

SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY,

AN

Illustrated Magazine

FOR THE PEOPLE

CONDUCTED BY J. G. HOLLAND

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For the convenience of purchasers of the "Midwinter SCRIBNER," we have reprinted the earlier chapters of "ROXY," Dr. Eggleston's Novel, from the November, 1877, December, 1877, and January, 1878, numbers of SCRIBNER, together with Mr. Frank R. Stockton's capital "RUDDER GRANGE STORIES," with the original illustrations (also continued in the "Midwinter SCRIBNER"), in a "SCRIBNER EXTRA" which is sold by all book-sellers and news-dealers. Price 15 cents.

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SCRIBNER & CO., 743 Broadway, N. Y.

THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE.



SEAL OF NEW YORK POST-OFFICE.

In the good old days when Franklin was postmaster-general of the colonies and kept all of his accounts in a nice little memorandum book of three hundred pages, he introduced many wonderful improvements for the time, and it is actually said that he almost took away the breath of the people by proposing in 1760 to run a wagon to carry the mail from Philadelphia to Boston once a week. In the postal system of that time, New York was a way station, where the bold fortnightly rider from Philadelphia was accustomed, perhaps, to change his horse, or hand the Boston mail over to his successor. In 1775 the revolutionists established a "constitutional post-office" in New York, in place of the unconstitutional one which the British had kept. This constitutional post-office was kept by Mr. William Goddard, at Holt's printing-office. It may be interesting to the reader to know that the printing-office was "in Water street, near the coffee-house." The post went "to Mr. Bradford's, at the coffee-house in Philadelphia." There seem to have been just as many coffee-houses in the two cities as there were post-offices—namely, one in each place.

When the British troops evacuated New York, the post-office was set up at 38 Smith street. Sebastian Bauman, the first postmaster under the Federal government, kept the office in his grocery store at 62 Broadway; then at 51 Wall street; later at the corner of what is now Wall and South William,—then Smith street,—and finally at 29 William street. In this last house General Theobaldus Bailey found the office, and here

he continued it for more than twenty years, in a room twelve by fifteen feet. There were one hundred and forty-four wooden letter-boxes in the window. In 1825 the office was moved into the Academy building in Garden street, at which time eight clerks and eight carriers did the postal business of the city. Thence the post-office went into the Merchant's Exchange in Garden street, the number of the boxes having grown to three thousand. Here the great fire of 1835 found it and burned it. It was then located in the Park, in the building known as the "Rotunda," until 1845, when the Middle Dutch Church was bought, and the post-office removed nearer to the business center of that day. There is extant an old circular, signed by John Lorimer Graham as postmaster, and ornamented with a cut of the church. This circular extends an invitation to "view the interior arrangement of the establishment." This old church, with its numberless additions, so familiar to the present generation of New Yorkers, continued to be the resting-place of the office for thirty years, until in August, 1875, the location was changed to the imposing new building at the lower end of City Hall Park. And now, in the new office, the employes, embarrassed by the clumsy devices of government architects who knew nothing of the needs of the service, sigh for the old church, where no awkwardly placed pillars cramped their assorting tables, increased the distances, and embarrassed their work.

But the enterprising Dr. Benjamin Franklin, with his little memorandum account-book and his ambitious weekly stage-wagon from Philadelphia to Boston—stopping, may be, to leave a few letters at a coffee-house in New York—would have rejoiced could he have foreseen how perfect a machine the modern metropolitan post-office would become. For what the heart is to the body, that is the post-office to the commerce of a great city. Unobstructed postal communication is one of the first requisites of business. A mistake or delay in the delivery of an important letter may entail bankruptcy, may bring any kind of serious misfortune to somebody. In the days when horses and the sails of schooners were the best motors known, and when a man's loose pocket-money was exhausted in paying the postage on a single letter, neither commerce nor

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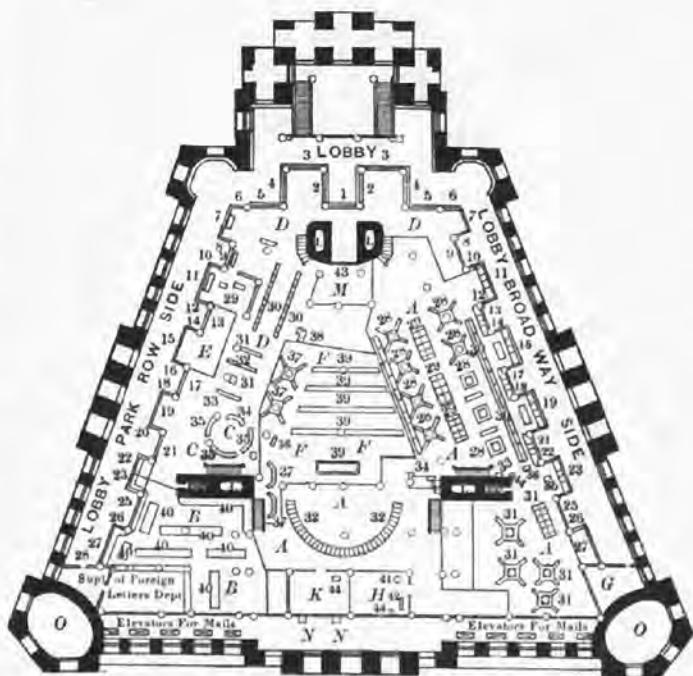
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social life had come to depend on the mails. People did without expeditious communication between New York and Philadelphia, as we to-day do without daily intercourse with Puget's Sound. But we have now so long lived next-door neighbor to the other great cities of the country, our social and business affairs have come to be so intimately entangled with those of people a thousand miles away, that the interruption of mail trains, even for a single day—by a railway strike, for instance—throws the whole intricate machinery of our modern life out of gear. The very perfection of postal organization has brought about a state of things in which that perfect organization is indispensable. Forty years ago, what we now call expedition was out of the question. To-day every letter received in New York is stamped with the hour of its arrival, and a single hour's delay in its delivery is a grievance to be grumbled at by the receiver and hunted down by the post-office.

But did you ever reflect how difficult of achievement is this wonderful accuracy and dispatch? Nearly one hundred and thirty-four millions of letters, papers, and packages were delivered through the New York post-office in 1876, and the rate is ever on the increase. If to this inconceivably large number of parcels delivered, you add the like number sent out to all parts of the country through all manner of complex routes, and to this again all the vast foreign and local mails in transit, which are made up, assorted, or sent forward through this office, you will have some glimmering notion of the amount of organizing and administrative ability needed to manage so vast and so complex a business. There are over twelve hundred men in the service of the New York post-office, and yet so

perfectly is everything adjusted, that the letters dropped into the central office at the closing hour for the up-town mail are faced-up, stamped, assorted, pouched, and carried to the station of the Elevated Railway in just nineteen minutes. And in this vast establishment, where everything is of necessity done with the utmost rapidity, and where there is an infinitude of intricate details, it is almost impossible for a clerk or a carrier to make an error that cannot be traced directly back to him.

We hear much about the accuracy of the



GROUND PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR.

