

Rural Delivery Recommended.

The continued and rapid growth of the postal service is a sure index of the great and increasing business activity of the country. Its most striking new development is the extension of rural free delivery. This has come almost within the last year. At the beginning of the fiscal year 1899-1900 the number of routes in operation was only 391, and most of these had been running less than twelve months. On the 15th of November, 1900, the number had increased to 2,614, reaching into forty-four states and territories, and serving a population of 1,801,524. The number of applications now pending and awaiting action nearly equals all those granted up to the present time, and by the close of the current fiscal year about 4,000 routes will have been established, providing for the daily delivery of mail at the scattered homes of about three and a half millions of rural population.

This service ameliorates the isolation of farm life, conduces to good roads and quickens and extends the dissemination of general information. Experience thus far has tended to allay the apprehension that it would be so expensive as to forbid its general adoption or make it a serious burden. Its actual application has shown that it increases postal receipts and can be accompanied by reductions in other branches of the service, so that the augmented revenues and the accomplished savings together materially reduce the net cost. The evidences which point to these conclusions are presented in detail in the annual report of the postmaster general, which with its recommendations is recommended to the consideration of the congress. The full development of this special service, however, requires such a large outlay of money that it should be undertaken only after a careful study and thorough understanding of all that it involves.

Very efficient service has been rendered by the navy in connection with the insurrection in the Philippines and the recent disturbance in China.

A very satisfactory settlement has been made of the long-pending question of the manufacture of armor plate. A reasonable price has been secured and the necessity for a government armor plant avoided.

I approve of the recommendations of the secretary of the navy for new vessels and for additional officers and men which the required increase of the navy makes necessary. I commend to the favorable action of the congress the measure now pending for the erection of a statue to the memory of the late Admiral David D. Porter. I commend also the establishment of a national naval reserve and of the grade of vice admiral. Provision should be made, as recommended by the secretary, for suitable rewards for special merit. Many officers who rendered the most distinguished service during the recent war with Spain have received in return no recognition from the congress.

The attention of the congress is called to the report of the secretary of the interior touching the necessity for the further establishment of schools in the territory of Alaska and favorable action is invited thereon.