

## Washington Whisperings

Interesting Bits of News Gathered at the National Capital.

### Taft Boom Was Born in Barber Shop



WASHINGTON.—The nursery of Taft's boom for the presidential nomination was a room in the executive offices of the White House grounds, where President Roosevelt, before he left for his home at Oyster Bay, was shaved each work day. Here, when the boom was a green and tender thing, its first young shoots pushed to the light. Here it was coaxed to sturdier growth. Here, in full blossom, it was talked over and admired.

Frank Hitchcock was the official and the president the unofficial manager of the Taft boom. The president, at these heart-to-heart talks with the candidate, was in a barber chair. A certain White House messenger wielded the razor and lather brush. It was the only part of the day when official business did not claim all of Roosevelt's time. It was Taft's one chance to do most of the talking.

Even then, the barber had to be watchful, and quick to snatch away the brush or blade. When T. R. wants to talk he sometimes forgets he is being shaved. If the barber's hand had not a gambler's quickness, the president would have had the lather brush

in his eye as often as he had it in his mouth. The shaving of the president and the midday cultivation of the boom of Taft started at 1 p. m. and lasted a half hour.

Taft, when he was in Washington, often saw the president several times in the morning. But Mr. Roosevelt had many things on his mind then and no leisure. For an hour or longer after 11:30 his outer office was filled with men who had appointments.

At the one o'clock shaving time came the first respite. The room in which the president was shaved is a small, narrow one, between the president's office and that of Secretary Loeb. It is used as an anteroom to both offices. On the wall is a long, framed photograph of a squadron of battleships.

At this window is a low-set leather upholstered chair. Against the wall at one side a writing desk.

When the time for shaving arrived the low, leather covered chair was pulled out from the wall. A neat foot rest of two steps was produced from under the writing desk and set in front of the chair.

Roosevelt took his place. Then came Taft, who pulled up another chair alongside.

When Taft was away Roosevelt often received others in the shaving period. Sometimes the correspondents talked with him there. Sometimes it was Hon. Jimmy Garfield, he of the classic brow.

### Wholesale Prices Are Highest in Years



It will be of interest to those who were busy last year in keeping the wolf from the door to know that figures on wholesale prices of 258 representative staple articles reached the apex of their soaring last October. These statistics are for the 18 years between 1890 and 1907.

The annual report on this subject of the commerce and labor department shows that the average for the year 1907 was 5.8 per cent. higher than for 1906; 44.4 per cent. higher than for 1897, the year of lowest prices during the 18-year period, and 29.5 per cent. higher than the average for the ten years from 1890 to 1899. Prices reached their highest point during the 18-year period in October, 1907, the average for that month being 1.2 per

cent. higher than the average for the year 1907.

When the commodities are divided into nine groups every group shows an increase in price in 1907 as compared with 1906. For farm products taken as a whole this increase was greatest, namely, 10.9 per cent.; for food, 4.6 per cent.; for clothes and clothing, 5.6 per cent.; for fuel and lighting, 2.4 per cent.; for metals and implements, 6.1 per cent.; for lumber and building materials, 4.9 per cent.; for drugs and chemicals, 8.3 per cent.; for house furnishing goods, 6.8 per cent., and for the miscellaneous group, five per cent.

The effect of the money stringency in the latter part of the last year is reflected in the decrease recorded in all commodities during November and December, the average price showing a decrease of 3.5 per cent. below October. Of the 258 articles for which wholesale prices were recorded 172 showed an increase in the average prices for 1907 as compared with 1906; 35 showed no change and 51 showed a decrease.

### Wiley's Poison Squad End Their Test



DR. HARVEY W. WILEY'S hygienic experimental students, irreverently referred to at times as the "poison squad," have ended the season's feasting at the bureau of chemistry, and their condition is being carefully noted to ascertain what effect the diet has had upon each.

Seven young men compose the class, and they have been giving their services to demonstrate what effect salt-peter and a variety of miscellaneous food products chemically or artificially treated have upon the human system.

The students have resumed the regulation boarding house meals without fear of interfering with the scientific investigations of the government.

Besides taking up such matters as summer beverages, widely advertised as possessing medical properties, but

thought by scientific men to be objectionable because containing caffeine or other injurious substances, there is a wide field for the students to experiment.

