

## Current Topics

**R**OSWELL BEARDSLEY, POSTMASTER AT North Lansing, N. Y., died recently at the age of ninety-three years. Mr. Beardsley, according to a writer in the New York World, was the government's oldest employe in all senses of the term. He held his first commission from President John Quincy Adams and he served under twenty presidents and thirty-four postmasters general. This writer says that when Mr. Beardsley took office, in 1828, there were about 5,700 postoffices in the country. Now there are 76,594. The postal department expenditures in 1830 were \$1,932,708. In 1901 they were \$115,089,607. Mr. Beardsley's share of the growth in the service lay in a gradual increase of salary from \$19.53, his first year's pay, up to almost \$200, his last year's due. Mr. Beardsley was postmaster twenty-five years before the stamped envelope came in. For six years he saw letters posted at rates running from six cents for transmission not over thirty miles up to twenty-five cents for distances over four hundred miles. His career has covered all that is marvellous in postal development.

**B**OB SMALLS, THE NEGRO POLITICIAN, IS Mr. Roosevelt's collector of the port of Beaufort, S. C. Small's name figured conspicuously in a precedent established relating to the arrest of members of congress. The story is told in an interesting way by the Washington correspondent of the Des Moines Register and Leader. The statutes of South Carolina provide for the punishment, by imprisonment in the penitentiary at hard labor for ten years, or by a fine of \$5,000, of any legislative officer who accepts a gift with an understanding that his vote, opinion or judgment shall be given on a particular side of any question. After receiving his credentials as a representative in the Forty-fifth congress, Smalls was arrested in South Carolina on a charge of having accepted a bribe, while a member of the state legislature, for his vote on a printing appropriation. He gave bonds, came to Washington and was sworn in as a member of the house, and then went back and faced the indictment found against him, first with a motion to remove the case from the state to the United States courts; when this was overruled, he followed it with a plea that his arrest was a violation of his constitutional privilege as a member of congress. This was overruled in turn, a jury trial was had, and he was convicted and sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. Pending an appeal he gave bail and came back to Washington, and made an effort to induce the house to declare his arrest void as in defiance of the constitution.

**I**T IS RELATED BY THIS SAME CORRESPONDENT that right here Smalls met with a decided rebuff, the committee on judiciary, through Proctor Knott of Kentucky, reported a resolution "that the arrest of Robert Smalls . . . was no violation of any right or privilege of this house, and that the detention of said Smalls for trial . . . was legal and justifiable." The report is one of the most notable in the annals of the house. Mr. Knott answered the argument raised in Smalls' behalf, that bribery was not regarded as a felony at the time of the adoption of the constitution, by saying that the same reasoning would apply to many of the most detestable crimes known to the calendar, including perjury and forgery, "which have since been specifically declared in many of our state constitutions to be so infamous as to render a person not only unfit for any public position whatever, but totally unworthy of credit on oath, or the privilege of voting at any election." And referring to the incongruities suggested by such an interpretation of congressional privilege, he said of the framers of the constitution: "Can it be possible that while deliberating on that section they could have contemplated the spectacle of the sergeant-at-arms of the senate, with the mace, the awful emblem of his office, upon his shoulder, stalking into a court of justice where a senator is held to answer an indictment for having bought his high position with money, and defiantly bearing off the privileged person of the thrifty statesman to act as judge in a high court of impeachment where the president or some other exalted functionary of the United States is

on trial for the same dangerous and detestable crime?"

**T**HE HOUSE DECLINED TO HELP SMALLS out of his difficulty, but Senator Matthew C. Butler of South Carolina exerted his influence in Smalls' behalf and the negro politician escaped punishment through the clemency of the state administration. The Register and Leader correspondent adds: "As President Harrison overlooked this little incident in his career and President McKinley was kind to him, doubtless President Roosevelt felt that it would be ungracious to take too careful notice of the past in his case. 'Ben' Daniels might have kept his marshalship if he had been candid with the president and recalled freely the story of his youthful conviction. Smalls never puts his own disagreeable experience into his autobiographies, but it is not known that he has ever tried to make a secret of it."

**T**HOSE WHO INCLINE TO ATTACH SIGNIFICANCE to dreams may be interested in a dispatch from East Orange, N. J., to the Chicago Tribune. The dispatch follows: "Mrs. Mary Grant Cramer, a sister of Gen. Ulysses Simpson Grant, who lives with her sister, Mrs. Virginia Grant Corbin, at 70 Lenox avenue, East Orange, says the death of Mrs. Grant was foretold to her in a dream on December 6. 'The dream was exceedingly vivid,' said Mrs. Cramer. 'I thought Mrs. Grant came to my bedside and, placing her hand on my shoulder, said impressively: 'Mary, I have come to talk with you and say good-bye because I am not going to be with you much longer.'" Mrs. Cramer told her dream at the breakfast table the next morning, and, to her surprise, a friend of the family, Mrs. Katherine Lawrence, who was visiting at the time, said that she, too, had a singular dream. Mrs. Lawrence said she dreamed that she, Mrs. Cramer, and Mrs. Corbin, stood in the portal of Grant's tomb on Riverside drive, New York, and that there appeared to be a large crowd of persons outside, drawn up in two lines, waiting the arrival of a cavalcade of some kind."

