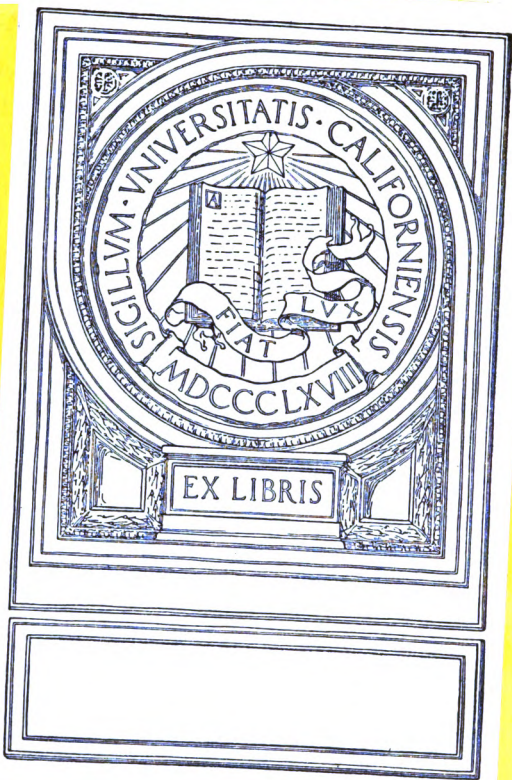
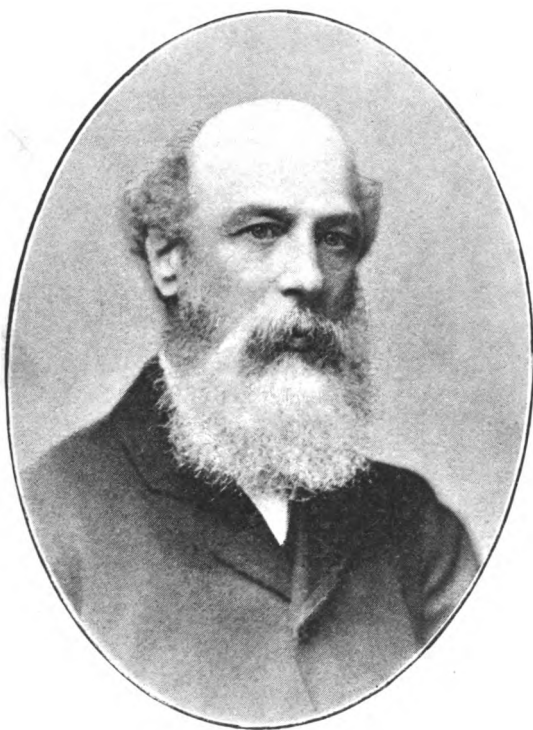

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MR. W. J. GODBY.

ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND.

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The Post Office Magazine.



ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND, 1837.

VOLUME I.

OCTOBER 1890 to JULY 1891.

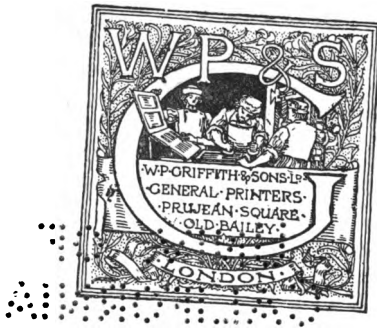
PRINTED FOR THE HONORARY SECRETARIES BY
W. P. GRIFFITH & SONS, LIMITED, GENERAL PRINTERS,
PRUJEAN SQUARE, OLD BAILEY, E.C.

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ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND:

The Post Office Magazine.

OCTOBER, 1890.

The Sanitary Aspects of Electric Lighting.

