

CURRENT TOPICS

GOVERNOR MAGOON, of Cuba, has made public an official report made by Major E. T. Ladd, relative to the condition of the Cuban treasury. "The results," reports Major Ladd, "show a deficit of approximately \$4,000,000 above the surplus on hand and revenues. In the time possible to devote to the subject at present I can only deal with generalities." Referring to this report the Havana correspondent for the New York Herald says: "Exactly the same ground has been gone over in detail independently by Controller Voliente and the Herald correspondent, whose results were cabled to the Herald last night. The controller makes the prospective deficit about \$7,000,000, and the Herald correspondent about \$6,000,000. There is one item which Major Ladd seems to have put too low. This is the estimated cost of the revolution, which he puts at \$5,300,000. According to Controller Voliente, it will be nearer \$6,800,000. The major's estimate of \$16,000,000 as the total revenue for the remainder of the year is also probably too low by \$3,000,000. The difference in the calculations are of little importance compared with the official conclusion following the Herald's announcement that a large shortage faces Governor Magoon unless he sets aside all special appropriations for new works that can wait and economizes to the last degree in general service."

THE LADD REPORT was a revelation to the Cubans, who believed the island had a cash balance of more than \$12,000,000. The Herald correspondent explains: "The Herald's announcement of the true condition of Cuba's finances cabled here, and now confirmed by the official figures, was a revelation to the Cubans, who, with the rest of the world, believed the island had a cash balance of more than \$12,000,000, which sum Secretary Taft found in the treasury. The actual balance was less than \$2,000,000, the rest being necessary to pay accrued debts. Congress has saddled on the treasury a load that it could not have well carried if it had settled its own revolution and the United States had not been forced to stop it. The figures show that the country, through extravagance, was riding for a fall. Its situation, it is hoped, has been discovered in time. Governor Magoon has the power to sit hard on the lid, and although it was not the intention of the Washington administration to interfere with the work of the Cuban congress or do anything except see that the laws were fairly and honestly administered, the emergency revealed by the examination of treasury books makes it absolutely necessary to nullify much that congress has done and institute reforms before unthought of. Another item in Major Ladd's report included in the country's assets as 'foreign debt, bonds \$1,000,000' may not belong there. There is doubt, the major admits, whether these bonds were brought from the general fund and are therefore a part of it or whether they were purchased by a special fund and are to be devoted to special purposes. His figures and conclusions are highly interesting."

THE MISSOURI Press association recently designated Walter Williams, R. M. White and W. O. L. Jewett as a committee to draft resolutions in tribute to the memory of the late William F. Switzler. The committee reported as follows: "Born in Fayette county, Kentucky, March 16, 1819; died in Columbia, Missouri, May 24, 1906. The Nestor of the Missouri Press, Author, Orator, Historian, Publicist, Journalist, Gentleman. Colonel William F. Switzler was a hero. There are various kinds of heroes. Heroism grows in various places. There are heroes of the battlefield and of the days of the peace. There are heroes of the store and of the street. There are heroes of the times of great stress and strain and heroes of the common hours. There are heroes of the homes where the drum beats and the flag floats to the breeze, and there are heroes, fewer and nobler, of the minutes when 'tis three o'clock in the morning. Few men, perhaps none, who ever resided in Columbia, had drunk so deep of life as Colonel Switzler. He had held high place, been foremost in public affairs, successful in business as money makes success. He was conspicuous as fame may make. Years had come.

His one-time friends passed away. He was the last leaf. His fortune faded into nothingness. His name was no longer on every tongue. He was on the shelf. Younger men took his place. He was, gently, but by very force of circumstance, put aside by the busy world in which he had borne such prominent and useful part. This was his life. Yet here he played the hero. He was gracious of speech and kindly in criticism, hopeful, uncomplaining to the last. He smiled in the very face of death as he had laughed at disappointment and jested at despair. Aside from all he did of public service—and it was much—done in the days when men were honored for giving their lives for the public, honored and abused, twin compliments—his life was worth long remembrance and a town's gratitude for its sunny optimism. He was a hero. He always smiled."

MRS. JEFFERSON DAVIS, who died recently in New York City, was born in 1826 at her father's home, "The Briars," near Natchez, Miss. Referring to Mrs. Davis, a writer in the New York World, says: "Her grandfather, Governor Richard Howell, of New Jersey, was a revolutionary officer, and her father, William Burr Howell, won distinction under McDonough on Lake Champlain. Mrs. Davis' maternal grandfather, James Kempe, was a wealthy Irish gentleman who went to Virginia after the Emmet uprising, and who moved to Natchez when her mother was an infant. Miss Varina Howell married Jefferson Davis in 1845, when she was little more than eighteen years old. She first saw him at the plantation of his brother, Joseph E. Davis, not far from Vicksburg. The impression he made on her must always be interesting. She recorded it in her memoirs of her husband: 'Mr. Davis was then thirty-six years old, and looked about thirty; erect, well proportioned and active as a boy. He rode with more grace than any man I have ever seen, and gave one the impression of being incapable of being unseated or fatigued. From an old letter to my mother, I quote: "I do not know whether this Mr. Jefferson Davis is young or old. He impresses me as a remarkable kind of man, but of uncertain temper, and has a way of taking for granted that everybody agrees with him when he expresses an opinion, which offends me; yet he is most agreeable and has a peculiarly sweet voice and a winning manner of asserting himself. The fact is, he is the kind of person I should expect to rescue one from a mad dog at any risk, but to insist upon a stoical indifference to the fright afterward. Would you believe it? He is refined and cultivated, and yet he is a democrat."

