

CURRENT TOPICS

WITH THE fiscal year ending June 30, 1909, according to the annual report of the bureau of railway news and statistics, seventeen railroad companies of the United States completed a six-year term without a passenger killed, 95 companies a five-year term, 177 companies a four-year period, 228 companies three year, 287 companies two years, and 347 companies, out of 368 reporting, one year of immunity. Referring to this showing the New York World says: "This gain in safety was accomplished along with tremendous increases of track mileage and with a multiplication of risks through additions to train schedules. The mileage of the death-immune American roads of 1908-9 was 159,657. Only twice in half a century has the no-fatality record been made on the railways of Great Britain, which have now, according to the bureau report, a mileage of 23,000. These figured facts of safety on the rail are in gratifying disagreement with a popular idea. As explaining contrary impressions, we have to remember that whereas most train wrecks get into the news, nothing is said of day-to-day trips, without event. The bureau statistics seems to demonstrate that railroad managers and employes are taking increased care and that the mission of the block-signal is being perfected."

FREDERICK M. KERBY, a stenographer in Secretary Ballinger's office, testified that Oscar Lawler, a lawyer attached to Secretary Ballinger's department, dictated the opinion which the president issued in exonerating Secretary Ballinger. This testimony created a great stir in Washington. The president deemed it of sufficient importance to write the public a statement through a letter addressed to Senator Nelson. Mr. Taft says that he did use some of Mr. Lawler's words in his letter of exoneration but that it was only done to expediate the work and that the exoneration letter represented his sentiments after thorough investigation. Immediately after the stenographer, Kerby, had given his testimony he was discharged by Secretary Ballinger. Mr. Ballinger wrote to Mr. Kerby this letter: "Sir: You are hereby discharged from the public service because you are unworthy to remain in it. In divulging information obtained by you in the confidential relation of stenographer to the secretary of the interior; in communicating that information to those whom you are bound to know are wrongfully seeking to bring reproach upon the administration and to injure me; and in deliberately mis-stating material facts as to which you did treacherously communicate you show that you are unworthy and unsafe. The fact that your treachery is futile can not mitigate the character of your offense. For the good of the service you are hereby dismissed. Respectfully."

WHILE Stenographer Kerby was on the stand he was badgered by the republican members of the committee and the attorney for Ballinger. Secretary Root wanted to know if Kerby thought it was just the thing to violate his duty as a confidential clerk to Ballinger. Kerby replied that he regarded himself as a confidential clerk to the government and therefore considered it to be his duty to take the public into his confidence. Following Kerby Attorney Oscar Lawler, the man who wrote Mr. Taft's exoneration letter, took the stand. He was in a very bad humor and he denounced Attorney Brandeis as a liar, withdrawing the remark when he was rebuked by the committee.

AS A RESULT of Stenographer Kerby's testimony the Ballinger committee ordered E. C. Finney, assistant to the secretary of the interior, to produce the copies of certain letters between Secretary Ballinger and George W. Perkins of J. Pierpont Morgan's company. Mr. Finney reported that he had searched through the files and had found only one letter. This letter was one written by George W. Perkins of J. P. Morgan & Co., to Ballinger last summer on the former's return from a trip to

Alaska. Mr. Perkins wrote that he thought he had discovered two new glaciers in Alaska and asked Ballinger if they could not be named Princeton glacier and Tiger's Trail glacier, after the New Jersey university. Mr. Ballinger referred the matter to the coast and geodetic survey, which replied that the two glaciers already had been charted and bore other names. The prosecution has sought to show that the Morgan-Guggenheim interests were the persons controlling or seeking to control the Alaska situation through the interior department. Stenographer Kerby read several letters from Secretary Ballinger's personal file yesterday which he contended showed Mr. Ballinger to be on friendly terms with Mr. Perkins. One of these letters showed that the secretary was a guest of Perkins one Sunday last May. Attorney Brandeis holds it to be exceedingly material to the investigation for the committee to know the extent of Mr. Ballinger's relations with Mr. Perkins.

THE MEXICAN Herald is guilty of this bit of lese majeste: "Most of us in Mexico—those who were living here fourteen years ago, and differing perhaps with many of the radical notions of the famous Nebraskan—cherish a sentimental regard for Bryan, who championed the cause of his country's chief mineral product so eloquently, and that at a time when silver was being legislated against, and shut out of the mints of the world as a principal money metal. The sum and substance of Bryan's offending was that he wanted to put into the hands of the people a coin called a dollar and actually worth about fifty cents." The gold bugs shrieked, the press and pulpit bellowed against the knave and mischief-maker, and Bryan was defeated. Then came Nature, turned Bryanite, giving forth her huge stores of unmined gold such quantities that the yellow metal has depreciated to a point that its purchasing power has fallen off quite to the worse that was predicted of the Bryan silver dollar. Not that this is good altogether; prices have gone too high in relation to the earning power of the masses; debts have been scaled down to the benefit of the debtor class and to the detriment of the creditor class; serious men are apprehensive of the future, and statesmen are puzzled over the results of the continued heavy outpouring of new gold. Nature is an enthusiastic, reckless, wanton disciple of Mr. Bryan, regardless of consequences. Could he have had the clairvoyant vision, and have seen what was coming, he might have won immortal fame as the champion of cheaper gold, for it was on its way, and today presents the gravest problem confronting the financiers of the world."