THE chief tendency of modern legislation in our British Parliament is to improve the environments of the human frame, so that we may live, and move, and have our being, with greater health to the individual and greater prosperity to the nation. The cleanliness of dwellings, the drainage of towns, the removal of filth, the suppression of nuisance, have not only been specified; but the inspection of the means to effect these objects and of their results are defined and insisted upon by Acts of Parliament. People often speak disrespectfully of our grandmotherly Government, but at least in this region of domestic legislation the control it has exercised over the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, is of a true parental order, and deserves our unreserved admiration and respect. The Home Office and the Local Government Board act the part of a wise and economic head of the house to the nation, while each community has its own Local Board or Authority to carry out hygienic provisions, to enforce sanitary principles, to prevent infection, to stamp out disease, to sweeten labour, and to prolong life.

I contemplated submitting an historical summary of these features of sanitary legislation during the present generation, but not only would the task be very onerous, but it would be so lengthy that I should have very little time left to discuss the question I wish particularly to deal with in this paper—the Sanitary aspects of Electric Lighting.

The propositions that I propose to submit and to demonstrate to the readers of "ST. MARTIN'S" are these:—

1. That electricity and light being analogous forms of energy, the former is naturally the proper source of artificial illumination.
2. That all other sources of artificial illumination being

dependent on the absorption of oxygen, and resulting in the vitiation of air, are injurious to health.

3. That the same authority which regulates the sanitation of our dwellings and the supply of our food, should also control the purity of the air we breathe and of the light we work by.

Light, however, it be produced artificially, is simply the equivalent of work that has been done elsewhere. Whether it be by the combustion of tallow or oil, by the burning of coal or of gas; by the glowing of a fine wire, or the formation of the brilliant arc, energy has been expended somewhere, to be transferred and reproduced in some other place in the form of light. The great principle of the conservation of energy teaches us that the amount of energy in the universe is a fixed quantity, that it can be neither created nor destroyed, that it can only be transferred, and that any expenditure of energy—work done—anywhere is the equivalent of energy utilised somewhere else. The rate at which this energy is expended is called *power*, and the amount of power which we foolishly call a *horse power*, and which we roughly imagine to be equivalent to the power exerted by a horse in drawing a load along the road, is competent to produce an amount of light which is very simply measured. Our standard of light is the light given by a No. 6 sperm candle, burning 120 grains per hour. Now, the energy of one horse power constantly expended will give by the aid of

Tallow	...	...	the light of 6 candles.
Sperm	...	...	" 8·7 "
Oil	...	...	" 9 "
Gas	...	...	" 13 "
Electric current—Glow	...	...	" 248 "
" Arc	...	...	" 1,492 "

The results to the air of these different modes of producing artificial illumination are well shown by the following Table:—

Products of Combustion in developing 100 candles per hour.

Illuminant.				Quantity Consumed.	Carbonic Gas Produced.	Water Vapour.	Heat.
				lbs.	Cub. ft.	lbs.	*Calories.
Tallow	...	...	...	2·2	51·2	2·3	9,700
Sperm	...	...	...	1·7	41·3	2·0	7,960
Oil...	...	...	...	1·3	33·6	1·8	7,200
Gas	...	...	...	56 cub. ft.	40·3	2·5	12,150
Electricity	...	...	...	(Coal) 2·2 lbs.	0	0	257

* This "Calorie" is the quantity of heat which is required to raise one kilogramme or 2·2 lbs. of water one degree centigrade.

Thus we see how very much more efficient electricity is than any other agent for the production of light.

The tendency of the teaching of the present day is to show that the transmission of light waves and of electrical undulations is of the same character and at the same speed. Clerk Maxwell by theory, and Hertz by experiment, have placed this beyond doubt. A current of electricity passing through a fine filament first raises its temperature, and then, as the current is increased in strength, it glows brighter and brighter until finally it is disintegrated and dissipated with great brilliance, and the light disappears. There has been no chemical consumption of material. The passage of the current has resulted in light, and light seems to have been the natural sequence of the flow of electricity. Energy has, however, been developed somewhere. There is a boiler for the production of steam, an engine for the application of power, a dynamo for the formation of electric currents.

Gas has to be extracted from coal, purified in gas works, distributed through pipes, and chemically combined with the oxygen of the air in jets or burners.

