Uncle Sam's Clerks.

Government Employes at Washington and Who They Are—Relatives in the Departments—High Salaried Places, and the Men Who Fill Them—Women Clerks' Efficiency.

Special Correspondence of the News.

Do you want a government job?

The hours are easy. The work is light. The pay is good. Uncle Sam never seizes his wages, and you get your money for the asking every fifteen days. These big government factories never shut down. The tariff and the hard times do not affect them, and the man who works for the government can laugh at fate and bounces. The thousands who are out of employment throughout the United States ought to look into the matter. Right here in Washington millions upon millions of dollars are paid out every year in salaries, and there are lots of fat, easy places. I have been looking over the pension which the committee of Congress have just made on the subject, and I find that the patronage is by no means equally divided. There are more than 47,000 clerks in Washington, but nearly one-third of this number are related to one another. Think of it. There are fifty-six hundred people in the departments whose blood flows, more or less, in the same channels, and there are more than one thousand who have two relatives in Uncle Sam's employ. Many of these government clerks get at least $1,000 a year, and at the average $1,000,000 are paid out annually to parties related to each other. Think of the millions of Uncle Sam's nephews and nieces scattered over this land who cannot get near enough the public crib to have a smell for themselves or their families, and look at the figures. There are 279 cases in which clerks have three relatives employed in the departments here, ninety-six in which the number of relatives are four, ten in which they number six and two in which there are nine clerks related to one another in the government service. There are lots of husbands and wives employed in the departments, and there are more than 300 brothers who work for Uncle Sam.

The number of clerks is not quite so large, but it runs between six and seven hundred, and there are sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, uncles and nephews and cousins and sons-in-law. In the Interior Department alone nearly fifteen hundred of the clerks have relatives in the government service here, and there are almost thirteen hundred treasury clerks who have blood relations in that or other government departments. It is a tradition of the service that no relatives should be employed in the different offices, and that there should be only one of a family, but this method of the service has gotten by, and it is here to stay.

I now and then hear the clerks objecting to their hard work. Take a look at the job and see what you think of it? The office hours are, you know, from 9 until 4. No one comes to the department before 9, and I find that time until 10 you are supposed to put in three hours of clerical labor. At 11 you have a half hour for lunch, and you are a very good clerk if you get to doing hard work before 1. At 4 you go out with the rest of the army on to the streets and do not bother yourself again about work until 9 o'clock the next morning. One month out of the year you have to yourself and can go where you please and do what you please, and your pay goes on just the same. If you are sick your wages are not docked, and I know of clerks who get from thirty to sixty days' leave on full pay. As to the rise in wages, there is no question about the salary, that is fixed by the government, and of long as you are in Uncle Sam's employ it cannot be reduced by the officials just above you. Every two years you go to the pay office or the department in which you are working, and your money is handed over to you in crisp new greenbacks, or sometimes in gold. If you are a good man your job is pretty sure to continue, and a great number of those clerks have been in the service for years; some, indeed, have spent a lifetime there, and there is one old clerk here who has been drawing a salary for sixty years from Uncle Sam. There are others who have worked from forty to fifty years, and it is said that we have a pension roll so near as our rats will go into the thousands. The number who have been just ten years in the service is more than seven hundred, and there are nearly as many who have been in from twelve to fifteen years. A great many clerks have been twenty years or more in the service, and the number of graybeards in office is by no means as uncertain as is generally supposed. The surety of holding a position increases every year, and the civil service rules are to be further extended that only its chiefs will finally be dismissed at the close of an administration.

