeton.

An Efficient, but Not Too Wise a House

WITH less than two weeks of the session behind it, the House of Representatives had passed the Tax Reduction Bill. Such prompt action is another indication of the at least comparative efficiency of the more numerous house of Congress.

It is estimated that the bill will, if it becomes law as it passed the House, reduce receipts by \$289,770,000, whereas officials of the Treasury Department had said that the greatest reduction which could safely be made was \$225,000,000. The Ways and Means Committee reported a bill which provided for reductions exceeding this sum but by less than \$8,000,000. The items providing for additional reductions of almost \$60,000,000 went in as amendments offered from the floor.

If the House will not accept the Treasury's estimates of the taxes needed to balance the Budget, then it must be prepared to go below the Budget Bureau's estimate of expenditures. After everything has been said, however, in favor of accepting the Treasury estimates, something remains to be said for the provision of the Constitution that legislation for the raising of revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives. Members of Congress contend that this means something more than that a tax bill shall be first introduced in the lower house.

The House has not been wise in ignoring the recommendations of the Treasury; but its right to ignore them might become, under other circumstances, a duty.

The Dragon Lashes the Red Bear

Moscow's hold on the Nationalist movement in China, which has been slipping for some time, seems finally to be broken.

On December 11 General Chiang Kai-shek, who has just been made head of the Nationalist Party, declared that he would seek unity among the factions in

the party and the friendship of foreign Powers with the possible exception of Soviet Russia. He criticised the Soviets for seeking to win advantage for themselves through intrigue in China, and urged the other foreign nations—particularly the United States—to take new steps for the revision of their treaties with China.

At the same time a Communist faction was attempting to establish control of Canton, where the Nationalist movement began under the leadership of the late Sun Yat-sen. On December 12 the news was that the radicals were in control of the southern city and were circulating hand-bills denouncing Chiang Kai-shek.

Two days later, on December 14, loyal Nationalist troops had regained command and were gradually restoring order after a period of rioting and looting almost unprecedented even in China. And in Shanghai, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chiang's administration at Nanking was telling the foreign residents that the Nationalists were “thoroughly fed up with Communist activities.” China, he said, was at the crossroads of a decision between a Soviet and an Anglo-Saxon democratic form of government.

On December 15 the Nanking Nationalist Government severed all relations with Soviet Russia, ordered Soviet diplomatic, consular, financial, and trade agents to withdraw from Nationalist territory within seven days. Risings like the Canton Communist rebellion, it was announced, had been plotted in other important Nationalist centers.

On December 16, in the course of a ruthless round-up of radicals in southern China, it was rumored that the Soviet Vice-Consul at Canton had been killed. Soviet subjects desiring to stay in China were required to register with Nationalist authorities.

On December 17 Moscow transmitted a note to Nanking, denying the charges against Soviet representatives and denouncing the “so-called Nationalist Government” as “under the control of generals influenced by foreign imperialistic Powers.”

So ends another chapter of the story of Bolshevik propaganda in the Far East.

A Fixed Sum for War Damages

S. PARKER GILBERT, the young American Agent-General for Reparation Payments, has re-echoed the American contention at the Paris Peace Conference