The simple candle, however, is its own gas works. We simply apply a match and the flame itself becomes boiler, engine, and light emitter combined.

In all cases, therefore, we have to consider—

- (a) The source of energy.
- (b) The distribution of energy.
- (c) The utilisation of energy as light.

The sources of energy at our disposal are—

Wind.

Water.

Coal (steam).

Gas.

Mineral oil.

The inconstancy of the wind in our climate renders it inapplicable for the steady and constant supply of power required for artificial illumination.

Water, on the other hand, is an unfailing source of power in some countries, but the quantity required to produce even small effects is opposed to its use anywhere but in mountainous or hilly districts where it is abundant. It requires a quarter of a ton of water falling one foot *per second* to produce one horse power, or falling ten feet to produce ten horse power. If we wish to main-

tain ten ordinary electric glow lamps alight for five hours with a fall of ten feet, we should require 100 tons of water per hour, or 500 tons altogether.

At Keswick, in Cumberland, a central station has been established, which is worked by a fall of twenty feet of the water of the river Greta, generating fifty horse power by means of a turbine. At Portrush, in Ireland, a fall of twenty-six feet generates currents that work a tramway to the Giant's Causeway. Many private houses in Scotland are so lighted.

There are innumerable places in the United Kingdom where this power is being allowed to run to waste. The non-utilisation is due probably to ignorance, and ignorance, as much as indifference, is the great obstruction which all new industries have to overcome, even when practicability and economy are almost self-evident.

The power of running streams and of the tides is used in some countries for grinding corn ; but the power utilisable is small, and no practical means have yet been introduced to employ them for small installations of electric lighting, though busy minds are actively engaged on this neglected field.

Steam, and therefore coal, becomes in all comparatively flat countries the principal source of power, while, for small installations, gas and mineral oil are extremely convenient, cleanly, and economical suppliers of energy. Indeed, gas as a source of heat is coming more and more into use, and if a cheaper sort of gas, such as water gas, were distributed for fuel purposes—as it probably will in the future—it would solve the difficulty of the transit of coal, and prevent the possibility of that nuisance, the formation of smoke in the midst of shops and dwellings.

The power that is thus expended is employed in developing electrical energy. Motion is imparted to coils of copper wire in a field of magnetism, and a certain resistance has to be overcome when the lines of force in this field are cut by the wire ; the energy of motion is absorbed, it takes the form of electricity, and as an electric current it can be transmitted to a distance, and there utilised. The amount of energy which is found in the form of currents is that delivered by the belt of the engine to the dynamo, less a small amount wasted in friction and in heat in the metal of the dynamo ; but this is so small that it is a common thing now to obtain dynamos with an efficiency of 94 per cent. ; that is, 6 per cent. only of the power applied to it, is lost as heat in the dynamo itself.

If a child has a skipping rope made of copper wire, and, with its face turned due north or south, it skipped, the rope would cut the lines of magnetic force of the earth in the proper direction, the rope would experience resistance, energy would be absorbed by the rope, and electric currents would be developed from hand to hand of the child. The child thus becomes an animated dynamo. The lines of force of the earth flowing north and south are cut twice in each revolution of the skipping rope, but alternately in opposite directions. Hence the currents generated are alternately flowing in opposite directions, and the child becomes an alternate current dynamo. It is a very simple thing to straighten these currents and to make them flow continuously in the same direction, and to convert these alternate effects into continuous currents flowing in the same direction.

Now, all electric currents require an electro-motive force, or a difference of electric pressure, to drive them through the resistance of metallic conductors, in the same way that water and gas require pressure to drive them through pipes. This electro-motive force in the case of the skipping rope is very minute, because the intensity of the earth's magnetic field is very small (it is only $\frac{1}{20000}$ of the field of an ordinary dynamo), the motion of the rope is comparatively slow, and there is only one cutting conductor. If we increase the number of conductors, their speed, and the strength of the field, we can magnify the electric pressure to any amount.