MR. BRYAN spoke on May 20 before the Lake Mohonk conference on international arbitration. He said: "Some favor large navies in the belief that they will compel peace, others believe, and I share the belief, that peace can better be promoted by discouraging the spirit that inspires the building of big navies. Our nation is in a better position than any other to test the power of example in leading the nations into the paths of peace. It does not need to compete with the world in battleships. It will become an increasing influence for peace in proportion as it relies on peaceful methods rather than on a show of force. It ought to announce its willingness to enter into treaties with all nations stipulating that there should be no declaration of war or commencement of hostilities until the matter in dispute has been submitted to an impartial tribunal for investigation and report."

THE ARBITRATION conference in session at Mohonk Lake adopted the following platform: "The sixteenth annual Lake Mohonk conference on arbitration congratulates the people of the United States on the marked progress which the past year has witnessed in the age-long struggle for the substitution of the reign of law, for the reign of force in international affairs. It notes with deep satisfaction the significant announcement of the secretary of state

that the proposed legislation of the international court of arbitral justice, recommended to the powers in his circular note of October 18, 1909, has been received with so much favor as to insure the establishment of such a court in the near future. The conference has further noted with profound satisfaction President Taft's recent declaration in favor of the submission to arbitration of matters of differences between nations, without reservation of questions deemed to affect the national honor and the conference expresses the earnest hope that the president and senate will give effect to this wise and far-seeing declaration by entering upon the negotiation of general treaties of arbitration of this character at the earliest practicable moment. The conference reaffirms its declaration of last year respecting the portentous growth of military and naval establishments and calls renewed attention to the fact that the rapid development of the instrumentalities of law and justice for the settlement of international differences furnishes to the statesmanship of the civilized world the long desired opportunity of limiting by agreement the earliest practicable moment. The coming celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the agreement between Great Britain and the United States definitely limiting their naval force to 400 tons and four eighteen-pounders on the great lakes and the St. Lawrence river, calls renewed attention to the continued menace to the peace of the world caused by prevailing conditions elsewhere, and emphasizes the fact, so well expressed by former President Roosevelt in his Christiania address, that with sincerity of purpose the great powers of the world should find no insurmountable difficulty in reaching an agreement which would put an end to the present costly and growing extravagance of the expenditure in naval armaments."

THE WHITE HOUSE is figuring just now in a little love affair. The Chicago Record-Herald says: "President Taft announced his intention of releasing from the federal prison at Fort Leavenworth Charles H. Thornton, a Chicago man, who is serving a term of five years for robbing the Hamilton National bank of \$10,000 in order that he may marry a Chicago girl who, since her fiancé's incarceration May 2, 1907, has remained faithful to him. The wedding is to take place some time before Christmas. Young Thornton will be released December 8, although his term, with 'good time' taken out, does not expire until January 8, 1911. Thornton and W. W. Baker confessed to taking funds from the bank and to concealing their thefts by juggling the bank accounts. Baker was sent to the Bridewell, and Thornton, who was the brains of the combination, was sent to Fort Leavenworth. It was not known, until an attempt was begun by E. J. Darragh, an attorney for the Chicago Union Traction company, to secure Thornton's release, that there ever had been a romance in his life. Diligent search for 'the woman in the case,' when his speculations were discovered, revealed no trace of her and at his old boarding house, the home of Mrs. F. Agnew, 5409 Calumet avenue, it was said last night that he was not known to have been paying attention to any young woman. Efforts to ascertain her name failed. Officials in the pardon office at Washington admitted that they knew the young woman's name, but declined to reveal it. 'I know who she is,' said one of them, 'but I can't make her name public. She is a deserving woman who has visited her sweetheart in prison many times. There is no use dragging her into publicity.'"

AFTER THE lower house of the New York legislature had defeated the income tax bill the state senate passed the same by a majority of one. The Albany correspondent for the New York World says: "The vote of Senator Edgar Truman Brackett of Saratoga, reluctantly cast under a call for absentees, accomplished the adoption tonight of the Davenport resolution indorsing the Taft income tax plan by the state senate. After a battle lasting more than eight hours the Davenport resolution