

CURRENT TOPICS

IT IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE APPARENT that a rigid congressional inquiry into the affairs of the postoffice department as well as into those of all other departments of the federal service will be necessary. On July 22 Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Bristow announced that Charles Hedges had been removed from the office of superintendent of the free delivery postoffice department. The charge against Mr. Hedges is that he falsified his diary and loaned his traveling commission. It is alleged that Hedges reported himself as being at various places when in fact he was not at those places on the dates mentioned, in some instances being hundreds of miles away. Mr. Hedges has issued a statement in his own defense asserting that while Mr. Machen was ill he (Hedges) was called to Washington to take charge of the entire service, that while he so acted he received \$2,000 salary as assistant superintendent while Mr. Machen received \$3,500. Mr. Hedges says that it was necessary for him to obtain a per diem allowance in order to make up the difference in salary, the theory being that strictly speaking under the law he was not entitled to per diem when at headquarters. On July 22 it was announced that John R. Garrison of the treasury department had been appointed auditor of the District of Columbia to succeed James T. Petty who was removed as a result of the alleged embezzlement of \$73,000 of the funds of the office by James M. A. Watson, a clerk. Petty was permitted to resign.

IT IS NOW WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT AN organized movement is on foot looking to the political destruction of Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Bristow. The rural free delivery service was recently placed under Mr. Bristow's charge and the officials in that service are very hostile to the fourth assistant postmaster general. It has been charged that Mr. Bristow is not at all friendly to the rural free delivery scheme. His friends deny this accusation and say that the charge is made only for the purpose of forcing Bristow's removal or resignation. It is claimed that behind this anti-Bristow move will be found many of the officials of the rural free delivery service as well as the friends of those republican officeholders who have been exposed as a result of Bristow's investigations. The Washington correspondent for the New York World says that every senator and representative who has heretofore utilized the rural free delivery patronage in building up his personal machine is also after Mr. Bristow's official head.

MR. BRISTOW'S FRIENDS ADMIT THAT A powerful fight is being waged against him, but they say that Mr. Bristow declined to begin the postoffice investigation until he was personally assured by the president that he would be protected after its conclusion. Mr. Bristow is credited with having said: "But one fate overtakes the investigator, he always gets singled." The Washington correspondent for the World says: "The politicians have waited for a pretext to make war on Mr. Bristow, and it has now come in the allegation that he is unfriendly to rural free delivery. His announced policy that each route must have 100 families, with 3,000 pieces of mail matter, afforded the opportunity desired. He had previously announced that in the establishment of routes the indorsement of a senator or representative should weigh no more than the ordinary citizen. Protests against Mr. Bristow are now pouring into Oyster Bay and coming to the postmaster general. He is credited with being an enemy to rural free delivery and seeking to ruin the service. Rural free delivery is the popular fad of the masses and no more appropriate watchword could be chosen than that Mr. Bristow is hampering the system."

THE OPINION IS EXPRESSED BY THIS Washington correspondent that the president is not likely to long hold out against the combined solicitations of all the men in public life; that he must yield sooner or later and that then Mr. Bristow must either withdraw from the service or have his power taken away from him. This correspondent says that on September 1, 1902, Mr. Bristow was slated for dismissal and only the fact that he had gained some renown

through his investigation of the postal scandals in Cuba saved his position at that time. It is reported that Senators Hanna, Elkins, and Scott of West Virginia, are leading the crusade against Bristow and while it is admitted that Bristow's success in the present inquiry will serve as a means of grace for a time, it is predicted by this correspondent that "when the newness has diminished and the edge of his achievements is deadened, his retirement seems inevitable." At the same time it will be readily understood that Mr. Roosevelt will be a bit embarrassed when he comes to yield to the demands for Bristow's scalp. Outside of a few republican politicians and other interested persons no one believes that Mr. Bristow is at all hostile to the rural free delivery scheme. He is generally regarded as a faithful public official whose only offense has been that he has sought to discharge his duty without fear or favor and that he has been the relentless foe of corruption in his department. Mr. Roosevelt may find it inconvenient to refuse to yield to the clamor of influential republican politicians, but he will doubtless discover that whenever Mr. Bristow is removed there will be a very general demand among the people for a reasonable excuse for the dismissal of a faithful public official.

WILLIAM A. MILLER WAS RECENTLY REMOVED from the position of assistant foreman in the government printing office on the ground that he had been expelled from the local union of the international brotherhood of bookbinders. Complaint was made to the civil service commission and that body demanded that Mr. Miller be reassigned to duty. On July 13 Mr. Roosevelt wrote to the secretary of commerce, in whose department the government printing office is, directing that Miller be reinstated. In that letter Mr. Roosevelt said that he would withhold final decision of the whole case until he had received the report of the investigation. In this letter Mr. Roosevelt said: "On the face of the papers presented Miller would appear to have been removed in violation of law. There is no objection to the employes of the government printing office constituting themselves into a body if they so desire, but no rules or resolutions of that union can be permitted to override the laws of the United States, which it is my sworn duty to enforce. Please communicate a copy of this letter to the public printer for his information and that of his subordinates." The bookbinders union has issued a statement with relation to the Miller case. In this statement it is said that the organization does not seek to direct the policies or to conduct the affairs of the government printing office, but that the rules of the same control all the union officers in the country. In this statement it is said that Mr. Miller ignored the notices to appear before the delegates of his union and says that while the union has never requested Miller's discharge from the government printing office, the union's constitution forbids members to work with a suspended or expelled member.