As to salaries, in proportion to the amount of work done and its character, they are as high as those of any laborers of the world. Uncle Sam's clerks are run on a big salary basis, and the capital service pay as a rule, they start in at $1,000 a year. The chiefs get $7,000 and upward, and there are 50 clerks in nearly every department which command $5,000, $4,000 and $3,000. The Department of State, for instance, has three offices which bring between $5,000 and $7,000, and the assistant attorney generals each receive as much as a Congressman. In the Department of Agriculture there are a number of good $3,000 places, and the government of the District has about twenty offices which run from $2,000 to $5,000 a year. The clerks who govern Washington are all appointed by the President, and the copies received are good. The Post Office Department has many high-salaried places, and there are a number of soft spots connected with the White House where governors have settled many years' hot water and have smoothed out their wrinkles in their tables. The best position, in point of certainty of tenure and liberal pay, is that with the Senate, House and Navy Departments. The clerks at the State Department are rather aristocratic than otherwise. They generally speak one or two languages besides their own. It is necessary in their case that they sometimes went to consulships on the other side of the world. The treasury has numerous changes. It contains over 4,000 employes, and of these 1,600 are women.

And just here I want to say a word about these women clerks in Washington. They are the brightest and smartest people in the service. They do their work continuously and they are the most eminent of Uncle Sam's employes are females. If I had to say I would give the women the preference as to all classes of work which they can possibly do, reserving only the harder places for the men. As it is, however, there are not many of the latter left in the departments, and the number of women all the time manages to run them down. These women are of all ages, from sixteen to eighty, and they work in the same way, you will note in the Treasury Department who has now reached ninety years. There are many women over sixty and nine-tenths of those young enough to be called girls are under forty. There are all kinds of women, from the old maids of seventy-five down to the young widows of twenty, who are left to support themselves and their families. They have to work as well as men, and they do it. They attend to all sorts of clerkships, and they now pass upon intricate law, extensive accounts, translate foreign languages and do everything under the sun. Some of the most expert engravers in the government are women, and several of the very best bookkeepers of the department were politicians. Women are left making their way as typewriters and stenographers, and the chief source to the outside employer of labor here is the information is this as soon as he makes a women thoroughly into his work as typewriter or stenographer she wants to get married and Uncle Sam can put a new place of a higher salary in one of the departments. I have had this experience happen to me half a dozen times, and I have come to look upon my office here as a kind of a training school for the government service. In the end better offices the most expert translators of bad writing are women, and it would surprise you to know that the Treasury Department has a woman lawyer who prepares the briefs for internal revenue matters and who could probably make more suitable of the department by practicing law than she gets by acting as a law clerk within it. There are a number of women editors in the service here at Washington. The official records of the Land Office are the result in certain cases gotten up by women, and in the Navy Department six full women who are making maps and tracing charts for use ships in different parts of the world, and in the government printing office there are women typewriters, stitchers, press feeders and compositors.

Everyone has heard of the pretty girls of the treasury, but one find beautiful maidens in all of those government departments. Hoke Smith directs the handiwork of 2,500 girls, and Dan Lamont has a company of 912 in the department of war. Postmaster General Bissell has hundreds of maidens under him, and in the government printing office there are more than a thousand of them. Many of these are of the best families of the country. Not a few are the daughters of noted generals, governors of states, Senators and Representatives, and now and then you'll find a relative of a President or a cabinet minister. The majority of them are women of good education, and with but few exceptions they are educated and refined ladies. They receive salaries ranging from $720 to $1,800 a year, and a large number of them support families. Many of them are widows, not a few are old maids, and thousands are sweet, marriageable young women, who have the misfortune to be strange a sex being under Uncle Sam is a perfect one in comparison with every good-looking man. The test of beauty is applied to them, and I am not a few of the most noted marriages at Washington in the past have been in connection with the government service. Mrs. Stanley Matthews, for instance, who has the ugliest face which ever entered a government department at Washington, got his wife, whom he met when a young lady, by being in a government department here. She was the daughter of Robert J. Walker, a former Secretary of the Treasury, and as she sat at her desk one day in the treasury department the future Attorney General walked through the room. She made some remarks about his bumptiousness. I do not know whether Stevens overheard it or not, but he rose her, and with him it was a case of love at first sight. He sought out introduction and shortly afterward offered her his hand and his wealth, and his name for herself and her children. It is said that he proposed to her in words something like this: "My dear, you are beautiful and I am hideous, but if you will marry me it will not be the first instance in which beauty and the beast have united under such circumstances. I assure you that you will never regret marrying me." His proposition was accepted, and the next time Mrs. Stevens came to Washington it was as the wife of the Attorney General of the United States. Stephen A. Douglas got his wife in one of the departments at Washington, and you all remember what a talk there was about Secretary Bayard and Miss Morton during the time that Bayard was at the head of the State department.

