

## OUR NEW POSTMASTER GENERAL.

BUFFALO, March, 27.—Ten weeks ago he was only Bissell of Buffalo. Now he is Bissell of the United States. I refer to our new postmaster general, who has lived here for forty-odd years, his fat round cheeks blushing unseen in his profitable law office, and his greatness going to waste in the desert air of the corporations whom he has counseled in a legal way to the tune of something like \$50,000 a year. It is wonderful how events produce great men, and how the elevation to power of one mortal pulls up the other about him. Benjamin Harrison raised his wand and fairy-like he created national reputations for his old college friend John W. Noble of St. Louis, for Miller, his law partner, and a score of others. Cleveland opened his lips in 1884 and Daniel Manning and William C. Endicott became national quantities, and now through his second cabinet utterance we are introduced to Bissell, Hoke Smith, Daniel Lamont and other men whose names we yet hardly know how to pronounce.

## "BOSOM FRIEND BISSELL."

Mr. Bissell and Mr. Cleveland have been friends and counsellors for years, and Grover Cleveland has not in the world a man who stands closer to him than his new postmaster general. He was known in the newspapers during the campaign of 1884 as "Bosom Friend Bissell," and the two, when they were practicing law together here, were called the Damon and Pythias of the Buffalo bar. He has been associated with Cleveland during his years of prominence, and the fact that he has not been better known to the people has come from his queer taste for keeping himself out of sight. During my stay in Buffalo I have chatted with close friends of both men and I find that Mr. Bissell has in the past preferred to be one of the stage managers rather than a chief actor in the elevation of Cleveland to power. It is not generally known that in the struggle between Cleveland and Blaine in 1884 Wilson S. Bissell was one of the chief directors of the Cleveland forces and that to his sagacity the democratic victory was quite largely due. He was Mr. Cleveland's private and personal representative all through the campaign, and it fell to his lot to nullify the scandalous stories sent out concerning his partner's past life. He had been among the foremost in securing Mr. Cleveland's nomination for sheriff, mayor and governor, and he had almost as much to do with his first nomination for the presidency as Daniel Manning, but he was not connected with the event. In the Chicago convention of last June Mr. Bissell was equal in command with William C. Whitney. He did most of the planning and the ex-secretary of the navy did most of the executing and got all the credit, although he would have shared it gladly with the Buffalo man if the latter had been willing. Mr. Bissell's name was scarcely mentioned in the newspapers, and very few persons knew then or know now the measure of his political power. He is now and has been for nearly a decade one of the great generals in the democratic party, yet when it was announced that he had been chosen to succeed John Wanamaker many democratic captains asked: "Who is Wilson S. Bissell?"

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The new postmaster general, accord-

ing to the statements of those who know him, here, is one of the closest-mouthed men in public life. He has always kept himself in the back ground, and even in Buffalo he has been rarely talked about. He has not the widest of acquaintanceships, but he is a companionable man, broadminded, witty and a good talker, except, where his own affairs are concerned. Mention these and he shuts up like a clam and either stops talking or changes the subject.

## "WANAMAKER AND BISSELL."

In this respect Postmaster General Bissell will be found far different from John Wanamaker. Our last postmaster general was generally ready to talk about anything, from his Sunday school to great postal reforms, and from his store to the chances of fortune making for young men. Mr. Wanamaker is a man of many ideas, of much shrewd common sense and of a lively appreciation of the value of the newspaper man in the way of helping on himself and his party. He had a first-class newspaper man at a salary of \$3,000 a year, which he paid out of his own pocket, by the way, in the person of Marshall Cushing, and the correspondents and news gatherers were always welcome at his office. Through this his administration was better advertised and better presented to the people than that of any postmaster general of the past, and I understand that he considered his newspaper secretary one of his best Washington investments. If Postmaster General Bissell does not change the character he had here he will do differently. He has never had much to do with the newspapers and has, I am told, cut shy of them and has apparently rather feared them. Mr. Wanamaker was always accessible and I have always been impressed by his honesty and his plain practical common sense. He knew how to deal with men and he seldom talked with a person long without making him his friend. He understood how to brush aside details and make the other men work for him. The new postmaster general has had to deal with books and legal questions more than with the managing of men, and he will not start out with the same advantages Wanamaker's experience in his store gave him.