All new ideas require new names to indicate them, and if they are new quantities capable of measurement, they require new units to compare them with numerically. Difference of electric pressure is called voltage, and the unit of comparison is a *volt*. The skipping rope develops only a very small fraction, about $\frac{1}{4000}$ of a volt. There are now dynamos at Deptford which will generate 10,000 volts, and a flash of lightning is the result of perhaps millions of volts. The human frame is very sensitive to voltage, 50 volts is scarcely perceptible, 100 volts give a distinct though slight shock, 500 volts are painful, and 1,000 volts might probably, under certain circumstances, kill a man; 10,000 volts, if effective through the whole frame, would certainly destroy life. We have recently read of a deplorable attempt in the United States to utilise this power for the execution of criminals, an attempt surrounded with sickening horrors, the result of the ignorance that exists at present as to the effects of electricity on the human frame.

The unit of electric current by which measurements are made

is called an *ampère*. If an ampère be circulated around a bar or ring of iron, it will magnetize it with a definite amount of magnetism dependent on its dimensions and quality.

If an ampère of current be transmitted through a bath of nitrate of silver, it will deposit four grammes of silver per hour. If it be driven through a fine filament of carbonised cotton six inches long, such as Edison and Swan use for their glow lamps, by an electro-motive force of 100 volts, it will develop a brilliant light of 32-candle power.

The actual energy conveyed by the current is measured by the product of the volts and ampères, and this measures the rate at which energy is being transmitted or expended. The unit of measurement is called the *watt*, which is a much more scientific and accurate unit of power than the absurd horse power that has become so 'rooted among our engineers. A man in pumping expends about 50 watts; in rowing a race he expends about 100; in running rapidly upstairs he expends 500 watts for a few seconds; a horse drawing a load on a level road expends about 500 watts. The so-called horse power is 746 watts. An ordinary arc lamp consumes 500 watts, and an electric tramcar, going at seven miles an hour on an average tramway, requires a mean power of about 3,000 watts.

Electrical energy is measured and paid for in 1,000 watts or in *kilowatts* delivered per hour. A kilowatt hour is called the Board of Trade unit of electrical energy, and it is defined in all Provisional Orders confirmed by Act of Parliament, thus:—

“The expression ‘unit’ shall mean the energy contained in a current of one thousand ampères flowing under an electro-motive force of one volt during one hour.”

This Board of Trade unit has not yet received a name. I have proposed to call it a *Bot*, from the initial letters of the Board of Trade, but there is generally a very strong aversion to a new name, however much it may be wanted, and we have during the past few years had a plethora of new names in electrical science.

One Board of Trade unit will keep an ordinary 10-candle power glow lamp alight for 30 hours, or it will keep 30 of such lamps alight for one hour. In Newcastle this energy costs 4½d., in Liverpool 6d., in London 7¼d., and in most other places 8d. Taking the cost at 6d., a 10-candle power glow lamp would cost one-fifth of a penny per hour, which is the cost of a 5-feet gas

burner at 3s. 4d. per 1,000 cubic feet. There is thus very little difference between the price of gas and that of electricity.

The output of a dynamo is measured in watts, and, as the number of watts in ordinary dynamos is necessarily numerous, the *kilowatt*, or 1,000 watts, is the unit employed. Thus, a dynamo of 100 kilowatts develops energy equivalent to 134 horse power, and as, for ordinary purposes, the ratio of the power utilised as electric current to the power indicated in the cylinders of the engine may be taken at 80%, it will follow that it will require 160 horse power to drive such a dynamo at full load.

The relations between mechanical and electrical measurements are thus very simple and wonderfully accurate.

100 kilowatts, or 100,000 watts, deliver sufficient energy to illuminate 3,000 10 c.p. lamps, and one of the most difficult problems which the electrical engineer has to solve is to design the best and most economical method of distributing this energy over an extended area. If the distribution be confined to one big building, like the Post Office, or the Savings Bank in London, the solution is simple. If it be over a widely scattered district, like Croydon, Wimbledon, or the districts of the great vestries of London, the solution is complicated. Every district must be governed by its own conditions, and be controlled by its own environments.