BROADWAY SIDE.—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, Lock-box delivery; 11, drops for letters and printed matter for delivery in New York City; 12, window for reception of bundles of letters for delivery in New York City; 13, drops for Middle States, Canada and Newfoundland; 15, drops for Southern States; 17, drops for New England States; 18, window for reception of letters and packages too bulky for the drops; 19, 21, 23, drops for Western States and Territories; 22, window, superintendent domestic distribution department; 25, window and drop for reception of circulars; 27, window for sale of postage stamps and stamped envelopes in sums less than one dollar; 28, cases for separation and distribution of letters for outgoing domestic mails; 29, tables upon which mails are verified; 31, cases and table for distribution, separation of circulars, and making up same in mail packages; 32, large case for pouching letter packages; 33, indicator of telegraph from Sandy Hook; 34, table for opening pouches of incoming mails; 35, superintendent domestic distribution department; 36, machine for post-marking postal-cards.

PARK ROW SIDE.—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, Lock-box delivery; 12, superintendent post-office delivery window; 13 and 14, general delivery—ladies' window; 15 and 16, general delivery—gentlemen's window; 17, call window—carrier delivery; 18, general newspaper delivery—window; 19, 20, 21, lock-box delivery—newspapers; 22, drop for newspapers, books, and merchandise, packages for United States, Canada, and Newfoundland, and window for sale of stamps—foreign mails; 23, supplementary foreign mail window; 25, drops for North and South America—foreign; 26, window for reception of mail from ship-masters; 27, drops—Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania; 28, window—superintendent foreign mails; 29, office—superintendent post-office delivery; 30, two tables and cases for look-assorters; 31, opening table for mails received; 32, table for making up mails for branch offices; 33, case for distributing newspaper mails for branch offices; 34, case for distributing newspaper mails for box delivery; 35, cases for distribution of papers for general delivery; 36, superintendent carriers' delivery; 37, cases for distribution of mails for carriers; 38, post-marking and canceling table; 39, tables and cases for use of carriers.

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT.—40, Tables for stamping and distribution of foreign letters; 41, telephone connected with stables of contractor for carrying mails; 42, indicator for arrival and departure of mails, and connected with large indicator, No. 43; 45, large indicator for arrival of mails; 44, speaking-tubes and call-bells connecting with assistant postmaster's offices.

Sub Bremen

An F. W. Schrader
GardenerNo. 3414. Klein. St. Angloroß.
St. Des Archen.

Shade & Fruit. Sale.

Planted & Trimm'd. Graps. Plotts.
neatly. laid. garden werr. promptly attended
Nord Amerika. to.

A "BLIND" LETTER RECEIVED AT THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE.

English postal system, and the wonders achieved by the London office. But the New York service is certainly not less efficient, and, in some respects, it is very much better. The difficulties of the New York office are much greater than those of any metropolitan office abroad. London sends about twenty mails a day, while New York sends eighty-four, and receives eighty-six mails a day. The whole number of post-offices in Great Britain and Ireland is but about ten thousand, and these are compactly situated within a small territory, while in the United States there are over thirty-seven thousand (37,575) offices scattered over all the wide territory from one ocean to the other, and reached by many connecting and intricate routes. The problem which confronts the New York post-office is therefore many fold more difficult of solution than that of the London office. For we must remember, also, that the schedules of the mail trains in England are under government control, and have by consequence a certain fixity, while here the time-tables and connections are regularly upset every spring and fall, and are liable to change at any time at the pleasure of the railways; yet the New York office has mastered these difficulties, and it would seem hardly possible to make human minds and human hands work with more accuracy and expedition than they do in the metropolitan post-office.

Armed with Postmaster James's authority

and his personal request to the superintendents that every detail of the business shall be open to our inspection, and that no desired information shall be withheld, we get on one of the lifts and descend into those sacred precincts to which no outsider is ever admitted except by rare favor. Let us go to the bottom of the matter by beginning in the basement.

Here, first of all, we see the leathern bags and the canvas pouches. To prevent confusion, the present postmaster hit upon the plan of having the pouches for each service made of different appearance from those meant for other uses. There is no danger that a pouch for foreign service will go by mistake up the North River, for it has a wholly different physiognomy. The pouch for the city branches is also unique. The registered letter pouches are quite the aristocracy of mail bags, and nobody can by any chance mistake one of them for any of the common herd of plebeian pouches. You would as soon think of hiring a young man with white neck-tie and lavender kids to shovel coals into your cellar, as to think of putting to common uses one of the registered-letter bags with its beautiful stenciling and its thirteen symbolical stripes. The pouches are all made of the very best goods, and with many curious devices for safety from pilfering and from water, and for the detection of robbers. So unlike every other sort of bag are the mail-bags, that any per-

son outside of the service, found with one of them in his possession, or even with part of one, is forthwith arrested for a thief. Perhaps, even more curious than the registered-letter pouch is the "catcher pouch," cunningly arranged for the taking up of mails at a way station by a train on the fly. Many of these devices are the ingenious work of Mr. Boyle, the contractor for the canvas bags, whose exhibition of this sort of manufactures at the Centennial Exhibition attracted much attention from foreign governments.

When a bag has been once used, and after each successive use, it is sent down into this basement and thoroughly inspected. If it is at all out of order, it is sent at once into the repair shops. These shops in the basement were planned by Postmaster-General Jewell, and have already resulted in a saving of eighteen thousand dollars to the government. This office is a supply station for all the mail bags used in the country, and they are stacked up here by thousands in great bins.

When you stand without in the lobby, on the Broadway side of the great new post-office building, you see letters dropped in all day long. There are separate drops for foreign letters, and places of deposit for all sorts of domestic mail matter,—from that which is to go to Harlem, to the letters meant for Texas, or Arizona, or Alaska. You ask, What becomes of all these? What is the great human machine that seizes and distributes these countless letters to the four quarters of the globe?

If we stand on the inside, we see the

letters coming through. There is something weird and mysterious about it. One sees no hand, there is no regularity about the intervals, but now one, now three letters are dropped, and all up and down this side of the office letters are being pushed in by unseen hands, and are dropping in a strange, irregularly intermittent way, with a muffled rustle and slapping upon the tables beneath.

The first thing to be done is to "face up" the letters,—to put them all with directed sides facing the same way. New York's largest correspondence is with New York, and at the table where drop-letters come through, sits an old man, with a kind of short-handled rake,—perhaps I ought to call it a hoe. As fast as the letters fall upon his table he rakes them toward him and faces them up ready for the stamper. Every stamp has its number, and by that number any miscarried or delayed letter can be tracked through all the hands that have handled it. The envelope will tell a post-office official whether the letter was posted at a lamp-post, dropped at one of the stations, or at the central office, and upon what tables it was stamped and made up in the mail. If it is tardy in arriving at its destination the superintendent of the mailing department can fix the responsibility of the delay. The system by which this is achieved was devised by Mr. Thomas L. James, the present postmaster.

After the stamper comes the separator, who puts the letters for each mail together; after him the mail-maker, who verifies every

Hounlein = Lahl Loffernad
County, Slingota
North Amerika
via Hamburg
für. Iron Niebe



letter in each mail, ties them into a bundle and puts on each a printed label marked with its destination, and stamped with his own name. When the packages are opened on the postal car, the route agent marks whatever errors there may be in them upon the labels and returns these to the New York post-office. A rigid account of these errors is kept, and every man's percentage of correctness for a given time is set opposite his name, on a sheet that is conspicuously posted in the office. Some men have become so accurate that they will have for some months a clean record, not having made a single mistake in the mailing of a letter. This accuracy is one of the tests upon which the salaries are graded from time to time, and there is consequently the liveliest emulation in the matter.