One of the most interesting possibilities is the determination of whether or not feunegreek, the famous old world herb remedy, which is part of most medicines advertised to increase flesh, is really what it is said to be, and will accomplish the purposes for which it is advertised. A class in feunegreek is said to be one of the possibilities of the early future.

Condition foods for animals also offer a field of endeavor that Dr. Wiley may yet explore to determine if the claims made for the various brands of food are really true.

The experiments conducted by Dr. Wiley are the first large experiments of the sort conducted in the scientific world. The classes, which were started in the fall of 1902, have already gone through a variety of experiments. Borax and boric acid were the first to receive attention, sulphuric acid, benzene, formaldehyde and copper salts have also been fully tested as to their effects on the human system when taken with food.

### Makes New Record for Cabinet Changes



THE retirement of Secretary of War Taft leaves but two men in Roosevelt's cabinet who were there when he succeeded to the presidency on the death of President McKinley. These are Secretary of State Root and Secretary of Agriculture Wilson.

Mr. Root was secretary of war when Mr. Roosevelt became president in September, 1901. He shortly afterward retired from the cabinet, but was persuaded to re-enter it upon the death of Secretary of State Hay.

There have been more changes and shifts in President Roosevelt's cabinet than in that of any of his predecessors. He has had two secretaries of state, Hay and Root. He has had three secretaries of the treasury, Gage, Shaw and Cortelyou.

With Luke E. Wright he has had three secretaries of war, Root, Taft

and Wright. He has had three attorneys general, Knox, Moody and Bonaparte; five postmasters general, Smith, Payne, Wynne, Cortelyou and Meyer; five secretaries of the navy, Long, Moody, Morton, Bonaparte and Metcalf.

He has had two secretaries of the interior, Hitchcock and Garfield. He has had one secretary of agriculture, Wilson, and three secretaries of commerce and labor, Cortelyou, Metcalf and Straus.

The retirement of Secretary Taft has led to some speculation as to how long Mr. Wilson will continue at the head of the department of agriculture.

The chances are that he will continue to serve through the term of Mr. Roosevelt, and should Secretary Taft succeed to the presidency, it is possible that Secretary Wilson would continue in the cabinet. It will be 12 years next March since Wilson became secretary of agriculture. He is 73 years old, but a man of great activity. However, it has been a matter of some surprise that he has continued in office so long, as it has been the Roosevelt tendency to get younger men into his cabinet.

## KERMIT ROOSEVELT



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Son of the president who will accompany the latter on his hunting trip to Africa on the expiration of his term of office.

## SECRECY OVER A SHIP.

**BIG SEA FIGHTER TO BE BUILT AT NEW YORK NAVY YARD.**

Order Forbids Men Telling Anything About New 20,000-Ton Vessel—Keel to Be Laid Within a Few Weeks.

New York.—In an order which is one of the most sweeping ever issued at the New York navy yard all officers and men employed in the construction of the new 20,000-ton battleship, whose keel will be laid within a few weeks, are forbidden to give out any information whatsoever to the newspapers or the public. So strict is the wording of the order that the officers in charge of the department of construction and repair, to whom it is particularly addressed, will not even give the name of the author.

Rear Admiral Caspar F. Goodrich, commandant of the yard, is in Washington, and it is believed that the order had its origin there. One officer did venture the information that the contents of the document would probably be made public within a few days.

William J. Baxter, naval constructor, who will have charge of the building of the ship, refused to talk about anything connected with his department.

"I am shut up tighter than a clam," he said. "Under this order we cannot give out any information. I cannot tell you when the keel of the new vessel is to be laid. The order won't let me say how many men are to be taken on or laid off."

All other officers connected with the department of construction and repair were as reticent as their chief. At the office of the labor board in the yard it was found that the order had produced an effect similar to that in the department of construction and repair.

While some of the officers and men are of the opinion that the desire of the navy department is to prevent foreign nations from learning of the improvements in the battleship, others see in it the result of the struggle that has been going on between the officers favoring the consolidation of the various departments of the yard and the anti-consolidationists.

The workmen at the yard are opposed to consolidation and many off-

icers are in sympathy with them, for under the new order of things it will be practically impossible for a workman to obtain promotion except by a competitive examination.