There are several modes of distribution under high pressure or low pressure; by means of alternate currents or of continuous direct currents; by two wires or three wires or five wires. Then, again, the supply may be for light or motive power, for street lighting, or for private lighting. If it be by high pressure, say of over 300 volts, then, as such pressures cannot be admitted into our houses, there must be a reduction of this pressure to the safe and ordinary 100 or 50 volts by means of alternating transformers or of secondary batteries.

The ruling guide is, of course, economy. A certain number of kilowatts are generated in the central station, at a price per hour that is easily obtained from the coal bills, the stores list, and the wages sheet. A certain proportion of this energy is delivered to the consumers, and paid for by them by meter or by contract. A certain proportion is lost—wasted as heat in the apparatus and conductors. What is the proportion between the energy paid for and that generated by the central station? What is, in fact, the efficiency of the system? It is difficult in the present tentative and youthful condition of the industry to obtain a true answer

Most central stations are in their pioneer condition. I have, however, examined the figures of certain well-known systems, from which I gather that we may estimate the following efficiencies as fairly practical:—

Low pressure—

Efficiency.

Continuous direct current90 per cent.

High pressure—

Alternate current60 „

Direct current battery.....50 „

In fact, one company—the St. James and Pall Mall—working on the low pressure system, have on the first half-year of 1890 secured a return of 94·3 per cent. on the energy delivered, while another company, working on the high pressure battery system, secured only 29 per cent.

In January of this year, at the Kensington Court Central Station, working at low pressure, 25,893 bots were registered and paid for, as against 28,291 generated and distributed, representing an efficiency of 92 per cent. At Dacre Street, Westminster, also working at low pressure, in the quarter ending June 24th—the summer and lowest quarter—the efficiency was 84·4 per cent. At the House of Commons the efficiency has been 89·8 per cent.

A simple way of looking at the matter is to find out the coal consumed per bot paid for by the consumer. It comes out—

Low pressure..... 9 lbs.

High pressure..... 17 lbs.

It is worth noting that it would require 38 lbs. of coal distilled in the gas works to produce the same light by means of the ordinary fish-tail burner.

The misfortune is, that the low pressure system is applicable only to confined and restricted districts. It involves the use of such heavy conductors, that as the district increases in extent, the weight of copper required varies as the third power of the radius of the area served, while with the high pressure system the weight of copper required diminishes with the pressure used.

It must, however, be recollected that the use of high pressure involves the use of very highly insulated conductors, and therefore what is saved in copper may be expended in insulation. The question that decides the economic use of high or low pressure is the distance or length of mains and feeders, when the difference between 17 and 9 lbs. of coal (or a penny per bot) is swallowed

up in interest on capital and waste of energy in the heavy conductors required by the low pressure system.

The consequence is that while compact areas, covered by a radius of half a mile, are best served on the low pressure system, those supplied beyond a radius of one mile can be served economically only on the high pressure system; while the intermediate range is to be considered simply with reference to its own requirements and its own conditions, such as the supply of water and of coal, the convenience of water and railway carriage, the value of land, the demand of residential districts, and of manufacturing and business quarters. Each district must, therefore, be dealt with on its own merits.

In London at the present moment several different systems are being used or installed for very similar districts. Thus we have the alternate current transformer system at Brompton, St. Martin's, St. Giles' and the various portions served by the London Electric Supply Association, the high pressure battery system in Chelsea, the low pressure system aided by secondary batteries to regulate pressure and to maintain the supply of energy during the small hours of the morning, or when breaks-down or cases of emergency arise, in Kensington, Westminster, St. James' Notting Hill, and St. Pancras. The proper system to be used is, therefore, still in a tentative condition.

