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OF THE POSTAL SERVICE. WELLMAN INTERVIEWS POSTMASTER GENERAL WANAMAKER. Eight Thousand Pieces of Mail Deposited Every Minute—Almost Two Billions of Ordinary Letters a Year—Sixty-three Thousand Postmasters. (Special Correspondence.) WASHINGTON, Sept. 8.—A short time ago I had a very interesting talk with Postmaster General Wanamaker on the great postal machine which Uncle Sam keeps for the accommodation of the people I found Mr Wanamaker enthusiastic over the usefulness, the magnitude and the possibilities of the postal service. "There are not many people," said Mr Wanamaker, "who appreciate the vastness of this service. The postoffice department is not quite a hundred years old. It is true the postal system was started under the government in 1789, but it was not till 1794 that a permanent establishment was provided for. A hundred years ago our postoffice carried but 2,000 letters and pieces of mail per day. Now more than 8,000 letters and packages are dropped into the mails every minute of the year.

"I often think of the difference between the postoffice department of 1789, when the first postmaster general under the constitution came into office, and the same department of this day. Then the postage on a single letter was six cents for thirty miles; six cents, eight cents, and so on at increasing cost for greater distances, till a letter carried 450 miles or farther—half the distance from New York to Chicago—cost twenty-five cents. A single letter was not permitted to weigh more than a quarter of an ounce. Not a daily mail existed anywhere. There were only 100 postoffices in the entire country. The length of all mail routes did not exceed 3,000 miles. The entire annual revenue of the service fell far short of \$50,000. Then the country was sparsely settled and not much more than a wilderness. The other day I came across some queer recommendations made by Postmaster General Gideon Granger in 1806 concerning the transportation of the mails between Athens, Ga. and New Orleans. Here they are:

"This part of the route ought to be surveyed and marked out, and cleared of trees and underbrush four feet wide. It would be rather an injury than an advantage to clear wider than is necessary for a single horse, as it has been found to encourage a thick growth of underbrush.

"Dog river is forty feet wide and too deep to ford. Two logs may be laid across it, so as to enable the rider to cross with the mails upon his back, and swim his horse alongside. Pascaoula river is 250 yards wide. A family lives there and keeps a canoe, in which the rider with the mail should be crossed, the horse swimming alongside the canoe.

"Four ears later we find Mr. Granger congratulating the country upon the tremendous strides made by the postoffice in expediting the mails. He said that when in 1800 it required to write from Portland to Savannah and receive a reply forty days, it could in 1810 be done in twenty-seven days; between Philadelphia and Lexington, Ky., the time had been shortened from thirty-two days to sixteen; between Philadelphia and Nashville from forty-four days to thirty; and between New York and Canandaigua from twenty days to twelve. This was indeed an improvement, but their fast time of 1810 seems almost laughable to us now.

"When the postoffice department was about half a century old," continued Mr. Wanamaker, "the locomotive began to displace the pony as a carrier of the mails. By that time the service had assumed some magnitude. There were about 10,000 postoffices, post routes covered 113,000 miles, and the annual receipts reached nearly \$3,000,000, though only twenty postoffices received daily mails. But the real growth of the postal system has been in the last thirty years. Since 1860 the population of the country has only a little more than doubled, while the magnitude of the operations of this department has increased five fold.

"We have now such a vast machine that I hardly know how to describe it for you. In the first place, we have an army of 150,000 employees. There are 63,000 postmasters, 10,000 carriers in the city free delivery service, 6,000 in the railway postoffices, 12,000 clerks, besides mail carriers, inspectors and the employees of the general office. We have 63,000 postoffices, and the total length of the mail routes in the country, not including carrier routes in cities, is 480,000. Every working day the mails travel a distance equal to forty-one times around the globe. More than one-half of all the postoffices in the country are supplied with a daily mail, and the great majority of these with many mails per day. In the last thirty years our system has made great strides toward perfection.

"The free delivery service now takes mail to the doors of millions of citizens from two to eight times per day, without extra cost. That has been added in the last quarter of a century, as has the great money order system, by which from any one of nearly 10,000 postoffices sums from one cent to a \$100 may be sent to any part of the world with absolute safety. The people use this system to the extent of \$5,000,000 a week. Another great step in postal progress was the development within the last thirty years of the railway mail service. In 1860 we used 37,000 miles of railroad for carrying mails, at an expense of a little more than \$3,000,000, with only 600 employees. Now we use 100,000 miles of road, spend \$21,000,000 a year in the service, and have 6,000 employees.