But expedition is also of great importance. If you step in here on a day when a steamer has arrived you will see how fast men can work. A marine telegraph at the north end of the building gives information of the approach of a mail steamer while she is yet "outside the Hook," and by the time the great load of foreign mail arrives the post-office decks are cleared for action. On one day in October last, for instance, three hundred and twenty-eight sacks of mail matter were landed from the "City of Chester," and one hundred and twenty-eight at the same time from the "Hermann." And that was on Monday, the day when the number of letters to be dispatched is always larger than on any other day. For Sunday is the day for writing and mailing social and family letters, and the number taken from the street boxes at 9 P. M. of that day is immense. So that when steamer-day and Monday come together, these stampers, separators, mail-makers, pouchers and dispatchers are up to their eyes in work.

When the mail-maker has tied up his letters they go to the poucher, who assort them, throwing the several packages with unerring aim into their several divisions, arranged like large pigeon-holes in a semi-circular form. These pigeon-holes slope downward toward the back, and even while the poucher is throwing, the dispatcher may be affixing the pouches at the back, opening a sliding door and emptying the mail into the bags, which are immediately locked and sent off to the wagons of the contractor, George K. Otis, waiting at the door. Here is a telephone hanging by a pillar. If there is a mail of size extraordinary, the dispatcher has only to speak

the word to this instrument and it is distinctly heard at the stables in Wooster street, a good two miles away.

The newspaper tables in the basement are among the most curious. The straight pitching and the rapid distribution are perpetual wonders to an outsider. The papers and letters are not all assorted to separate offices, but what are called "mass states and territories,"—mails for the whole of a distant state or territory in a single package—are sent to be distributed on the postal cars. Some notion of the vastness of the business may be had from the fact that two hundred and forty-six bags went out to New England and Canada, on the day of our inspection.

There are two other curiosities in this department. Postmaster James found that deaf mutes could be used for some of the work, and there are now three engaged in stamping, and one in sorting. "When we get two noisy men," said the assistant superintendent, "we put a 'dummy' between them and so secure quiet."

The other thing that interested us was the arrest of lottery matter. The law gives the post-office power to stop all matter of this kind. But the lottery men resort to many ingenious tricks to defeat the vigilance of the office. There are always newspapers on their last legs, with a respectable reputation, but very few subscribers. The lottery swindlers buy up one of these and fill the outside with the usual innocent reading matter, while they stuff the inside of the paper with puffs of their scheme of capital prizes and lovely frauds. The edition is suddenly swelled, and it is mailed to the list of names which have been assiduously gathered by the harpies. One such transformation had been detected on the very day of our first visit, and the whole edition stopped.

Of the whole number,—nearly a hundred and fifty millions of letters and packages a year at this time,—about one half are distributed through boxes, at the central office, about one-fourth by carriers, and about one-fourth are sent to the stations in other parts of the city. Every letter received here is stamped at once with the hour of its arrival. All letters coming in between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning are stamped "11 A. M." When the hour turns, the stamper wipes his stamp clean of ink, lays it away in a drawer and takes a new one with the next hour upon it and proceeds again. The greatest care is exercised to have the stamp legible. In London a machine is used for stamping, but here it is found that nothing

Mr General Grant
Expräsident der



Nordamerikanischer Union.
in New-York.
Nordamerika

Primo.

is so good as the human hand. These stampers are incredibly swift and dexterous, in their alternate rapid stamping of a letter and the ink-pad.

From the stamper the letters go to the assorters. The letters are separated into box letters, carriers' letters, and letters for the branch offices. The assorter for the boxes has to distribute to each of the windows of box delivery its letters, and, to do this, he must remember twenty thousand names, and at what window each one of this twenty

thousand gets his mail. The letters should be addressed to the box number, but in most cases they are not. Though Jenkins & Company are always addressed at 97 Fiddler street, their letters must always be put in box 9,775, let us say, which box is at a certain window, which window the assorter must always keep in his head associated with Jenkins & Company of Fiddler street, and with some thousands of names besides. Moreover, there is a John Jenkins & Son in Huckleberry lane, whose letters must be

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Sam Kee



Washing and ironing
polishing and flut'in'
all work done good
536 palego st buttons
sewed on

kept separate and sent through carriers, and there is another Jenkins & Company at 73 Vandernocker street, whose box is at another window. Besides all that, the firm at 73 Vandernocker street has the whole building, so that when a letter comes addressed to Titus Oates at that number, it must be

Jenkins & Company, located at 73 in that street.

The greatest pains are taken to find the address to which a letter should go, so that it shall not fall into the general delivery. To return to our friends of the name of Jenkins, for instance. Here is a letter



AN OLD TIME POST-BOY.

evident to the infallible assorter, that the said Titus Oates, of whom he has never before heard, is in the employ of the Vandernocker street Jenkins & Company, and that the letter must not go to the carrier for the street, but into the box of the house of

addressed to "John Jenkins, New York." Now, the directory may show us twenty of that name, we will say, from the railway president to the cab-driver. But on the upper left-hand corner of this letter, it says, that this letter, in case of non-delivery, is to

be returned to Peters, Smith & Hubbard, dealers in garden seed, in Spring Garden street, Philadelphia. The clerk to whom the assorter has referred the matter, hence concludes that the letter does not belong to John Jenkins of the firm in Fiddler street, for he finds that that firm is engaged in the manufacture of real Cremona violins; nor to the John Jenkins of the firm in Vander-nocker street, for that manufactures real Orange County milk and butter. But, as the firm in Huckleberry lane are seed dealers, he sends it there on trial. But, should there be no sign of any kind on the letter other than the name, and should the name be a common one, the letter must needs take its way to the Dead Sea of the general delivery, where there is an average of thirteen thousand letters awaiting claimants. Twice a week letters are advertised, and every thirty days they are sent up to the dead-letter office at Washington.

Among the devices for securing accurate delivery is the list of ships in port, cut from the "New York Price Current." The consignees' names are given in this list, and a letter addressed to Ole Knudsen, sailor, on

the bark "Thor," is sent to the house of Knud, Olafsen & Co., 75 Downtown street, consignees of the bark, "Thor." The clerk shows me a letter that has gone astray. It is marked "R. H. Dana, New York," and he draws his pen through the name of New York, and writes the proud name of Boston in its place.

The assorters for carriers have to remember each carrier's boundary. All the odd numbers, we will suppose from 701 to 741 Broadway, are in one carrier's district. But the even numbers on the other side of the street are differently arranged. These he must also remember with an infinitude of other things; for instance, the Equitable Building at 120 Broadway is a place of delivery for thirteen hundred names, and there are other numbers as populous. The assorters for city stations are fined for every error which sends a letter to the wrong station, and the system is so perfect that the error is always fixed on the man who makes it. Ten of these assorters, the quickest and most accurate, get fourteen hundred dollars a year each, fourteen get twelve hundred, and five get ten hundred and twenty,—not a large

wage for so much skill and mental quickness.

At the hour of the departure of carriers, the delivery department is full of animation; the men in their uniforms pass from one assorter's table to another and take, each from his own box, all the mail deposited therein, while the impassive assorter goes right on throwing mail into the box for the next delivery. Then you will see the carriers at a long counter which is divided by little raised partitions into compartments, each making his mail into a conveniently arranged bundle. In a carefully prepared report on file in the office, I find that during the



THE OLD POST-OFFICE.



THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE BUILDING.—FROM THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF BROADWAY AND FULTON STREET.

year 1876, the carriers handled—*i.e.*, collected and delivered—in all, over one hundred and thirty-six millions of pieces (136,631,116),—an average of three hundred and eighteen thousand four hundred and fifty-four pieces to the man.

When a carrier cannot find the person to whom a letter is addressed, he enters it in his log-book. He sets down the address of the letter, the reason for its non-delivery, and a few cabalistic initials which describe it. "M." "M. R." "C. D." "D. R.," and such-like initials stand for "Mail," that is a letter from outside the city; "Mail Request," that is, the same kind of a letter with a request for return to writer; "Card Drop," a postal-card dropped in New York, and so on. These books explain a great many of the complaints made against the service by showing that the fault lay somewhere else. The letters which ultimately fail to find owners are sent to the dead-letter office, but the lost postal-cards are tied into bundles

to be burned. Here they are—thousands that have baffled the diligence of the clerks and carriers; they will be sent down-stairs presently in charge of a clerk who will see them fed to the fire under the boilers, and thus they will help to lift the elevators.

All the boxes to-day are lock-boxes of a new pattern, and they are very convenient. But some of the great houses get mails too large for the boxes. Some of these send hand-trunks for their mail. Keys to these trunks are kept in the post-office and at the business house; the messenger cannot unlock them in transit. Here is a rough pine box in which the "Herald's" mail is stored; the Fourth National Bank has a similar one. The Importers' and Traders' Bank gets the largest bank mail, and they send a trunk for it. But the very largest mails of all are those of the two great dry goods houses of A. T. Stewart & Co., and H. B. Claffin & Co. Their letters number about two thousand a day each. They have trustworthy mes-

sengers who give their whole time to the transportation of the mail to and from the post-office. Houses with good messengers do not often complain of the service.

There are mistakes, of course, in the service, and there are mistakes of correspondents that the service must correct, and hence the need of the inquiry office for missing and dead letters; at the head of which is the second oldest clerk, Mr. Hallett, who has served the office more than fifty years. When a valuable letter has gone to the dead-letter office, been opened and returned to the writer, if the writer is in New York it comes to this department where it must be receipted for before it is delivered. To this room come all the packages that are "short paid."

By law they should go to the dead-letter office; for though a short-paid letter goes to its destination if one full postage is paid on it, a short-paid package does not. But where the business card of the sender is on the package a note is sent to the firm informing it of the detention of the parcel and a second chance to pay in full is thus given. This is done out of pure courtesy, from a desire to facilitate business; but for this voluntary service the office rarely gets thanked, but often censured for not sending forward the package. Eighty such notices of short-paid parcels were sent out on the day of my visit. These mistakes are often made by the largest houses, and sometimes consist in paying fifty-one cents on a parcel which should have fifty-two. In many cases no clew to the sender can be found. Here they show me a forlorn copy of SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY, which somebody, having read it, is kindly sending to a friend in the country. But alas, it has but three cents postage, and not having enough to pay its fare it will never get to cousin Sallie out in Pennsylvania, but will waste its sweetness in the desert of the dead-letter office.

Some of the bundles which they show us here are too long for the mails, others not properly packed. Here is a naked auger-bit with a directed tag, and alongside of it a coil spring. Either of these would make havoc in a mail-bag. They show us also a package of vials,—one of these medicine

bottles is already broken, and though the post-office people may feel never so sorry for the ailments of the folks in the country, which ailments would all be cured on receipt of this physic, they cannot carry any liquids in glass. Only yesterday, they tell me, forty pieces of wedding-cake in nice pasteboard boxes tied with the delicatest white ribbon, were dropped into the mail. But bride-cake is more than even the post-office can digest, and the unsentimental clerks were obliged to arrest the cake, which somebody was to have dreamed on. I saw a box of it, and the grease had already struck through. Among the articles that have been stopped in the New York office



UNITED STATES MAIL-BAGS.

was a roll of butter, a package containing chicken-on-toast, and a string of trout sent in from New Jersey.

One principal branch of the business carried on in this room is the seeking for letters that have gone astray. The complaint-book shows that the office is able to get some account of the letter in more than forty-nine per cent. of the cases brought to its notice. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the service is not found in fault. Somebody complained that a pair of shoes sent by mail had been stolen; but the office found, on writing to the sender in Indianapolis, that the shoes had not been sent by mail at

all. In one case of complaint, the person to whom the letter was sent was out of town when the carrier tried to deliver it. It is hardly right to put upon the post-office the duty of keeping the people in town to get their mail. A revenue collector complained that his returns had not gone forward to Washington, and a few days later he found the document in his own office. Another man complained that a check had been lost in the mail. The letter turned up, and the stamp on it showed that the sender had mailed it three days too late, and thus gained time by throwing the blame on the post-office. Many a debt is paid by money said to have been lost in the mail. In one case a country bank complained; but it was found that their check had been sent to the wrong bank in New York. A merchant, who was in distress about a check stolen in the mails, found it safely shut up in his own check-book. A great stir was made over the loss of a check of \$800. Look opposite the complaint here in the book, and you will see this entry, "The writer of the letter had carried it five days in his pocket."

In this office a list of all the fictitious concerns is kept, and all letters going to them are stopped and sent to the dead-letter office. Seven or eight hundred names of concerns without existence are kept on a list here. They are technically called "saw-dust people," and the post-office uses its utmost endeavor to defeat their schemes for swindling the public.

Here come also the misdirected letters, whose direction cannot be corrected by the clerks down-stairs. A clerk sits surrounded by a semicircle of the directories of all the principal cities. In most cases he does not have to consult them. He knows that a letter to Peter Blank, Camden Street, New York, should read Camden Street, Baltimore. This sort of mistake is very common, and, what is curious, is more often made by banks than by any other kind of business houses. A boy who can write a good hand sits down in a bank addressing letters to correspondents, and New York is in his mind; he puts it down, in place of Jersey

City or St. Louis, and the letter goes wrong. The average of misdirected letters sent up to this department is over 500 a day; the day I was there last it ran up to about 1,000.

The most difficult of these go to Mr. Stone, who is called "the blind man," perhaps because he can decipher an inscription that is utterly illegible to any other man in America. His most difficult cases are the foreign letters. Here is a letter directed to "Sanduik," which he makes out to be Sandy Hook. Sometimes the arrangement of the name and address is curious.

For Mr. Thomas
Smith Bridge
port post-office
Conn. America

is very plain when you once understand that it is "For Mr. Thomas Smith, Bridgeport, Conn., America." But when a man says "Hoio," how is anybody but a blind man to know that he means Ohio? One letter reads, "Bet Feet Rue de Agua." Now the



REPAIRING MAIL-BAGS.

blind man knows that "Rue de Agua" is Spanish for Water street, and that there is a Water street in New Bedford, Massachusetts. "Lysram, Warner Co.," he translates into Luzerne, Warren Co.; and "Common



WHITE STAR STEAMER "GERMANIC" RECEIVING MAIL OFF SANDY HOOK IN A GALE.

