

he seems to have grasped its work and its possibilities remarkably well. Bissell's mind is an analytic one. He gets at the nut of a question at once, and he doesn't bother himself over details. He prides himself on his power of organization and he is able to give the drudgery of his office over to his subordinates. He has in fact very good executive abilities, and I find that he is making some radical changes in our post office methods. I called upon him this week. He was sitting behind the desk in the office of the Postmaster General where John Wanamaker used to sit about a year ago. The desk, which is a big flat-topped affair of black walnut, had still its plate glass top, below which lies a map of the United States, but there was less litter about it and fewer papers upon it, and the man who occupied the seat behind it had fewer lines of care in his face. Postmaster General Wanamaker took his life very seriously. When he talked his blue eyes became grave and perceptible crow's feet appeared at their corners.

His hair was roughed up with much running of the fingers through it, and he bore all the aspects of hard work. The new Postmaster General works perhaps just as hard, but he seems to do his work more easily. He gets to the office at 8:30 in the morning, and he works away here until 6:30 at night, putting in twice as many hours as any of his clerks. Still he does not look over tired. He is a well dressed, healthy looking giant, with a big head, fastened to broad fat shoulders by a strong neck. He stands over six feet in his stockings, and I venture that he weighs 300 pounds. He is a clean looking man, and he seems to be as healthy in mind as he is in body. He is noted for his reticence concerning himself and his department, and he is one of the few public men who do not like to see their names in the newspapers. He will talk freely enough, provided he knows he will not be quoted, and he is not an aristocrat. I sat sometimes and watched him, as he received his callers. A number of them were business men, and among others were some who had questions to answer or propose concerning contracts. I was surprised to see how quickly he seemed to grasp each situation as it came up, and how positively and quickly he passed upon them. I find that he is making many radical changes in the organization of the Post Office Department. He is cutting down expenses to the lowest notch wherever they do not impair the efficiency of the mails.

HOW THE HARD TIMES AFFECT THE POST OFFICES.

"The Postmaster General finds it imperative to reduce our postal expenses. The hard times have considerably lessened the postal revenues. There is no business barometer more sensitive than the post office. The mail increases or decreases in proportion to the amount of business done, and it is safe to say that there has not for years been such a radical falling off in postal receipts. For the past thirty or forty years there has been an average increase of about seven per cent a year in the postal revenue over that of the year preceding. This increase has been so regular that when Congress has made its appropriations it has allowed for it. It did that last year. Well, the revenues went along all right up to the 1st of June, and during the first three months of Mr. Bissell's term

the percentage of increase was more than eight per cent over the receipts of the corresponding months of last year. In July the hard times began, and the percentage of increase dropped during that month from eight per cent to three per cent. At the close of August it was found that the receipts were four per cent less than they were during the August of 1892. This was a decrease of eleven per cent over what had been anticipated, and the same story will probably be told as to the other months of this fall. The result is that the appropriations will not equal the expenses, and the Postmaster General is having his hands full in trying to make the ends meet.

UNCLE SAM'S ECONOMY.

It is interesting to note how the Postmaster General is economizing. In a big business like that of the post office it is the little things that count, and a hundred thousand dollars has just been saved by cutting off an order for a billion of the big Columbian stamps. There is little difference between the ordinary red two cent stamp and the Columbian stamp in size, but the difference is big enough to make the Columbian stamp cost just about one-hundredth of a cent more than the red stamp. The Columbian stamps cost just about seventeen cents a thousand, while the red stamps cost only seven and one-half cents a thousand. The change means a saving of ten cents on every thousand stamps, or of \$100 on a million stamps, and of \$100,000 on a billion stamps. The last administration made a contract for three billions of these stamps at seventeen cents a thousand. It was thought that there would be a great demand for them, but they did not sell. The people did not want them, and it was to the interest of the department to be released from their contract. After considerable negotiation, the American Bank Note Company agreed to let the Postmaster General off from the last billion, he consenting to take up to the amount of two billions of the stamps. The contractors could have held the department, but they did not and thus Uncle Sam will have just \$100,000 profit off of the operation.

THE NEW POSTAL CARDS.

Another economy has just been inaugurated in the making of the postal cards. During the past few years we have been using three different styles of cards. There was a little white card for a cent for the ladies, a yellow barn door at the same price for the big business man, and a middle sized card for general use. It has cost considerably more to make the three different styles than one, and the Postmaster General has decided to use but one card, and the one fixed upon is of the size used by the International Postal Union, and postal cards will now be the same all the world over. We use such an immense quantity of these cards that the saving in the new contract amounts to \$70,000 a year. The contract is made for four years, and the total saving will thus be \$280,000. It is a one-cent business, but the saving means a fortune.

MILLIONS IN LOST MONEY ORDERS.

It will be surprising to many people that the postal service of the United States by no means pays its own expenses. Uncle Sam has for years been carrying letters and mail below cost, and it is estimated that the Post Office De-

partment will need about \$5,000,000 every year from the appropriations of Congress. This is so notwithstanding that the mails are carried over the Pacific roads without any cash outlay on the part of the post office. These roads owe the government, and the amount of money due for carrying the mail is credited to their account. If it were not so the department would have to pay out about \$2,000,000 additional every year, so that it really costs \$7,000,000 a year more than it brings in. The most expensive part of the business is the carrying of second-class matter, which pays only a cent a pound, and which costs on an average about seven cents a pound to deliver. All of these items are being closely looked into during these hard times and every bit of postal revenue is being scrutinized. The Postmaster general, in fact, has been materially helped through the money order fund. We have had a money order system since 1864, and during all this time orders have been issued and paid for, but the money has not been called for at the other end. Either the orders have been lost or stolen, or the parties receiving them have failed to collect them. These sums have accumulated until they have now between two and three million dollars of such money in the Treasury Department. From this fund there was recently credited to the Post Office Department \$1,250,000, and this is now being applied to the deficiency of the current year.

I made some inquiries at the department as to whether any improvements were contemplated in the postal service, and I find that it is the Postmaster General's idea not to attempt any experiments at the present time. He is a great advocate of thorough organization and of complete development. He believes that the postal service can be improved by investigating its needs, strengthening its weak spots, and perfecting its present system. He is not at present seriously considering any matters connected with the postal telegraph, postal telephone or the pneumatic tube system for cities, evidently believing that such experiments, necessitating the expenditure of great sums of money, should be left to more prosperous times.

BISSELL AND CIVIL SERVICE.

During my call I had a few words with him about the service and find that he is thoroughly in favor of civil service rules and thinks that these should be enforced as far as possible. He told me that these rules had been extended to fourth-class postmasters and that these are now allowed to remain in office for four years whether they are Republicans or Democrats, unless good reasons are given for their removal. The appointments of postmasters are now made almost entirely on petition from the people, and the Postmaster General cited a case of a city in which there was a delegates' convention called by the members of the Democratic party of the city, where the delegates elected their postmaster. The different candidates came before it and one of the defeated ones moved that the nomination of the successful man should be made unanimous. This was carried, and the name of the successful nominee received the appointment from the department here.

WHAT HE THINKS OF GOVERNMENT CLERKSHIPS.

While talking to the Postmaster General the other day the subject of govern-