AT THE TIME referred to, Jefferson Davis was at the beginning of his political career. He had not been elected to congress nor had he distinguished himself in the Mexican war, from which he returned severely wounded. The World writer says: "Mrs. Davis accompanied her husband to Washington when he was United States senator, 1847-1852; secretary of war, 1853-57; United States senator again, 1857-61, and she was in Richmond during the terrific struggle in which he played the chief part as president of the Confederate states. 'The day before our departure,' she wrote, 'Mr. Davis gave me a pistol and showed me how to load, aim and fire it. He was apprehensive of our falling into the hands of disorganized bands of troops roving about the country, and said: "You can, at least, if reduced to the last extremity, force your assailants to kill you. If you can not remain undisturbed in our own country, make for the Florida coast and take a ship there for a foreign country. If I live, you can come to me when the struggle is ended; but I do not expect to survive the destruction of constitutional liberty." The storm of war centered around their public life; their private life was full of peace and sunshine. Mrs. Davis was always her husband's loving wife and helpmate, intellectual companion and confidante. Greatly she aided him to achieve his career. She met misfortunes like the true daughter of good Americans. During the first year of Mr. Davis' imprisonment Mrs. Davis was not permitted to be with him, but she was allowed to join him during the second year at Fortress Monroe. They went to England

in 1867 and remained three years, then lived in Memphis, Tenn., for eight years, and then removed to Beauvoir Station, on the Mississippi coast."

OFFERS FOR THE Beauvoir estate were repeatedly made and as repeatedly rejected by Mrs. Davis. At one time she refused an offer of \$90,000 made by a syndicate, but when the United Daughters of the Confederacy sought to purchase it for a home for the confederate veterans, Mrs. Davis sold the place for which she had refused \$90,000, for the sum of \$10,000, provided the home be maintained in memory of her husband. The World writer says: "Mrs. Davis was her husband's amanuensis when he wrote his 'History of the Confederate Government.' After Jefferson Davis' death, in 1889, Mrs. Davis wrote many articles for newspapers and magazines. Particularly for the World she wrote, addressing herself to women, young and old. Mrs. Davis soon learned, as she said in the letter quoted here, never to look back. She met Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant at West Point in 1893. The Widow of the North and the Widow of the Confederacy, both of whom had suffered so much, became friends, exchanged confidences. Mrs. Davis' last years were infinitely saddened by the death of her daughter, Miss 'Winnie' Davis, the accomplished and attractive woman who was fondly called 'the Daughter of the Confederacy.' Miss Davis died at Narragansett Pier, R. I., in September, 1898, and 70,000 mourning people attended her funeral in Richmond, Va. The veterans who fought for the cause which was lost, and their descendants, almost venerated Mrs. Varina Howell Davis. Of her family only one daughter survives, Mrs. J. A. Hayes, of Colorado Springs, whose children greatly comforted their grandmother in the winter of her life. Of recent years Mrs. Davis resided in New York in winter and in Narragansett Pier in summer. The family is perpetuated by a son of Mrs. Hayes, who by act of legislature was permitted to take the name of his grandfather and call himself Jefferson Davis."

OFFICIALS OF THE postoffice department have announced that they intend to abolish "the back stamp" on letters—that is the postmark on the reverse of the envelopes, to show when it arrived at its destination. There are, however, many protests against this change. These protests are voiced by the Houston Post when it says: "The information is valuable to a business man and is information he wants. If his mail is delayed he wants to know whether it was in transit between the point of mailing and the point of destination, or whether it occurred between the postoffice and his business house. He wants to know when the mail arrived, if it is in any way delayed, and he wants some information on which to fix the blame. If a letter arrives at a Main street business house, delayed, the business man knows whether the delay is in Houston or on the road, because the front and back stamp tell all about it. If there is no back stamp it will be very easy for the postmaster in the local office of destination to shift the responsibility to the railroad delays, to the office of origin, etc., but when the tell-tale evidence of his own stamp is there he must account to some one for the slowness with which the mail matter is handed out."

AN INTERESTING letter on "Disappearances in Russia," was written to the London Times by McKenzie Wallace from which the New York World takes the following extract: "Some of my own acquaintances of the past week have mysteriously disappeared, and I know that they were a moderating influence in the societies to which they belonged. Thus the government, who have a finger on the public pulse and know that the new sentiments that stir the people to desperate deeds can never be exercised by any of their enchantments, are depriving the revolution of its best elements and handing it over to the control of the men whom they have most reason to dread and who have least reason to dread them—the men of the Terror; men of consummate and merciless skill, whose fundamental principle is that