County, P. A.," is made into Cameron County, Pennsylvania. But who would guess that "Overn C. D. Learey," in one line, means that it is to go to *Auburn*, in search of C. D. L.? One letter is directed to "Kunstanzer Brauerei, S. I., Amerika." Mr. Stone recollects the fact that Constance's Brewery is at Stapleton, Staten Island, and the letter is sent there. He reads "Ioël" into Iowa, and "te Pella in Yomah" he makes to go to Pella, in the same state. Nor does Ohio get off with one miss. Here is one letter that wants to go to "Stadt Hioh Zunsounati, Strasse 15,"—that is, to the State of Ohio, Cincinnati, Street 15. But that is not all. This other one wants to reach the same

city; but it has a bad spell of another kind, for its direction runs "Scit-znaty." And then "Pizzo Burg Messessip," is sent to Vicksburg. Michigan is spelled "mutting." "Glass works Berkshire" is sent to Pittsfield, in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, where there is a glass factory. But the hardest one I saw was addressed to "John Hermann Schirmen," in one line, with the wonderful word "Staguek-aundo" for the rest. Mr. Stone cut the word in twain, and read it "Chautauqua County," while he translated the whole into "John Hermann, Sherman P. O., Chautauqua County, N. Y."*

But there are some which even a blind man cannot make out. One letter in rather a good handwriting is very vaguely addressed to

"Mackay, Esq., Amerique."

Another reads:

"Too much of this.
From your affectionate son,
"ANTON HIEMBURGER."

In this case the close of the letter has been copied exactly by some one who did not understand the language. In-

stead of too much of this, there is really too little. But here is a case where the top of the letter has been imperfectly copied in the same fashion. It reads: "Tuesday Evening, Nord America."

If Tuesday Evening should see this article, he will know that his letter has gone back again to Europe.

Some mistakes are curiously common. About twenty-five letters come from Europe every week directed simply to Westchester

* The humor of some of these letters is better shown in the fac-similes before given. The one on page 62 is intended for "Mountain Lake, Cottonwood Co., Minn.;" while that on page 61 was sent to St. Louis, where there is a Klein street crossing the other streets named.

County. Some institutions are given to making mistakes. The Bank of Montreal sends its letters into this department to be corrected as often as any business house on the continent.

Letters of value need some greater security than is afforded by the ordinary mail system; hence the registered letter department. The old registered letter system was rather worse than nothing, for since the registered letter went into the ordinary mail-bag its registration was an advertisement to a post-office thief that this was the letter to take. But of late the system has been carried to a high degree of perfection. Last year 369,000 registered letters were sent out of the New York office, and though six or eight of these failed to reach their destination, there are but three that have not been accounted for, and the responsibility for these will soon be fixed. Under the present system, the envelope containing registered letters is received for by every person into whose hands it goes, and a package of registered letters, or a registered-letter bag, is never opened except in presence of two persons. The system of accounts is exceedingly perfect, though to an outsider very intricate. The books show the name of every clerk who handles a package or letter, and of the clerk who verified the number of letters in every package.

The registered letter department is indeed a complete post-office within a post-office. It is located in a gallery, and no one is admitted but clerks in the department, each of whom carries a special key to the room. The locks of the registered-letter pouches are peculiar, and the keys are only intrusted to those who have to do with the registered-letter bags. Here in New York the key is fastened in the safe, and the several pouches must be taken to the clerk in charge at the safe and unlocked by him, so that it is always known into whose hands the contents of every pouch pass.

The foreign registered mail is made up independently, and about nine hundred bags are used for the foreign service alone. The foreign government sends these bags back inclosed in their own, and the New York office returns the foreign pouches in the same way. The foreign mail is often of great value. Many millions in government bonds are sometimes in the office at once for shipment abroad.

Large shipments of gold are now intrusted to the registered-letter mail. One thousand dollars in gold weighs less than four pounds, and is consequently within the limit of aailable parcel. Twenty-five of these thousand-dollar parcels are put in one box and sent through the mail. This office also



POUCHING-CASE FOR NEWSPAPERS.

receives and registers all the postage-stamps and postal-cards for the whole country. The postal-cards are sent in boxes.

Besides the precautions for safety already

out to be delivered at Augusta, Georgia, advice of that letter is sent to the post-master at Augusta in the ordinary mail. Having received this bill and failing to get



PORTRAIT OF THOMAS L. JAMES. (DRAWN BY J. ALDEN WEIR AND ENGRAVED BY T. COLE.)

described, there are innumerable other guards set up. When a registered letter is inclosed in a registered pouch and sent

the letter, he knows at once that something is wrong. Between certain offices of importance, registered mail-pouches are sent



VIEW FROM POST-OFFICE BUILDING LOOKING DOWN BROADWAY.

"Herald" Building. "Evening Post" Building. Trinity Church. W. U. Telegraph Co's Building. St. Paul's Church. Astor House.

daily whether there is anything to go in them or not. Two such pouches are sent to Albany, and awhile ago a dispatch came to the New York post-office :

"Only one registered bag received. Did you send two?"

On receiving this, Mr. Forrester, the superintendent of the registered letter department, hastened to the Grand Central Station, where he telegraphed ahead and intercepted at Syracuse the bag that had gone astray.

In the New York office the accounts of incoming and outgoing letters are carefully balanced like a cash balance every evening, and not a man is allowed to leave the department if the balance is not correct. One night the men were kept until nearly morning looking for a letter that had dropped through a crack in an old table, and lodged in the folds of a worn-out mail-bag, and so got kicked into a corner during the search. At another time when the office

was at its wit's end after a night of search it was found that an absent-minded man had carefully deposited his pen in the safe and put the missing package in the pen's place in his table drawer.

Of a million and a half (1,573,633) of letters and packages handled in the New York office, in 1876,—the latest year reported at this writing,—not a single one was lost. The country offices are not so vigilant. Three hundred and seventy-three letters came to New York last year unsealed; and these contained over twenty-six hundred dollars in currency, and more than three thousand in checks.

One of the latest and most important improvements in postal communication is the money order system, but it is a department which has fewest details of interest to the general public. In 1865, the first full year of the money order business, the New York office paid 28,921 orders, while in 1876 the orders paid amounted to 555,663. The amount of money paid on orders in 1876

was over six millions. During the year 1877, the number of orders ran higher than in the previous year, but the aggregate amount of money sent was less. This department is a pretty accurate barometer of the state of trade, and the present gradual improvement in commercial affairs shows itself in the business of this department during the last quarter of last year.

When an order is presented for payment the clerk receiving it writes a check on the paying teller, who stands at another window. This check is put upon a belt rotated by a tiny steam engine and carried to the teller. This dainty little engine is enough to make a boy delirious with happiness. The superintendent shows us little pigeon-holes for each of the great publishing houses where duplicate orders are kept always ready for them. When you sent a money order for SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY, the postmaster in your town made out an exact duplicate, except that he put *your* name in the duplicate, and this last he sent to the New York office, where it was deposited in the pigeon-hole which is labeled with the name Scribner & Co., until its mate, which you sent, should be presented for payment.

The English money order department is not so accurate as the New York office. Some time ago Mr. Plimley, of the New York money order department, wrote to the London office, pointing out discrepancies in their two official lists of money order offices. The New York office had only examined three or four letters of the alphabet in the London Official Guide, and pointed out the errors in them as examples. The London office thereupon issued a circular making the corrections pointed out, but no others. The English department also requires the New York office to make out duplicates for orders on England, while it refuses to furnish similar duplicates for this country, leaving that also to be done in New York. The foreign orders are often carelessly filled; some of them are orders payable in "Washington, U. S."—a very puzzling address.