"The men employed in this service use 2,800 cars. In a year they travel (in crews) 133,000,000 miles. While traveling they distribute the enormous, almost inconceivable, number of 7,900,000,000 pieces of mail matter, besides receiving for, recording, protecting and distributing nearly 17,000,000 registered packages and more than 1,000,000 through registered pouches. This great task is performed with such care that only four letters in 10,000 are sent wrong. This does not mean that four letters in 10,000 are lost, only that in

distributing 10,000 letters an average of four mistakes is made by which the transmission and delivery of those four missives may be delayed. "Considering the difficulty of the work, that every clerk must carry in his mind the most direct routes to thousands of postoffices, these conditions constantly changing with changes of railway schedules and the time of the day at which the distribution is made, the result is really most wonderful, approaching nearer the ideal than any other branch of the public service in this or any other country.

"Are many letters lost in the mails, Mr. Wanamaker?" "Surprisingly few, indeed. Ninety-nine out of a hundred losses and non-deliveries are the fault of the writers and not of the service. The safety of our mails is really most remarkable. It is estimated that we carry in a year 1,854,670,000 ordinary letters. The total losses due to carelessness or depreciation of employees was about 14,000, which you can see was a loss from this cause of one letter in 132,500. What is the average money value of a letter in the mails? That is something which we can arrive at only by comparison, as the values of letters are not declared and officials are not permitted to inquire what letters contain.

"It is interesting to know, however, that the average value of the money letters opened in the dead letter office is \$1.63; of the letters containing postal notes, \$1.51, and of letters containing negotiable paper, \$55.07. The average value of all letters opened there is twenty-five cents and two mills. At this average value of all the ordinary letters in the mail in a year would be \$467,000,000, and of this great sum only \$3,600 is lost through carelessness or crime on the part of employees. Even this low ratio of loss will be greatly reduced now that lottery letters, which tempt so many postal employees, are excluded from the mails.

"Now that I am on the subject of losses in the mails," continued the postmaster general, "I will tell you some surprising facts. Of more than six and a half millions of pieces of mail received at the dead letter office in a year only a million contained anything of value. Its almost incredible, but true, that nearly one-half of these letters contained no signature by means of which they could be returned to the writers. They consist in the main of letters from one member of a family to another, and are signed 'Your loving husband, Harry,' or 'Your affectionate mother,' or 'Your own little wife,' and so on. Last year there came to the dead letter office 11,000 letters which contained lottery tickets, and 200,000 contained pictures and papers unfit for circulation. Of course all these were destroyed. Half a million letters came from foreign countries and these were returned to the countries whence they came. Two hundred thousand letters were restored unopened to the writers. Nearly 300,000 letters which contained inclosures were restored to the writers, and about three and three-quarters millions were destroyed, it being impossible to find the owners.

"I wish the people who use the mails could be made to understand that the observance of a few simple rules would greatly reduce the number of lost letters. A good practice is always to scan the address of a letter before posting it. All writers of letters do not care to place their names and addresses upon the corner of the envelope, but if they would do so there would be few undelivered letters. We couldn't by law or regulation require affectionate mothers and wives and husbands and sweethearts and sons and daughters to sign their full names, and have their address either at the top or the bottom of their letters, but if they would do this a million and a half more letters would be restored to their owners every year."

WALTER WELLMAN. A Story of Mrs. Potter. New York, Sept. 8.—The gossip of various sorts that has recently been going the rounds regarding Mrs. Cora Potter, the actress, recalls a singular tale which she carried away from New York with her. On the opening night of "Antony and Cleopatra," just as Mrs. Potter had taken her seat in the barge before making her entrance, a young man in the company ran up to her, and pressing something into her hand said: "Wear this about you when you go upon the stage and your success is assured—do not lose it on any account."

Mrs. Potter opened her hand and saw what seemed to be a dingy piece of cord. She thrust it into her girdle and thought no more about it until the last curtain had fallen when she sought and obtained an explanation from the donor.

A writer in a French restaurant had hanged himself that morning. The young actor had a room over the restaurant, and when the body was cut down he begged for a strand of the rope. It was given him, and having the success of "Antony and Cleopatra" very much at heart, he divided it and gave Mrs. Potter half. A piece of the cord where with a man has hanged himself is said to never fail to bring good fortune to its possessor; but to part with it is certain disaster. The houses were packed during the New York run of "Antony and Cleopatra," and when the fair Cora sallied away her uncanny talisman was securely nailed inside one of her trunks.