**A**N INTERESTING CHAPTER TO THE STORY of the Spanish-American war is provided by Joseph G. Cannon, in an interview with the Washington correspondent of the Philadelphia Press. This correspondent asked Mr. Cannon if Speaker Reed had approved Mr. Cannon's bill appropriating \$50,000,000 to be used by the president for national defense. Mr. Cannon replied: "He probably did not, but he did not place a straw in the way of its passage. That bill was my own. After the explosion of the Maine I concluded that war was inevitable and I feared more serious complications because of the sympathy expressed for Spain in Europe. I had a talk with President McKinley and suggested some action of this kind as a warning to Spain and her friends and also as a means of preparing for war, which seemed inevitable. I suggested that the president send a message to congress recommending an appropriation of \$50,000,000 or \$100,000,000 for national defense."

**A**CCORDING TO THIS STORY, MR. McKinley feared that the proposed action would be accepted as an admission that the administration wanted a war while he was exerting every effort to maintain peace. Mr. Cannon says: "But he said he wished he had such an appropriation to prepare for what he feared must come. I still suggested that the appropriation ought to be made and the president then stated in substance, General Grosvenor of Ohio being present, that he would be glad to have us meet a number of members and senators at 10 o'clock the next morning to consult touching the propriety of the appropriation. We did meet the president and a number of others, among those I recollect being Senator Allison and Representative Boutelle, of Maine, and the consensus of opinion was that the appropriation should be made. I introduced the bill that morning and had it referred to the committee on appropriations. The newspaper boys found it and the news was spread over the whole world before noon. That was part of my plan. It had the desired effect so far as other European powers were concerned."

**T**HE INTERESTING STORY IS CONCLUDED by Mr. Cannon in these words: "That was a busy day in the house. Mr. Reed was in the chair all day and I was busy. I did not see Reed

except as speaker until I was leaving my committee room in the late afternoon. I met him leaving the speaker's room. His first remark was, 'Why did you do it?' with just a shade of reproach in his voice. I replied that I thought it advisable. I did not consult you because I was quite sure you would not approve and I did not care to ask your advice and then go contrary to it, because I was quite certain I would introduce the bill anyway.' We walked up town together and talked about the situation. I explained to him that the object to be attained by the appropriation was twofold: First, to show to Spain and other nations, some of whom were disposed to sympathize with Spain, that we had the money to pay the expenses of war in our treasury and were ready to use it. This was good as a measure making for peace, and if it did not result in peace, it was absolutely necessary in due preparation for war. After a short silence Mr. Reed replied: 'Perhaps you are right. Perhaps you are right.' The bill was reported the next day and passed by the unanimous vote of the house."

**T**HE PARAGRAPHERS HAD CONSIDERABLE sport prior to the delivery of Mr. Roosevelt's message speculating on the probability of the president making formal reference to his unproductive bear hunt. It has not been generally believed, even since the message was inspected, that Mr. Roosevelt would refer to that incident, and yet, according to a story related by the Washington correspondent of the New York Tribune, a certain army officer insists that the president did not omit reference to his Mississippi expedition. The story is told in this way: "Two army officers, known to fame and also renowned for their fondness for an honest wager, put up a modest sum a few days ago on the novel proposition that the president would mention the Mississippi bear hunt in his annual message. The man who believed the president would mention the hunt in some way naturally asked and got good odds. Today he stood around waiting anxiously for the coming of the fateful message. In the first copy he could lay his hands on he buried himself deeply, and when he put down the paper his face wore a smile of triumph. 'The dinner's mine!' said he, gleefully. Inquiry reveals the following sentence as the basis of the officer's claim: 'The senseless slaughter of game, which can by judicious protection be permanently preserved on our national reserves for the people as a whole should be stopped at once.' 'That means that the president got mad and swore off when he came home,' said the officer, with a note of finality in his voice. Nothing short of a court-martial will shake his belief in his prediction."

**T**HE KILLING OF A MAN IN GUATEMALA by the son of the United States minister has raised an interesting question as to the manner in which the accused is to be brought to trial. A writer in the Chicago Tribune maintains that the Guatemalan courts will have jurisdiction in this case unless it is expressly agreed that the offender is to be sent to the United States for trial and punishment by the courts of this country. It is pointed out that twenty years ago the first secretary of one of the embassies accredited by the court of St. James was arrested together with certain English associates on the charge of felony. As soon as the diplomatic status of this particular defendant was established he was delivered into the custody of the ambassador who returned him to his native land in the custody of two detectives to be dealt with by the courts of his own country. It is also said that several years ago when the English coachman of the American ambassador in London was arrested for an assault committed outside of the precincts of the embassy, the jurisdiction of the British court was questioned. It was shown, however, that this coachman being an Englishman was not entitled to the privileges and immunities that American employes of the American ambassador would have.

**T**HE RULE IN FORCE A FEW YEARS AGO gave extraordinary privileges to ministers with relation to the misconduct of the members of their household or their servants. The Chicago Tribune writer says that in the old days the envoys themselves acted as judges in cases where members of their mission or of their household had been guilty of crimes committed either within or without the precincts of the embassy. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were quite a number of incidents of this kind. This writer recalls that when Venice was still a republic, the Spanish ambassador, having caught one of his Spanish servants in the act of thieving,