



THE storm which has for many months been brewing in the Orient has broken with sudden and awful force. Japan, unable to obtain from Russia even promises of the concessions in Korea which she demanded, peremptorily severed diplomatic relations, and at once began active hostilities. The result of the first naval battle, fought at Port Arthur, was disastrous to Russia. At this writing the result of the war cannot be predicted, but it is apparent that fighting will be pressed by both sides until one or the other is forced to yield.

Despite the long negotiations carried on between the two countries prior to the rupture, there is ample evidence that Russia was not prepared for war. Her weakness and unpreparedness were apparent in the first fighting. Japan, primed for the fray, swept the defending squadron at Port Arthur before its superior attacking force, sustaining practically no damage to her own fleet of modern fighters.

As soon as it became apparent that war could not be averted, a squadron of United States war ships was ordered to the scene of action to protect American interests, and on February

9, Secretary Hay sent an identical note to the powers, asking them to join in representations to Japan and Russia to the effect that the integrity of China must be preserved.

THE fire which devastated the business portion of Baltimore on Sunday and Monday, February 7 and 8, was one of the worst which has afflicted any city since the great Chicago conflagration. The estimated property loss was over \$100,000,000. The great Baltimore fire seems to prove again the futility of attempting to construct buildings said to be fire-proof. The great bulk of the buildings destroyed were of brick and stone, and were supposed to be capable of withstanding a conflagration of any proportion. These melted down like chaff before the angry element which assailed them. The result is that architects and builders are again confronted with the old problem of devising some means of construction which can be relied upon as being capable of withstanding fire. The theory that any building, no matter how modern in design, will prove a barrier to turn back flames, has been so often disproven that the casual observer has lost all faith in their efficiency.



MRS. FLORENCE MAYBRICK

From a Photograph Taken Before Her Incarceration.

MRS. FLORENCE MAYBRICK, the American woman who for more than fourteen years has been confined in an English prison, has been released on what seems to be a conditional pardon. Sentenced for life after conviction on a charge of poisoning her husband, she has suffered imprisonment for years, though every effort has been made by

friends who believed her innocent, to obtain her release.

Mrs. Maybrick is now in a sanitarium recuperating, and it is probable that she will be finally released in July. Under the terms of her ticket of leave, she is bound to forego all efforts to seek publicity and not to appear upon the stage or write a story of her conviction and imprisonment.

WITHIN the past decade, and more particularly within the last year, the section lying west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains has come forward as the greatest wealth producing, as well as the strongest political factor in the United States. The eyes of the people of the East and far West, as well as of the people of the old world, are turned for the time being upon the residents of the Mississippi Valley. In agriculture, in the production of cattle, horses and sheep, and in the mining and smelting of lead, zinc and iron, the Middle West is now far in advance of any other section of the country. This section, the producer of the great bulk of the raw materials used in the factories of the East and in the cotton mills of the old world, is the one section in this country not adversely affected by the temporary stagnation caused in other sections by the high prices of many of the raw produces used in manufacture. The Southern cotton grower is benefited by the advance, and the miner in the Missouri-Kansas lead and zinc district reaps a profit by the advance in price of the product which he has to offer. Every fat steer and every sheep or horse which the farmer or ranchman offers for sale is readily bought at a good figure. Wheat, oats and corn command good figures, and it is not easy to convince the man who is fortunate enough to reside in the Middle West that he is not prosperous.

COLUMBIA'S threat to invade Panama in an effort to force the overthrow of the government formed since the secession of the latter state from the federation, appears

now not to have been idly made. Though it is not probable that all the force Colombia can throw across the mountain border of Panama can do more than temporarily harass the people of Panama, it is now almost certain that the United States will be forced to make good the threat to keep the territory within the proposed canal zone open for traffic, even at the cost of war. Colombia apparently stands to gain but little by the employment of such force as she can command and employ in this war of coercion. What she may lose remains to be seen. Stubborn resistance may result in the disintegration of the Colombian Federation. Uncle Sam is apparently in no mood to dally with the conflicting forces on the isthmus and further south. It has come to be a generally recognized fact that the recurring conflicts in the Central and South American states nearest our border have, for years, militated against the trade and commerce of the United States, and particularly the states of the South and Southwest. The establishment of sound policies of government in those countries, with the consequent assurance of stable trade relations, will solve a vexed problem, and one which it is the apparent duty of the people of the United States to settle.

WHITAKER WRIGHT, the king of the British get-rich-quick contingent, has proven the truth of the adage, "the wages of sin is death." It is recorded that he promoted the most gigantic fraudulent scheme known to modern, and, perhaps, to ancient history, the London and Globe Finance Corporation. His