THE CENSUS BUREAU HAS ISSUED AN INTERESTING report concerning the electric railways of the country. The Brooklyn Citizen says that this report "puts at rest all rumors regarding the greater prosperity and stability of steam roads; for, it shows clearly the increase in the use of electricity as a motive power with a corresponding abandonment of other forms of energy and the extension of the trackage used everywhere." In this report it is shown that there are 817 operating street and electric railway companies in the United States, and 170 which are leased to others by which they are operated, making a total of 987 companies controlling 22,577 miles of single track; while the par value of the capital stock and funded debt outstanding amounted to \$2,308,282,099. The income aggregated \$250,504,627, and the expenditures \$219,907,650; and it was found by statistical calculation that while the operating expenses had increased since 1890 129.5 per cent, the income had increased 173.2 per cent, showing unmistakably that as a whole the companies had prospered in proportion as they supplied "a long-felt want." There were paid in salaries of officials and clerks \$7,439,716, and as wages of 133,641 employes \$80,770,449, to which immense sum nearly 5,000,000,000 passengers con-

tributed by the payment of fares; this being in 1902 an increase of 3,000,000,000 since 1890.

FOR THE LAST DECADE ALL RUSSIAN vessels have enjoyed the unusual privilege of having the Suez canal dues refunded by the state exchequer. It was recently announced from Odessa that the Russian minister of finance had decided that this practice should be continued for another decade, although of late years it has cost the imperial government about 100,000 pounds per annum. Some objection has been raised to this privilege being given to the Russian vessels as it frequently happens that vessels trading in ports in European Russia or the far east are under the Russian flag while in reality they are partly owned by men of other nations and that, as is often the case, when their cargoes are consigned to foreign European ports, the refunded canal dues of 9 francs per ton are really a premium paid directly into the pockets of non-Russian ship owners. Despite these objections, however, the minister of finance has determined to continue the concessions for another ten years.

THE NEWSPAPERS OF THE COUNTRY have recently contained references to what W. T. Stead, the noted newspaper correspondent, calls "the latest outrage perpetrated upon the moral sense of mankind." This applies to the decision to impose upon the inhabitants of India one-half the cost of maintaining in South Africa a British garrison. Mr. Stead declares that before the late war a garrison of 6,000 men was ample to keep the British flag flying in that section of the world and he adds that after spending 200,000,000 sterling and killing 40,000 men, 20,000 children and 5,000 women, it is now discovered that flags are unsafe unless South Africa is permanently garrisoned by 25,000 men.

THE MASSACRE OF THE KING AND QUEEN of Serbia together with several members of the royal household and the subsequent accession of Peter I. to the ill-fated throne has served to call attention to many phases of the situation in Serbia. One curious fact is pointed out in a recent cablegram from Belgrade. This refers to the fact that no king of Serbia has possessed a crown since the fourteenth century and it seems that the new monarch has determined that he must have one at last. He has therefore delegated the task of discovering the form of the ancient crowns worn by the kings of Serbia in olden times and the search is being made in all the libraries within his reach, in order to ascertain how the new crown shall be constructed. One report has it that the treasury in Serbia is so depleted that the king must pay for the bauble out of his own pocket.

AN INTERESTING COMPARISON OF THE ship building activity in America today with what it was some time ago was recently made by a writer in Leslie's Weekly. This writer declares that in the early days of the industry fine shipbuilding timber grew right down to the shore on the Atlantic coast and that there was hardly a bay on the New England shore where there was not a ship building yard. This writer says: "Ships built of Essex oak are famous for their longevity. The oldest ship in the world, the mail schooner Villigant, running into St. Croix, French West Indies, is now under the French flag, but was built, so I have been told, in 1802, of Essex oak, at Essex, Mass., and was long under the stars and stripes. But, alas! Americans in these days can neither afford to build ships nor to sail them as American ships, except in the coastwise trade, where they are protected by law. It costs nearly one-fourth more to build a steel steamship in America than in England or Germany, and when they are built they are either not as good or are more unlucky. The underwriters' records show that American-built ships do not stand the racket compared with the Clyde product."

THE STORY OF HOW MEERSCHAUM, THE beautiful white earth which is used for making expensive pipes, is mined and made up is told by a writer in the Cincinnati Enquirer. This writer says that the clay is found in excep-