In the auditor's office the whole business of detecting the errors of other offices is carried on. An average of sixty dollars a day is collected on matter improperly charged elsewhere. It is also the business of this office to examine packages for articles which are forbidden to be sent. One package which had contained grasshopper eggs when it started had hatched out on the journey, and the little creatures escaped

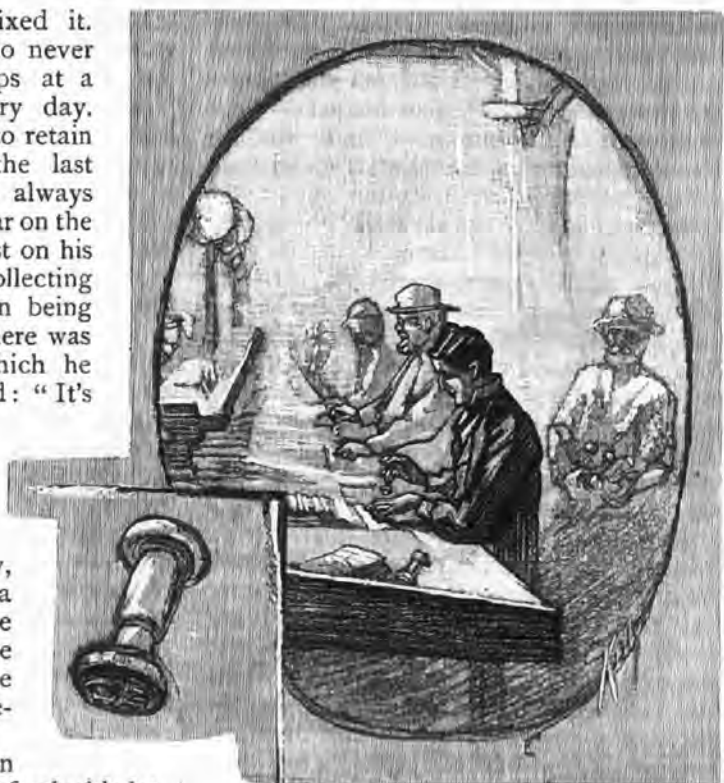
through an opening in the box making a very lively mail. Everything is found in the mail sooner or later, even alligators.

Here one sees the system of paying postage on periodicals in bulk, a system said to have been first suggested from the office of this magazine. Here are stamps that only the most enthusiastic collector will ever add to his list. They cost too much, and they cannot be had after they are canceled (see p. 79). The publisher pays his postage on the whole wagon load of matter delivered at one time, and the clerk affixes stamps not to the packages but to the stubs from which the receipt is taken. Here is one hundred and forty-two dollars paid with eight stamps, including two for sixty dollars, and here we see a larger amount, \$204.58, paid with five stamps, viz.: three of sixty dollars each, one of twenty-four dollars, one of forty-eight cents, and one of ten cents. Any amount up to about two hundred dollars can be paid with five stamps. A publisher can buy these stamps if he wishes, and pay his postage with them; but as it locks up a large amount of money there is but one publishing house in New York that chooses to keep a stock of them. None of the large denominations have been sold to collectors from the New York office. A foreign government bought some for samples, but they were so expensive that the agent brought them back and wished to return them. The office could not receive them, but they were sold to a publishing house at a discount. On the floor below you will see the large Fairbanks scales on which the publishers' mails are weighed.

The stamp business belongs in the department of the cashier, and in his office all large amounts are sold. In one of the galleries I saw boxes containing thirty-seven thousand dollars' worth of envelopes and postal-cards, and the stock of stamps on hand at the same time was a hundred and thirty thousand dollars' worth. The New York office orders one million of postal-cards at a time. In little rooms fronting on both lobbies you will find the sellers of stamps in small quantities. To render the keeping of their accounts as simple as possible, each stamp-seller has his own "capital," and buys stamps at the cashier's counter, like an outsider, paying cash for them. These stamp-clerks are subjected to all sorts of vexatious and amusing encounters with queer people. There is one old man who regularly brought a copy of the same paper every morning to be weighed, then bought

his one cent stamp and affixed it. There are men of means who never buy but two or three stamps at a time, though they buy every day. They are, probably, anxious to retain the use of their money to the last moment, like the man who always sits in the rear seat of the last car on the train, so as to save the interest on his fare while the conductor is collecting from the rest. One man on being asked by a stamp-seller if there was any writing in the book which he offered to post, gruffly replied: "It's none of your business." The clerks at the stamp windows, remember the ill-natured people. As we stood inside watching the stream of faces passing the window, and the clerks answering a steady torrent of questions, one of them said: "There is the man that called me a brute one day; we have a way of remembering these people."

In spite of all the care taken to insure the safe transmission of valuable letters, inclosures, and money orders, people will continue to send money through the ordinary mail, sometimes in considerable quantities; therefore the utmost pains are taken and with surprising success to make even the ordinary mail safe from depredations. But the unregistered mail will always suffer from theft, while human nature is what it is. The aim of the post-office department is, by care in appointments and by the use of the skill of expert detectives, to reduce this to the minimum. In the rooms of the special agent of the post-office department, in the New York post-office building is the center of the detective operations of the department for the metropolis. Mr. Sharratts, the agent, has a genius for the work; full of irrepressible energy, eager, tireless, you will find him sometimes strolling in the lobbies, watching the messenger boys, who, all unsuspecting of his vigilance, are peeping into their employers' boxes at unwonted hours, or doing worse. Sometimes from above I have seen him watch the coming and going crowds like a fish-hawk balancing over his prey. Sometimes he will lift his hat to a man. You think he is greeting a friend. This man is a detective, and the hat-lifting is a sign perfectly understood between him and Mr. Sharratts. His rooms overlook the great first floor where the letter mail



STAMPING.

is handled, so that nobody knows when his eye is on a suspected employé of the office.

In his rooms there is no machinery—nothing to show the immense work done—but two or three clerks. You would not think that from this office the mails coming and going from New York are guarded. Nor will you get much account of methods by inquiring. The vigorous detective does not relate blood-curdling stories, or take the public into his confidence. Mr. Sharratts tells us that he has a victim in the inner office now, "telling what he knows about farming." Which means that a rascally messenger who has been robbing the mail between his employer's office and the post-office, is left alone in that room to write out a full statement of his pilferings.

"You can come in here if you want to," says the special agent, "and take a view down Broadway." We are thus admitted to the private office, where, Mr. Sharratts, making show of ignoring the criminal at the desk, points to the view down the street, bids us be seated, and thus gives us a chance to see the poor victim to whom the fear of punishment is now applying the rack. He is a not bad-looking boy of sixteen, with flushed face and bitter tears in his eyes. The

special agent takes up his now completed confession and reads what is written. Then he leans over and says some rapid words that we cannot hear, shakes his head threateningly to the young man, and bids him come again in the morning. For the mo-

a mother and two children in an attic tenement. The boy's lunch is a little piece of bread and butter tied up by his mother. He is beset by the temptations of the Italian stalls, the chestnuts, bananas, pies, and what-nots. You know," adds the special agent, dryly, "what a gulf there is in a boy's inside. Some day a companion suggests that he can hook a few stamps off the letters and exchange them for pies. And presently the fine merchant is berating the postal service for the loss of his letters."