It is a wonder to me that there are not more marriages among the clerks. Young men and young women who work in Congress are kept busy side by side in departments. They come in contact with each other hourly and sometimes I think there is more than one mother-in-law in the bureau of engineering and printing, where the money is made. There is much sad romance among the clerks to one such sad romance of Washington. Many of the young women who are employed in the service. There are, I believe, more pretty Bloomingdale here than you will find anywhere else in the country, and some have been known where women have married and kept their marriages a secret for years in order to avoid the pain that a husband and wife shall not be employed at the same time in the civil service at Washington. Many such cases have been found out, and the recent investigations of the congressional committee will probably lead to many changes in this respect. According to the report there were but 10 twenty-four husbands and wives drawing salaries from the government here, when the husband and wife were both in the civil service at Washington. In all cases such have no job at all unless it definitely suits.

Does Uncle Sam really pay good wages?

An hour some of the clerks talk about the easier you would think he does not, and perhaps in proportion to the amount of responsibility involved the reverse would salaries. One clerk tells me that the big men of the departments have the easiest places and do the work, while the petty and cranks do all the work. There is no doubt that many $1,000 clerks have the same amount of responsibility resting upon them as many $3,000 men, and many a man is glad to get $1,000 a year and do the work which is done by a $3,000 man. Hoke Smith will run the Interior Department for a third of a million dollars less than it has been run for, and the same is true of the Department of Agriculture under Secretary Morton. There are not half so many clerks in the departments who have been turned out as there were before, but the work is done as well, and some believe as far as outside power.

You have all heard the story of how Salmon P. Chase once came to his earlier, who was then in the United States treasury, and asked for a position for his wife. He said that he would have to give a clerk or lay an axe of a spoke, but that he would not ask to be placed in charge of the department. Chase told him that he would see what he could do, and he appointed the man's wife to a position. The latter was not long satisfied that she was unsuited for the government departments a good place to work, and she was no doubt better off as a caregiving, energetic young fellow had better keep away from the governmental service. The hours are not suited to the tenderness of the female sex and government salaries. A man has to have very positive qualities in order not to be ground into a machine, and I call to mind now a woman who was in being. Washington is a city of rich young men and a place in which many men of wealth live. I know a city conducting many intelligent homes, and I know of numerous women as well as government clerks who have married into the society here at all fashionable receptions on entertainments, and who have not always paid for dates by the time they are worn out. The Hon. Miss of Washington society expect people to eat bills, and they have their settlements just after the government pay days at the 15th or 1st and 15th of the month. I am positively sure of the government clerks save money and save the interest by so doing, and they do not like to make any money out of that which they do have.

Washington is a great place for people to go into debt, and there is a small class of the government clerks who are in the habit of borrowing money at 10 per cent a month. These are about the Capitol and the different departments of the city, and they are the ones who, and they turn up about pay day in order to catch the clerks who owe them. They know their money is good and they lose but little. I have never been known of clerks who have paid 10 a month for ten years for the use of $100, and the majority of those who borrow at this rate do not appreciate how much interest they are paying. It used to be that only brokers when they could not get the money on time would make arrangements with the chiefs of the departments and through them would collect their bills. This has been abolished of late years, and the chiefs have now no control over the salaries of the clerks. Brokers of the kind were in times past connected with Congress, and I know of a post corporation who who made a fortune in this way. He would lend money at high rates to Congressmen and collect the money when they got their pay