**OFFICE CAT PETRIFIED.**

Found Between Walls Thirty Years After Disappearance.

Greensburg, Pa.—The office cat has turned up at last, and a prank of the printer's devil of 30 years ago has come to light. In tearing out a portion of the Mitinger building recently workmen found the petrified body of pussy, encased between floors. Every feature except the whiskers is well preserved and the curio has caused much comment.

Old time printers and veteran newspaper men are racking their memories to recall the disappearance of the cat, but none has been found who remembers the circumstance. Thirty years ago the Greensburg Herald was published in the Mitinger building, and it is presumed the "devil," finding the hand set galleys scarce and little work to do, caught the cat, cunningly concealed her between the floors, and nailed shut the opening.

The piece of petrification is heavier than stone, of a grayish hue, and even the eyes of the feline retain a luster.

**TOO MUCH MUD IN OMAHA.**

Citizens Imbued 11,315 Tons of Sediment in a Year.

Omaha, Neb.—Omaha people have been drinking 31 tons of mud every day, according to the testimony of the city chemist, given in a suit wherein the city is protesting the bills of the Omaha Water company because of the impure water furnished. During the year Omaha people drank 11,315 tons of sediment, the chemist said.

The Omaha water supply is taken from the Missouri river, the muddiest stream in the country. Although alum is used in settling the water, and five different settling basins are contained in the battery of reservoirs, yet the water as it comes from the mains is murky.

The water commissioners are refusing payment of the water bills for the last four years.

## MEXICO'S INLAND WATERWAY

**Canal 104 Miles Long Between Tampico and Tuxpam Built by an American.**

Tuxpam, Mex.—The Mexican government is building an inland waterway 104 miles long to connect the ports of Tampico and Tuxpam. It is now about one-half finished and will cost about \$5,000,000 Mexican money, which is equivalent to \$2,500,000 gold.

It is 75 feet wide and has a uniform depth of 10 1/2 feet. The first division of 66 miles is now practically finished and is open for traffic. It is expected that the waterway will be opened all the way through for small boats within two years.

This waterway runs within from two to five miles of the gulf along its whole length. Its construction grew out of the fact that there are frequent days at a time when small boats engaged in coastwise trade are unable to weather the rough water of the gulf and that there is insufficient water over the bar at the mouth of the Tuxpam river at times to enable the boats to reach the harbor at Tuxpam. Another great incentive that led to the building of the canal was that it would be the means of developing a broad agricultural region that has heretofore been badly lacking in transportation facilities for its various products.

The Tampico-Tuxpam canal follows the route of an inland waterway which has been in use for more than three-quarters of a century.

Capt. Charles Shillaber of Chicago is constructing the canal for the Mexican government on a percentage basis.

He had made a comfortable fortune, had just reached his sixtieth year and

## GIRL RUNS BIG FARM

MANAGES ESTATE WHILE HER FATHER IS IN JAIL.

Daughter of Unfrosted Rector Has Trouble, but Sticks to Hard Task with Success—Incidentally Wears "Merry Widow."

Richmond, Va.—Miss Elizabeth Hargrave, since the incarceration of her father, Rev. James T. Hargrave, the unfrosted Episcopal clergyman, who was recently convicted in the federal courts for using the mails for purposes of fraud, has become sole manager of the estate, Cedarhurst lodge, in Hanover county.

The evidences are that the pretty 19-year-old girl is a genius in the business of operating farms. She appears also to know a thing or two about the law, which information she is studying to advantage in her trials with the county officers.

Miss Hargrave came to the city for the purpose of petitioning for an injunction to prevent the officers from seizing the property of her father while he is a prisoner. The law is to the effect that a prisoner in the penitentiary shall not be liable to civil suits. The question is whether or not the county officers are justified in the seizure, since Hargrave is serving a term in the county jail.

"There's nothing in it. I can't run a farm on air and water," said Miss Hargrave. "When they seize everything that comes to me I can't get on. Why, they even dare to take my own things—my mail, freight and express packages, and everything. They've levied on everything but the place and that is so fixed that they can't get at it. If they keep pushing me I am going to take out the 'homestead exemption.' I don't suppose they can get around that."