Sometimes the thief is inside the office, and then the toils are slowly and surely wound round him. His habits are studied, his day and night life is known, his accomplices spotted, and when at last the favorable moment comes, the unfaithful servant meets a swift doom and is sent to prison for a terrible term of years. But the greater part of the thefts are outside. In a drawer in one business house were found three

thousand letters; in another case the remains of fifteen hundred were hidden away. In yet other cases, the fault lies higher up than with the messenger. It suits the convenience, now and then, of some rascally house to complain of lost letters where no letters have been lost. So that the special agent must unravel a problem full of intricacies and complications before he finds the depredator.

Under Mr. James's administration a system of genuine civil service has grown up. He has steadily resisted the demands of politicians that good clerks shall be removed on account of their lack of efficiency in ward politics. It is said to be a beautiful sight to see him send for a superintendent and ask what kind of a man the clerk is, in the presence of the "statesmen" of the Assembly district who are urging his removal. A good report from the superintendent, and a polite, "You see, gentlemen, that it is impossible to remove him," ends it, except that the ward statesmen never think well of the postmaster's efficiency after that.

There is a notion prevalent that with every change of postmaster a pretty clean sweep of employes is made. But only one hundred and four removals have been made in Postmaster James's five years, and of this number eighty were for drunkenness. This vice at one time made sad havoc among the



THE DIRECTORY TABLE.

ment the rack releases its grasp, and he is allowed to go free until the next day. The confession tells how he has plundered letters of over a hundred dollars in money. In his confession, he euphemistically calls it "stopping" them. To soften the name of a crime is the first step toward committing it. He says he spent the money on "theaters, apples, and things." Mr. Sharratts says as he looks over the paper, "He lies. That is not all." The young fellow had told only what he supposed had been found out. The rest will be extracted from him painfully and in installments. It is curious how a bright boy like that can be so weak in common sense and moral feeling.

Mr. Sharratts has demonstrated that most of the plundering of the mails is outside of the post-office. He has found that thousands of letters have been stopped by a single messenger. The special agent has almost never failed to reach some result, outside or inside of the office, in every case of letters of a house having been stolen. Detection is only a matter of time, and would seem to be almost as inevitable as death.

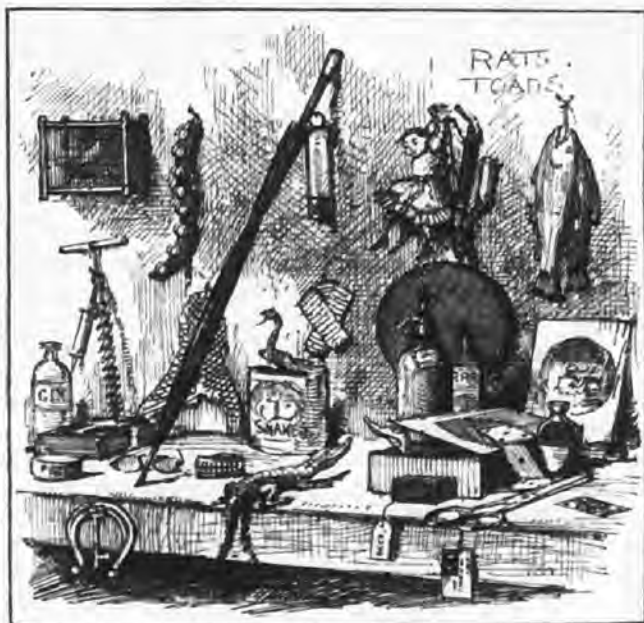
"Fine merchants," says Mr. Sharratts, "who draw checks on tinted paper and do business in a gilt-edge style, will send their mail to the office by a little boy whose salary of two dollars a week is half the support of

rank and file of employés; but there is at present an efficient post-office temperance society, and there have been some remarkable reformations, while a sentiment in favor of temperance has diffused itself through all departments of the office.

That clean sweeps have not been made is sufficiently shown by the time of service of some of the clerks. In the delivery department you will see the venerable figure of the patriarch of the office, Mr. Charles Forrester, Sr. He entered the service as clerk in 1825, when the office had just been removed out of its twelve by fifteen feet quarters at the corner of William and Garden streets, where the postmaster, General Bailey, lived upstairs over the office for twenty years, and closed his office when he went to dinner. Mr. Forrester has been in the office now for fifty-two years, and may well call himself by the title of which Southey was so proud: "A man of letters by profession." Mr. Forrester's father was a clerk in the office before him, having served under General Bailey from 1808, and his son, Mr. Charles Forrester, Jr., is now superintendent of the registered letter department, so that the post-office may be said to run in the

vice in practice. Promotions and salaries are now based partly on length of service, partly on a careful system of testing the correctness of work done, partly on conduct, and partly on a periodical re-examination. This examination is not a test of the clerk's knowledge of the names of the extinct volcanoes in the moon, but a trial of his expertness in his work. For instance, the clerks who are distributing matter in the mailing department were recently required to place correctly 2,200 cards, containing the names of all the post-offices in Ohio, in a series of pigeon-holes labeled with the names of the counties in that state. One man succeeded in making the distribution in two hours and twenty minutes, with only thirteen errors. The best man at the New York table was yet more remarkable. He put the whole two thousand eight hundred and forty cards bearing the names of the post-offices in this state into their proper counties in one hundred and five minutes, with but a single error. Awhile ago, there was a competition for the vacant chief clerkship at a table, and the lowest man of all, by sheer excellence, took the place.

In the delivery department, the box



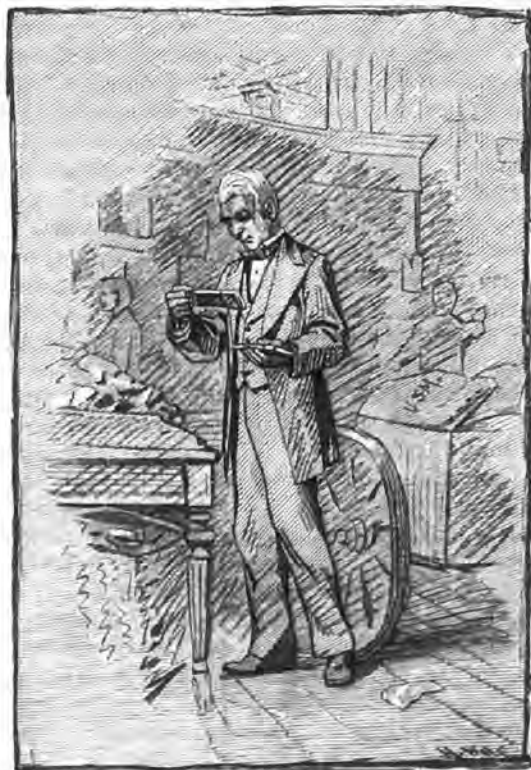
SOME THINGS THAT ARE DETAINED IN THE SEARCHER'S DEPARTMENT.

family. Mr. John H. Hallett, chief of the inquiry office for missing letters, lacks but a year of having served as long as Mr. Forrester, Sr.

While others have advocated it in theory, Postmaster James has exemplified civil ser-

assorters, whose wonderful memory of twenty thousand names I have described above, are tested by the distribution of cards containing 2,000 names of persons and firms holding boxes. A little over a year ago, when these examinations were begun, the

highest man on the list received a mark of ninety for correctness, while the lowest ran down to sixty. At the last trial seven were marked over ninety-nine per cent. for correctness. The swiftest assorted the whole two thousand cards in forty-five minutes, the slowest—a new man, perhaps—was more than four times as long. But the very lowest of the whole twenty-nine received sixty-seven as the percentage of correctness and



THE VETERAN.

expertness. Such is the improvement wrought by the stimulus of emulation. Perhaps this is better shown by the average of the whole force, which, under this severe test, was, in July, 1876, but sixty-four, while in September, 1877, it attained ninety. The salaries are graded in part by the results of these examinations.