The great question that divides the merits of the high and low pressure is that of safety to person. Grossly exaggerated accounts of accidents in America have seriously prejudiced the public mind against the high pressure system. If people only saw for themselves the conditions that surround the distribution of electricity in the United States, they would not be surprised at the accidents that have happened—they would wonder at there being so few. Poles are frequently carried down the principal streets of the towns carrying open telegraph, telephone, fire signal, and electric light wires, all together on the same support, without any particular rules or regulations. A lineman who ascends a pole to attend to a telephone wire is very apt to touch suddenly an electric light conductor. He receives a shock, and is thrown down perhaps on the ground and killed, or perhaps among the other wires, where he may be probably burnt or otherwise injured.

Such things are impossible in England. Mains and conductors must, by legislation, be placed underground in all towns; but,

where they are for local reasons placed overground, they are subjected to carefully prepared rules and regulations, and to watchful and constant inspection. A high pressure conductor is certainly dangerous if it were handled, but it should never, under any circumstances, be so placed as to be in a position to be touched by any one but the skilled technical men who have the charge of its maintenance. There is no case on record of any one being hurt on a well-designed underground system.

The great hygienic advantage of the electric light when illuminating our dwellings and our workshops is not that it purifies the air, but that it prevents the air from being vitiated by the introduction into it of the products of combustion, such as carbonic acid, carbonic oxide, sulphurous acid, &c., it prevents the air from being weakened by the abstraction of oxygen, and it prevents it from having its temperature raised by undue radiation, and by throwing into it heated gases.

While legislation and the most stringent regulations possible have been drawn up to prevent the adulteration of food and the poisoning of water, scarcely any attention has been devoted to the prevention of the admission of noxious gases and poisonous vapours into the air of our habitations. Carbonic oxide is a poison of the deadliest character, and gas jets are freely used which deliver copious discharges of this dangerous gas into the atmosphere of our rooms. If we were consistent in our legislation, we ought to forbid the use of any burner which thus poisons the air. A man at rest exhales 00424 cubic feet of carbonic acid gas (CO_2) and 1189 cubic feet of air per pound weight per hour, while a gas jet burning 5 cubic feet of coal gas exhales 4 cubic feet of CO_2 . The maximum proportion of CO_2 to air consistent with health is 6 volumes in 10,000; 10 volumes affect the heart, and 30 volumes produce headaches. Rheumatism, bronchitis, and other ailments proceed from higher proportions. In fact, 5 cubic feet of gas requires 8,000 cubic feet of pure air per hour to maintain it healthy. The electric light requires no such provision.

That the electric light is a powerful element of health is evidenced by the fact that those who use it not only feel all the better for its introduction, but their appetite increases, and their sleep improves, and the visits of the doctor are reduced in frequency. Workpeople work all the better, and absences from illness are far less frequent. In the Savings Bank in Queen Victoria Street, London, where 1,200 persons were employed, the absences from illness were so far re-

duced by the introduction of electricity, that the extra labour gained paid for the light. During a period of two years just ended we have been compelled to revert to the use of gas in this building; but I am glad to say that the difficulties we encountered to the reintroduction of electricity there have been overcome. A splendid steam plant and improved dynamos are now fixed instead of the old gas engine plant, which gave considerable trouble even when running at its best. The handsome new building in Knightrider Street is fully equipped as well as the Queen Victoria Street premises. Altogether about 1,200 lamps will be fitted, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that throughout the coming winter, with its long hours during which artificial lighting will be necessary, our colleagues in the Savings Bank will not have the air they breathe vitiated by the carbonic acid and other nauseous products thrown off by the gas jets. Large electric lighting installations are also in hand at the G.P.O. East, and at the Post Offices at Birmingham, Liverpool, and Newcastle. Glasgow P.O. has been lighted since 1884.

The influence of artificial light on the eyes has a very important sanitary bearing. Why is it that there is so much shortsightedness in the present day? Is it due to our mode of producing light? Some assert that the injury to the eyes is due to the heat rays and not the light rays. If that be so, the electric light must be less injurious than any other. On the other hand, no one can have experimented with arc lamps without having had his retina painfully affected, which leads one to think that the ultra violet rays have some influence. No one has, however, ever complained of the influence of a steady glow lamp upon the eyes, and it is possible to read and write for many hours by such light without experiencing the least fatigue.