"The hardest luck of all," she continued, slightly blushing, "is that I have to take the hay. Several days ago I had a field all plowed up ready for planting. The seeds were at the station, but when I sent for them the information came back to me that they had all been levied on."

Miss Hargrave was neatly attired in a princess gown of striped gray. She wore a "Merry Widow" hat, trimmed in pink feathers and ribbon, with a big-headed hat-pin stuck through the middle of it. Her long brown gloves swung limply across her right arm. Her appearance was that of a carefree maiden, who had never known the meaning of trouble.

"I'll run that farm or die," she exclaimed, as she left to catch her train, having failed in her mission because of the absence of Judge Edmund Waddill from the city. "I'm the girl they can't fool. I'm going back to Hanover to take care of it. There are five men on the place at work to-day. I guess if they were girls, the county officers would try to seize them. It's all very awful, but I am not starving."

**PAIR WEDS AFTER 47 YEARS.**

Outbreak of Civil War Cause of Postponing Marriage.

Lewisburg, Tenn.—After a postponement of their wedding for 47 years, O. P. Starnes of Johnson county, Texas, and Mrs. Woolaver of Archer, Tenn., have been married here. They have gone to Oklahoma on their honeymoon.

The bride was formerly Miss Mary Faley and lived in Greene county, which was also the bridegroom's home. They were to have been married in the summer of 1861, but at the outbreak of the civil war Mr. Starnes enlisted in the confederate army and the marriage was postponed. At the battle of Missionary Ridge the prospective bridegroom was critically wounded and left for dead on the field.

Reports that he had been killed reached Miss Faley, and in time she became the bride of Robert Woolaver, Starnes saw Mrs. Woolaver but once after his recovery and left for Georgia, where he was married. He subsequently moved to Texas.

Eighteen months ago Mrs. Starnes died and the husband recently ascertained that his former sweetheart in Tennessee was a widow. A correspondence was begun which resulted in the consummation of the pledges made many years ago.

**RIDES IN LOCOMOTIVE TANK.**

Machinist Beats Way 260 Miles and Nearly Drowns.

Wilkesbarre, Pa.—Having ridden from Buffalo to this city, 260 miles, in the tank of a Lehigh Valley railroad passenger locomotive, considered an impossible feat in ride stealing, William Bahmiller of Mauch Chunk, was arrested here when the 2:40 express arrived.

Being a machinist by trade, and having worked on locomotive tanks, he knew enough about their steel bracing to risk hanging on, and crawled in at Buffalo. He was in water up to his neck most of the time, and when the locomotive dashed around curves he had hard work to save himself from drowning as the water dashed all over him.

He was also in danger each time the tank was filled, but escaped until it was being filled here; when the fireman allowed it to run over, and Bahmiller had to pop his head out to get air and was discovered.

After hearing his story, Mayor Kniffen fined him only one dollar.

## POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

The helping hand is never empty. One to-day is worth an eternity of yesterdays. There is nothing platonic about a man's love for himself. If a small boy is quiet his mother wonders what ails him. Money makes the mare go—and sometimes she goes to the horse doctor. If a man expects a woman to be reasonable she thinks he is unreasonable.

## SENTENCE SERMONS.

The greedy are always needy. Life is the mill in which men are made. They are richest who give the world most refreshing. Making a name for gold does not make a golden name. Truth rests on facts, but her face reaches higher realms. Hope and aspiration joined make the energy of any life. It often nukes a great load to get a man down on his knees. An appetite for flattery attracts our foes and repels our friends.

## Knew Him.

"William," said the head of the firm, looking at his watch, "I have business out of town this afternoon and may be detained several hours. If anybody should call—" "There ain't no ball game to-day, Mr. Spoteash," interrupted the office boy. "I said nothing about ball games, William," rejoined his employer, eying him sternly. "However, my business is such that it can wait until some other day. That will be all just now, William."

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## All of It.

Newitt—But Dr. Price-Price doesn't ask for pay from poor patients. Markley—No, because he wouldn't get it. When he treated me he asked me if I had any money, and I said "yes," of course. Newitt—Well? Markley—He said, "I'll take it."

## Carriage to Match.

"I heard Miss Gadabout wondering the other day what sort of an electric she should get." "I would advise her, if she wants something fitting, to buy a runabout." —Baltimore American.

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