Nearly all the higher officers of the New York post-office have come up from the ranks. Even Mr. Pearson, the assistant post-master, rose from a clerkship in the office and passed through the various grades in the railway postal service (of which he was one of the originators) before attaining his present position; Mr. Gaylor, general superintendent of the city delivery, began as a \$600 clerk; Mr. Forrester, superintendent of the registry department, began as a \$600 clerk in the distribution department; also

Mr. Wareing, the assistant general superintendent of the mailing department, told me frankly that he came in as a porter. Mr. Yeoman, the superintendent of the same department, began as a stamper, on a salary of three hundred a year, and so on through the list. All but one of the nineteen superintendents of branches entered as clerks. In short, here is civil service of the most approved kind in successful operation in the best conducted of all the government institutions.

The clerks are quite satisfied to go down if they are beaten down. Under the old system, a man in the post-office had but little chance for promotion, except by the intrigue of some political clique. In giving men a chance to be something, and a perpetual stimulus to their ambition, Mr. James has undoubtedly wrought a marvelous improvement in the service. But he has done better than that; for by opening a door of hope to a man one makes him a man. Men no longer expect removal on the caprice of a ward committee. The office offers them a career, and they have every stimulus to faithfulness and excellence. It is found that the least efficient clerks in the office are generally those backed by the most eminent names, while the poor fellows who have no hope but in winning the favor of their superiors by fidelity and excellence are altogether the most valuable.

The swarm of applicants for places in the office are tested by examinations also, but these look more to their general intelligence. I was permitted to see some of the very original answers on the examination papers. One question, "What has been your clerical experience?" is a veritable *pons asinorum* to the applicants, and many are the donkeys who are lost here. Most of them take clerical in its ecclesiastical sense. One man answers that his clerical experience has been "Catholic," and so through all the denominations. One man responds by saying, "Have taught in a Sunday-school." Another man has not had any occasion to deal with clergymen, for in answering the question as to his "clerical experience," he breaks out, "Well, I was never sick a day in my life." There are others who give the term a wider sense. One answers, "Composer;" another, "Working as porter in a store;" while a third hits it exactly when he says, "Making horse-collars." The geographical questions are quite as troublesome. On one paper the large rivers in the United States are "North River and East River," while another applicant, when he is required

to name the British Possessions in America, rises to the occasion and answers, "Laying the Atlantic cable and visit of the Prince of Wales." In these papers we find the Black Sea put into the Arctic Ocean, the prevailing religion of Turkey set down as "Protestant," and "Garibaldi" made to be King of Italy. To the question: "What nation assisted the United States in the war of the Revolution?" we have answered, with perfect naïveté, "The Irish." When one man was required to state into what three departments the government of the United States was divided, he answered, with the promptitude of a lightning calculator, "Philadelphia, New York, and Boston." But another man of more statesmanlike cast of mind wrestles with the same question and divides the government into "federel, judishel, and navel."

More and more as we look through the complicated details of the office do we feel the pervading influence of the head. Everything is carefully centralized, and a wonderful unity is given to every movement of the office. For instance, all the letters of the various superintendents on matters pertaining to business of their departments, are sent up to the room of the assistant-postmaster at three o'clock. Mr. Pearson, who is second in authority in the Office is the embodiment of accuracy and painstaking. He receives and examines these letters checked only with the initials of the clerks who write them. They are then sent forward to the postmaster, who signs every one of them, so that the correspondence all receives the signature of Mr. James, and no one else is known or allowed to speak for the office. In this way a perfect supervision of the business of all the departments is maintained.

Here is a large room with shadowy reeds and ferns, green stalks, and other plants of elegant form, frescoed in light and shade on the walls. The windows look off down into the ceaseless roar of Broadway and over into the somber quiet of St. Paul's ancient church-yard. On the sofas in this elegant room are generally several gentlemen,—Congressmen, merchants, eminent foreigners perhaps, waiting to take their turn in speaking to the postmaster, who sits at a table in the middle of the office. Mr. James is an active man of alert faculties and prompt decision. There is not a trace of official snobbery about him. He is an easy, gentlemanly, unspoiled and entirely American man, with a world of human kindness and good fellowship. He is an organizer and administrator of a very high order, and is

himself the pervading genius of the office. He will generously boast of the excellence of his lieutenants, without leaving any room for merit in himself. But you have only to talk with superintendents or subordinates to find out that Mr. James is the postmaster. He is always in his office in business hours, and I was told that he had come down at four o'clock on the morning of one of my visits to attend to the transfer of an Australian mail for England to a Cunard steamer sailing at seven. This mail of one hundred and eighty-two bags had reached San Francisco three hours after the departure of the mail, and had been sent forward on a special train to overtake the regular mail. In New York Mr. James accomplished its transfer in one hour, the aim being to beat the Red Sea mail, with which our service is in lively competition.

On another occasion, the steamer "Germanic," of the White Star Line, anchored off Sandy Hook in a furious gale to receive the Australian mail, dispatched by Mr. Cortis, the agent of the Line, down the bay in a steam-tug, from which it was transferred in a "crate."

I went into the office a total stranger to the postmaster, and without any predilections in his favor, except what had come from the praises of the service I had heard from business men. But everywhere I found not only admirable system and thorough discipline, but what is more important and more difficult of attainment, a cordial and even zealous *esprit de corps*. To produce this a man must be a natural leader of men. The postmaster's inspiration is felt in every rank of the service. Wherefore, it only remains for me to add my voice to the rest, and to say that of all who have had charge of the metropolitan post-office, from colonial times to the present, Mr. Thomas L. James will go into history as the great postmaster of New York.



STAMPS OF LARGE DENOMINATIONS, USED BY PERIODICALS.

HIS INHERITANCE.

BY ADELINE TRAFTON.



" THEN WHY SHOULDN'T IT BE AS I WISH? "

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CITY WITH A PAST.

THERE is at least one city in New England which boasts of a past. Not a far-off past shrouded in beauty and mystery, like that which follows in the footsteps of the old-world cities; but a yesterday only, as nations reckon time, the story of which is remembered and repeated to-day. And lest it should be forgotten, with the lesson it is believed to teach, a shaft of granite has been erected in the town, about whose summit on cloudless nights the stars gather and shine. Even as I write the flags are but just lowered, the bells have hardly ceased ringing, the echo of the cannon is still in my ears which celebrates the hundredth anniversary of the event which gave to the town its importance, and to a scattered, feeble people the hope of becoming a nation.

It does not matter that this monument

really commemorates a defeat instead of a victory, or that the battle fought here bears in history the name of another height not far distant, which never trembled to the thunder of cannon. That it marks the beginning of a great nation and keeps in memory a struggle for independence which was successful at last, are enough to endear it to the hearts of the townspeople and make it the shrine of a continual pilgrimage.

For here upon every day in the year comes the nearest approach to the genus tourist we Americans can show in our own land, since the more sober sort among us, who keep within the generous confines of our own country, still hold it half a sin to give ourselves up to ease and idle roaming about. Bridal parties come here. Though what care they—happy, self-engrossed souls—for General ——, who, without food and with scant ammunition for his men, held his position through all the long, hot day, a hundred

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