

ment for confirmation, with the possibility of receiving concessions for fifty years. Under these regulations, any titles not presented before January 1, 1927, would be regarded as void.

Mexico contends that Article 27 is derived from an original declaration of the Spanish crown regarding lands in Mexico. The Indians always held their lands on a sort of communal basis, under the terms of this declaration; and the present Mexican Government argues that they were improperly deprived of their lands during the Gonzales and Diaz administrations. Under the law of 1884 and subsequent codes, ownership of all rights was vested in the surface title. It was in accordance with these laws that American and other foreign holders of oil properties acquired their unlimited titles in fee simple. One of the slogans of the revolution in Mexico which resulted in the present Government was the restoration of Indian lands and a return to the system of vesting ownership of mineral rights in the nation. So there arose the conflict between the claims of Mexico and the United States.

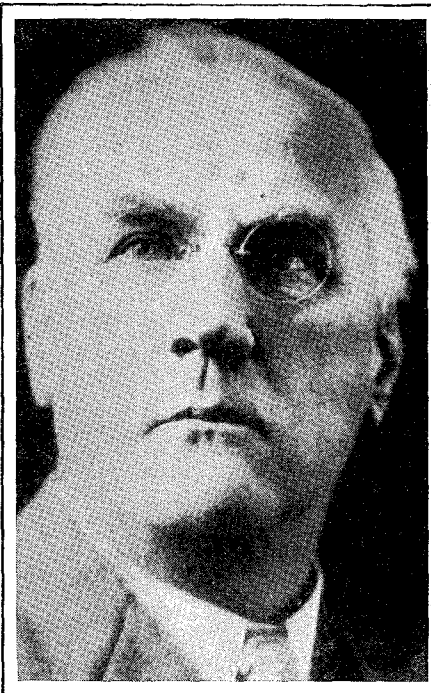
According to the Mexican Embassy, the property holdings of citizens of the United States in Mexico amount to \$1,389,061,000, of which \$318,063,000 is represented by oil interests. The Embassy has further stated that oil companies have applied for confirmatory concessions on 323 claims covering 17,000,000 acres of land held under titles secured before the passage of the Constitution of 1917. Applications concerning titles secured after that time bring the total number up to 643 and the area to 26,833,330 acres, which is said to be all but about six per cent of the total area involved. Meanwhile, the Mexican Government has canceled some 153 drilling permits on lands acquired before May, 1917, in cases where the companies have not complied with the requirements of the new laws—thus holding up the operations of the industry. It is to meet and settle the issue involved in this action that the case of the Transcontinental Company, first referred to, has been brought.

The case should provide a final test of the opinion of the Mexican courts. It should also open the way—if that proves necessary—for arbitration of the dispute. On the one side is the Mexican contention as to the original constitutional status of land titles and the legality of the arrangement by which it was changed. On the other side is the contention of the United States as to titles in fee simple acquired in good faith.

The resolution passed unanimously by the Senate, in favor of arbitration, points the just way out of the difficulty.

Dr. Durkee at Plymouth Church

IN taking up his duties as pastor of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, the Rev. Dr. J. Stanley Durkee inherits the riches of a great past. As with material wealth, the treasure of a fine tradition carries with it not only resources but impediments.



Keystone

The Rev. Dr. J. Stanley Durkee, new pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, Brooklyn

The pioneer who breaks a new way through the wilderness has a freedom which the heir of a great estate cannot enjoy; but he lacks the guidance that custom and experience give. Fortunately, the greatest tradition of Plymouth Church is that of liberty.

Henry Ward Beecher, its first minister, who was also the first editor of this journal, was an apostle of freedom in the anti-slavery cause. His successor, Lyman Abbott, who was also his associate and successor as Editor-in-Chief of this journal, served in the pulpit of Plymouth Church the cause of religious freedom. Under Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis Plymouth Church has carried on the tradition of liberty. Dr. Durkee will find there an atmosphere of freedom not only of speech but of work.

Conditions in Brooklyn Heights have changed—there, as elsewhere in the greater city of New York—since the days of Beecher. Instead of the former

stable population of established families there is a shifting population. In the quarter-century of Dr. Hillis's pastorate the church has enlarged its permanent resources. It has new tools with which to work. The younger generation to which it must appeal is not seeking to be served so much as to be shown ways of service. It is an active generation, and the problem of the churches is to harness its activities to useful ends.

Dr. Durkee, a native of Nova Scotia, was educated at Bates College in Maine and Boston University. He was ordained to the Free Baptist ministry, was pastor of the South Congregational Church at Brockton, Massachusetts, and since 1918 until his call to Plymouth Church was President of Howard University, one of the foremost institutions for the education of Negroes. He was welcomed at his installation by representatives not only of his own denomination but by Protestants of other communions and by a Jewish rabbi. He brings to his new service a mind free from dogmatism, a mellow and friendly spirit, a wide experience, and a happy freedom of utterance.

The Oratorical Contest on the Constitution

THROUGHOUT the country there is now taking place a competition for high school and private secondary school students consisting of competitive orations on the Constitution of the United States. By April 1 the winners in the several schools will have been selected. In a series of other contests the competitors in the National finals at Washington on May 20 will be selected. In October the American champion will meet champions of similar contests in other countries.

During the competition in the schools The Outlook will print each week an article as an aid to the pupils who enter the competition and to their teachers. The first of these articles appears in this issue. It is on Washington's contribution to the Constitution. Dr. Krout, the author of the article, is Assistant Professor of History at Columbia University. We believe that this article and those that succeed it will not only start the thinking of the contestants in the right direction but also stimulate them to further study. It was never more important than it is to-day for the people of America to understand their own Government. We hope, therefore, that these articles will be of interest to adults as well as those who are to take part in this exciting and useful competition.