President Harrison. Secretary Halford says of President Harrison that he has developed a very remarkable facility for turning from one thing to another, and for keeping a half dozen things running in his mind at once. Any man can do this who is put in a place where he must see scores of callers every day, one right after the other, each with a new business to discuss. To this quality of the president's mind, this ease of turning from one thing to another, and the corresponding ease with which he relieves his mind of everything when the time comes to do so, and to rest or sleep, I attribute the remarkably good health which he has enjoyed since he left Indianapolis.

DELIGHTS OF YACHTING. By a Fellow Who Was Taken Aboard for Ballast. I assisted at a yacht race about ten days ago, and the doctor says that I may sit up in bed now and write an account of it. It is believed by the general public that I am drowned, but my physician informs me that this is not true. Many letters of condolence have been received by members of my family and placed on file. One is from the captain of the yacht that I sailed on. He closes a page of it with the words: "Great comfort to my friends to reflect that in life I made as good shifting ballast as he ever used. This captain is a rough seaman, but it will be noticed that his heart is on the right side. I regard him as a physiological phenomenon.

My weight, at times when I have not recently been drowned, is about 240 pounds. They wanted me to sit on the windward side to keep the yacht level, and I was expected to sing "Larboard Water, Aho," "White Wings" and "The Wreck of the Julie La Plante" at stated intervals. I did not know these songs, but I gave my pants a hitch and sang "Gathering in the Sheaves" in a manner that made the captain look sad.

We carried about half an acre of canvas and plowed the billows merrily. This captain was to sing a few verses of "The Flower's Joy," which everybody pronounced timely and appropriate. The captain said that everything depended upon me. I was to lie flat under the windward rail and bear down hard. He said he would like to have me weigh as near a ton as I could. I was admonished to avoid drawing in long, deep breaths as much as possible, because air was light and it would not do for me to be making a balloon out of myself at a critical time like that. The mate suggested that I might do all the breathing that was necessary when the yacht was in stays and hold my breath when she was on a tack.

At about this juncture the yacht capsized. There were five life preservers on board—one for each man. The reader who does not suppose that I possessed myself of those life preservers in a hurry does not understand my grasping nature. I shouted to the others that I would try to save the life preservers if they would endeavor to rescue the pig iron that was inside of the yacht. Then I kicked myself free from the wreckage and floated off. Our noble captain was the last man to leave the yacht. "Save yourselves!" he cried. "Never mind me. I have no wife nor little ones at home."

This was true, for his family had gone to Ypsilanti on a visit. Then this self-sacrificing man took a large chew of tobacco and calmly waited for a boat to come and take him off. He knew that the yacht had air cans enough stowed away to float her, but he didn't want any company.

The other members of the crew overtook me and seized all of the life preservers. I am informed that my remains were subsequently recovered and were "worked" for all there was in them by the life saving crew. Yachting is a manly and pleasant diversion. Therefore I have bought a farm in the interior of Kansas.—Hervey Smith Tomer in Detroit Free Press.

Quick to Respond. Mrs. Bingo—You know we ladies are anxious to do all we can toward building the new church, so each one of us has agreed to deny ourselves the privilege of a new gown.

Mrs. Kingley—How self-sacrificing! Have you subscribed? Mrs. Bingo—Oh, yes. I got the money from my husband the first day.—Clothes and Furnisher.

"How Long." A story is told of an old negro woman in Alabama whose extreme age and helplessness caused her friends and neighbors to supply all her needs.

She was very grateful for all such attentions, and never failed to express her gratitude in original language. One day she could not sufficiently thank the son of her old master, who had brought her some choice grapes.

"You is powerful good to a pore old 'oman like me, wid one foot in de grave an de oder a-cryin out 'Lard, how long, how long!"—"YOUTH'S COMPANION.

Sanitary Item. Dr. Fowler having had occasion to treat the family of Sam Johnson for malaria, remonstrated with Sam for having the pig pen so near his residence.

"What's de reason I ought to put de pig pen furder away from de house?" asked Sam. "Because it is unhealthy," replied the doctor. "Reckon you is mistaken," replied Sam; "dat pen has been dar for two years, and dar ain't been no sickness yit among de hogs."—TEXAS SIFTINGS.

Not Treating Him Right. Bell Boy—You gave me an old pair of trousers this morning that you said you didn't want, and I thanked you for them. Guest—Well, what of it? Bell Boy—I want to take back the thanks. I have just found out that you didn't leave anything in the pockets.—Clothes and Furnisher.

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