The two postmasters general are the opposite in appearance. Bissell weighs twice as much as Wanamaker and he tips the beam at about 300 pounds. His massive skull could contain Wanamaker's head and the brown hair of the great merchant would not touch the walls of Bissell's cranium were it boxed up in its center. Mr. Bissell's arms are as big around as Mr. Wanamaker's calves and his thighs measure almost as much in circumference as does Honest John's waist. Wanamaker is about five feet eight; Bissell is over six feet in his stockings. Both are smooth shaven, both dress in black and are simple in their tastes.

## CLEVELAND AND BISSELL.

Here at Buffalo I hear many comparisons of Cleveland and Bissell, and the new postmaster general seems to be in most ways the twin brother of the president. Their lives have run close together. They squalled in their cradles at about the same time away back in the forties. Both came of fairly well-to-do families, Bissell's parents being perhaps the richer and sending him to school at

Yale. Both were bachelors till they were forty years old their wives are of about the same age and the two girls went to school together. Both families have one baby daughter, and the little girls are about the same age. I chatted last night with an old lawyer friend of the two men. Said he:

"Mr. Cleveland and Mr. Bissell have been almost inseparable ever since the latter was chief clerk in the office of Lansing, Cleveland & Folsom in 1870. When Mr. Cleveland was elected sheriff of Erie county he wanted Mr. Bissell to become his deputy sheriff, but the clerk thought he saw better things ahead in the law line and he declined. A few months after he became the law partner of the Hon. Lyman K. Bass and three years later Mr. Cleveland joined the firm. The two men were seen together almost everywhere and called each other 'Wils' and 'Grove.' When Mr. Cleveland married the daughter of another of his law partners, Oscar Folsom, Wilson Bissell was the best man, and when the present postmaster general married Louise Fowler Sturgis in February, 1890, Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland were the guests of honor. These two men have never ceased to be 'Wils' and 'Grove' to each other, and it is likely that no one in the cabinet will have more influence in the new administration than Wilson S. Bissell."

## THE BISSELL-CLEVELAND LAW FIRM.

The old law firm in the Weed block, Buffalo, of which Mr. Cleveland and Mr. Bissell were members has probably sent out more public men than any other in the United States, and Mr. Bissell is not the only Postmaster General among them. The firm dates back to 1834 when the Hon. Orasmus H. Marshall, the most famous of western New York historians, opened his law office. Mr. Marshall's first two partners both left him to take public office. His third partner was Judge Nathan K. Hall, who had until then been Millard Fillmore's law partner. When Fillmore became President he selected Judge Hall as his Postmaster General, afterward appointing him United States judge as successor to Roscoe Conkling's father. Nearly all subsequent members of the firms descending in direct line from O. H. Marshall have held some important office from district attorney up. One of them the Hon. Lyman K. Bass, was not only a district attorney, but a member of Congress, and his widow is now the wife of Senator Ed. Wolcott of Colorado. Mr. Bass was Bissell's first partner, and Grover Cleveland joined the firm in 1874 after his term of Sheriff had expired. Bass withdrew on account of ill-health in 1887, and left the firm name Cleveland & Bissell. The two men did a very large business as confidential advisers and counsel to corporations and in a year they were obliged to take in another partner. Mr. Cleveland remained a member of the firm throughout his term as mayor of Buffalo, but retired upon his election as governor of New York, leaving Mr. Bissell where he had been ever since, at the head of the firm, which is now styled Bissell, Sicard, Brundage & Bissell.

## A BIG LAWYER OUTSIDE THE COURTS.

I am told here that notwithstanding the fact that the Postmaster General has been making from \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year at the law, he has never had a case in court in his life. Still he has