A Snap-Shot of Florida

By LAWRENCE F. ABBOTT

Contributing Editor of *The Outlook*

I AM writing this article in a country house on the shores of Long Island Sound about forty miles from New York. As I look out of the window I see a thin film of snow on the ground and a heavy sheet of ice on an inlet of the Sound—heavy enough to bear an automobile. In fact, yesterday, I saw a sedan in the middle of one of these sheets of ice. It apparently had taken a party of skaters out from the shore who were wheeling and cavorting about the car on their thin steel runners. This kind of climate has its advantages. It produces the reddest-cheeked children that can be found in the world. Possibly it explains the contention of the biologists and psychologists who tell us that it is the Nordic peoples that make the world go round.

But, admitting all the landscape beauty and health-giving qualities of a Northern winter, I cannot help thinking, with the thermometer at zero, a little wistfully of the charms of Florida, to which I made a flying visit of a little more than a week just after New Year's Day. I did not go down to the land of Ponce de Leon as a mere tourist, but on a matter of important business—not connected, let me hasten to add, with speculation in land. My business being accomplished, I had three or four days to devote justifiably to play. Two or three things were impressed indelibly upon my mind. For example, an afternoon's automobile drive of fifteen or twenty miles on the wonderful beach that skirts the ocean at Ormond and Daytona; another motor drive of sixty or seventy miles inland from Ormond to the charming lake region about Winter Park and Orlando; and, perhaps, best of all, an afternoon spent on a beautiful golf course near the last-mentioned places. The weather was like that of an early June day in New England or New York. I played in a summer costume, and the putting greens were covered with a silky and verdant turf that would have satisfied the most exacting demands of an habitué of the Scottish St. Andrews.

Now, I am not trying to defend Florida from the punishment which she is deservedly suffering at this time from her "busted boom." The real estate speculators have done her a good deal of harm, and it will take her a good while to get over the effect of the jocund financial spree into which she plunged a year ago so light-heartedly. She is now en-

joying the inevitable headache of "the morning after." The boomers defend themselves on the ground that their well-laid plans were frustrated by "an act of God," meaning the hurricane that visited Miami. As a matter of fact, this storm did comparatively little damage even in the southeastern part of the peninsula, and no damage at all to those parts of the State whose economic structure rests upon sure foundations. What did break down was the indiscriminate lot selling in the swamp lands and the wood lands which are as yet wholly undeveloped and uninhabited. I do not say uninhabitable, because these swamp lands and wood lands may some day be turned into fertile fruit and truck farms. The swamp lands especially will be valuable when an economic system of drainage is perfected, for they contain a rich soil made of vegetable matter that has been decomposing and disintegrating for ages.

No doubt an army of men who went to Florida to "get rich quick" have suffered. Possibly some innocent but gullible bystanders also suffered. A typical indication of the speculative collapse struck my eye as I was passing through Orlando. On the outskirts of this pleasing and prosperous city there was a huge vacant lot, as large as a small city park, packed with automobiles, above which was displayed a great canvas sign with the legend "Used Cars for Sale" emblazoned upon it. Some of these cars were handsome sedans and limousines, shining with nickel and varnish, and looking as if they had just come out of a dealer's show-room. They were mute witnesses to the fact that the blow that struck Florida was not "an act of God," but an act of foolish humans—as foolish as those who were submerged in the bursting of the notorious "South Sea Bubble" or the disastrous failure of John Law's gambling "Mississippi Company."

Florida, however, has undoubtedly an assured future, provided its settlers and developers are willing to remember the Scriptural injunction, which is just as economically sound to-day as when it was uttered three or four thousand years ago, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Even in the fertile and semi-tropical soil of Florida fruit and vegetables do not grow without labor and cultivation. But think, O ye Yankee farmers, of the cultivation of a black

soil without a stone in it even as large as a pebble!

Some humorist has said that Florida is four hundred miles long, a hundred miles wide, and two feet high. This somewhat monotonous plain lacks hillsides, mountains, and valleys, but it has a wonderful seacoast, many placid and picturesque lakes, and some rivers and inlets that add diversification to the scenery. As I have already said, a large portion of its soil is rich in growing properties; I do not mean real estate properties, but those chemical properties that are necessary for the production of food, both animal and vegetable. I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but I am convinced that Florida is destined to fulfill, in a measure of which its present development is only the beginning, two important functions for the whole Northern Atlantic Seaboard and the Middle Atlantic States. It will be both the winter vacation park and the winter truck and fruit garden for a vast snow-bound territory to the north of it. It is not the intent of this article to boost Florida at the expense of California, its great competitor. California has some advantages of topography and climate which Florida can never possess. Its snow-capped mountains give it a unique beauty of scenery and enable it to produce agricultural products not only of a semi-tropical but of a temperate zone. It takes, however, four days for the New Yorker and three days for the Chicagoan to reach California by the fastest train. The traveler can flee from the ice-bound waters of Lake Michigan or Long Island Sound to the gentle air of Florida in thirty-six hours. This accessibility is a great asset.

To the student of economics and politics the romantic history of Florida makes a strong appeal. New Englanders are prone to think that the civilizing of this continent began with the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock in 1620. The truth is that European civilization got its first foothold on what is now the territory of the United States when Ponce de Leon, a companion of Columbus, landed on the coast of Florida near the mouth of the St. Johns River, a hundred years before the Pilgrims touched Plymouth Rock. There are still to be seen at St. Augustine picturesque and substantial architectural remains of Ponce de Leon's civilizing labors. We may not owe to the Spanish forefathers the debt of moral gratitude which we owe to the English forefathers, but we certainly owe them something which we ought not to forget in our present-day enthusiasm for things Nordic. In order that I may not receive letters of protest