

commandments, that the Lord began to bless them again, to build them up, to increase their substance, and to give them what was necessary for their good. And as they have obeyed the commandments of God, the Lord has blessed them. He will continue to do it while time endures, if they continue faithful; and throughout the countless ages of eternity they will reap the reward of fidelity to the cause of truth and to the laws of God; and so will all the people of Israel. I testify of this to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

Washington, D. C., Nov. 25, 1897.—There is no busier place in the United States just now than the White House. The new Congress has brought a horde of office-seekers with it, and the President is besieged almost as much as he was at the beginning of his administration. I found thirty people cooling their heels in his ante-room when I called at the Executive Mansion the other morning, and I spent the day there watching the crowd come and go, and studying the manner in which business is done.

Shortly after I arrived the first mail came in. It was brought from the city postoffice in the war department wagon, and the driver carried the great bags upon his shoulders to the second floor and dumped them down in the President's counting room. This room is on the north side of the Executive Mansion, facing Lafayette Square. It is filled with clerks, some of whom are rattling typewriters so noisily that you can hardly hear yourself think. Others are sorting letters. Some are writing, and others are reading newspapers. It is here that the mail is handled. There are about a thousand letters every day, and the newspapers which come in every morning would supply a good-sized village with reading matter for a month. The chief work is with the letters. There is about six hundred in the mail this morning and every one of them has to be read and briefed, in order to save the gray matter of the President and his secretary. First the letters are sorted. The private letters of the President and Mrs. McKinley are taken out, and the balance are pitched, one by one, into different baskets, according to their apparent importance. The clerk who sorts them knows he hand writing of the most prominent men of the country, and he can tell almost at a glance such letters as demand immediate attention.

After sorting, the letters are boiled down. The juice is sucked out of each of them, and only the condensed extract goes to the President. A letter of twenty pages is put into five lines, and a voluminous document into a sentence. The men who read the letters write a few lines across the upper left-hand corner of the first page of each letter, showing just what is in it. This is for Secretary Porter, who, by this means, can grasp the whole mail in a short time and direct the making up of a set of briefs for the President. The letters themselves never get to the President. He will not see a dozen out of six hundred which came in this morning. This is also the case as to his personal and private correspondence. All of the letters are briefed, and they are put in such order that any of them can be given to the President at a moment's notice, if he so desires. Sometimes a brief does not tell all he wants, and he calls for the letter itself. In answering his mail President McKinley directs Secretary Porter what to say. He writes no answers himself, and does not even dictate the replies to a stenographer. He

has little time to use the pen, and almost the only letter which he writes is the one which goes daily from here to his old mother at Canton.

As we look at the letters we see that the marks on the envelopes give no idea of the contents. Many of the letters are addressed "Personal" and "Private" by men who think that this will bring their letters directly to the President. In most cases such letters are from office-seekers, and most of them the President never sees. They are referred by a printed form to the department to which they belong.

Here is one marked "Confidential." The writer wants a consulship. It goes to the state department. There is another marked "For the President's eye only." Mr. Cortelyou, the executive clerk, opens it. It is also from a man who wants office. Here is a third on the outside of which is written "Important. Not to be opened by the secretary." That letter comes from a crank, who wants to tell the President of a new version of the Bible, and so it goes. Many of the other letters, however, are very important. As I see the mail opened and briefed I notice how carefully everything is handled. There is not a paper which is misplaced. Every inclosure is fastened by a clip to the letter itself, and, though already more than one hundred thousand letters have been received since the 4th of March, I am told that not a single paper has been lost. Every letter must be carefully watched. There are a few which are unanswered, but there are none which escape the eyes of the clerks.

Let us stop a moment and look over some of the other letters. It is easy to see why they should not be shown to the President. If every one was important he could not read and answer them all. Think what a thousand letters a day means! If he took a minute to a letter and worked without stopping from 9 o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock at night he could look over six hundred letters in a day. Four hundred letters would be left unopened, and he would run behind something like three thousand letters a week. More than half of these letters are from office-seekers. The clerks understand what to do with them. They are referred to the high officials of the various departments. A large number are from cranks who have new methods of reforming the world. There are cranks who think they own the treasury and cranks who want the President to move out, in order that they may move in. There are scores of people who write asking for autographs and photographs. Some want Mrs. McKinley to send them a sentiment, and others write the President for an autograph page of his message.

The beggars are the worst of the lot. The President's salary could be spent five times over in satisfying the requests which come into the White House. Let us take a look at that pile of begging letters which has come this morning. Here is a western church which wants \$200 to help lift the mortgage on its new building. There is a note from a Sunday school superintendent who asks for \$25 toward a new organ, and there is a note from an Indian hospital asking McKinley to endow a bed. That scented sheet is from a Kentucky girl who wishes the President to send her \$500 to complete her education, and the poorly written letter beside it is from a widow asking McKinley to give her something out of his plenty. The requests of a single morning's mail often amount to more than \$5,000, and the clerk tells me that such petitions have footed up as much as \$9,000 a day. President Mc-

Kinley is a generous man, but he has his own ways of giving. He cannot allow his soul to be harrowed up by such requests, and letters of this kind are never shown to him. They are all answered, however, and it takes quite a few pennies to pay the postage. It is only the official mail that goes free. Upon his personal mail the President pays for the postage stamps.

In another part of this big counting room the White House newspapers are papers taken here every day. These are clipped. There are several hundred carefully scanned and all matter relating to the administration is cut out for the President's scrap book. The most important matters are laid aside and every editorial of note is sent in to the President. He is not afraid to hear the criticisms of his administration. He watches the newspapers closely to learn what the people wish and he keeps his fingers on the pulse of the country. He interviews the men who call upon him in order that he may keep abreast with public sentiment, and he is, in fact, closer to all the people than any President we have had for years. Many persons can't see how President McKinley can be so well posted and remain the most of the time in the White House. One secret of his knowledge is stored away in a little room in the northeastern corner of the Executive Mansion.

This is the telegraph room. We can go out of the counting room into it. As we enter we hear the click of the telegraph instrument and we see one of the President's most confidential clerks with his hand on the key. The operator is Mr. B. F. Montgomery, who has for years been in charge of this department of the White House. He has instruments here which connect him with the chief telegraph lines of the country, and that telegraphic switch board upon the wall controls the avenues of the news information of the world.

It is here that the President has the whole United States under his thumb. The great telegraph companies will give him a private wire at a moment's notice. He has his own telegraph line connecting him with Congress and all of the government departments. Suppose he wants to see a senator. The electric wire calls the man up at the Capitol and within a few moments the President has his answer. Now a message is sent to the state department for the papers in a certain case. Now a pardon is telegraphed to the attorney general and now the treasury department gets its directions as to what to do in a special matter. This office is a strictly private one. Much of the matter which goes over the wires from here is confidential. Orders are sent out which will affect the state of the stock market, and a dishonest clerk could easily make a fortune by a use of the news. Many of the foreign governments would be glad to have advance information of the matter sent over these wires, and the Spanish minister just now would give a pretty penny for the telegraphic conferences which are held here on Cuba. It is here also that the President gets almost all of his news. He has important items in advance of the newspapers. The Press Association sends him important news as soon as it comes, and if there is trouble anywhere in the country the telegraph companies offer him private wires. At the time of the Chicago riot President Cleveland gave all of his directions at this office. It was from here that he ordered General Miles to take charge, and from here President McKinley can easily move the army. It was here that President Harrison sat all day at the time of the Johnstown flood waiting for the news as to whether Secretary Halford and his wife had escaped that disaster, and here when Garfield