The electric current is not altogether free from being a cause of fire, and, though its use is by no means very general, still it is used sufficiently to make itself felt as an element of danger in this respect. The following tables shows the number of fires in London which can be traced to the different methods of lighting:

	1887.	1888.	1889.	Total.
Lamps	245 ...	205 ...	257 ...	707
Gas	188 ...	197 ...	209 ...	594
Candles... ..	142 ...	113 ...	136 ...	391
Electricity ...	0 ...	1 ...	2 ...	3

The progress of the electric light in our homes has been much

more rapid in England than in any other country, but its employment for street-lighting, for shops and manufactories, has been infinitely more rapid and extensive in the United States than with us. In America the growth has been enormous. There are now 250,000 arc lamps, illuminating the public streets and shops, and 3,000,000 glow lamps in dwellings, stores, and workshops.

The following Table shows the development of the Berlin Central Stations :—

Station.	Effective Horse Power.						When Completed.
	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	
Friederichstrasse	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
Markgrafenstrasse .....	...	1000	1000	1000	2400	2400	3100
Mauerstrasse .....	...	...	500	1250	1250	2950	4950
Spandauerstrasse .....	...	...	...	...	...	2000	4000
Schiffbauerdamm .....	...	...	...	...	...	1000	6000
Total	300	1300	1800	2550	3550	8650	18350
16 c.p. lamps, or equivalent	2500	4603	13229	24660	34750	.....	...
Kilometres of cable .....	...	8	10	15	25	75	...

The progress in England has been very much checked by inordinate speculation and by terrible failures in some of the earlier work done. There is something very captivating in the practical applications of electricity, and something romantic in its mystery. The neophyte has rushed into it with remarkable fervour, and the lessons of failure have, in consequence, been very severe. The users of the light have also been paying heavily for the education and experience of amateur tradesmen and inexperienced contractors, and have neglected to avail themselves of the professional services of the experienced electrical engineer. People who would not build houses without the architect, nor construct bridges without the engineer, nor make their wills without the lawyer, rush wildly into the use of electricity without any professional assistance, where, above all things, experience and knowledge are essential to prevent disaster and disappointment. Large installations have been completed without specifications to guide the contractor, and without inspection to see that the work has been properly done. The user has paid violently for his temerity, and fires and accidents have been the result. The heavy price of wiring a rented house, and the expensive

character of the fittings proposed, have deterred many from adopting the light, even when it is within their reach. Highly insulated wire is unfortunately expensive. All cheap wires are nasty and dangerous. There is nothing that becomes the electric light better than simplicity, and its effect is frequently marred by elaborate brass work. It possesses also most active and widespread opponents, both in oil and gas—opponents who have benefited by its introduction, and who are not slow to profit by its advance. The improvements in gas and oil lamps are as marked as the advancements in electric light, and as means of artificial illumination alone—that is as far as light-giving power is concerned—there is little choice between the three, but oil and gas cannot lose those elements of discomfort and ill health which differentiate them from the cool and pure glow lamp.

A very important question arises for discussion. Legislation has slipped in to place the virtual control of the supply of electrical energy in the hands of the local authority of the district to be served. Is this supply to be the result of the capital of private enterprise, or is it to be effected by raising money on the security of the rates?

It is argued that, the supply of electricity being a purely commercial undertaking, it should therefore be carried out by a limited liability company. The Acts of 1882 and 1888 do not encourage monopoly, but rather court competition, and competition attracts capital. Competition properly regulated and controlled secures economy in supply, and certainly enforces economy in working, while it encourages improvements, and induces perfection of apparatus and novelty in processes. These arguments are plausible, but are easily refuted by those who desire to uphold vested monopolies. Direct competition always means ultimately enhanced cost to the public, for the same public has to pay for double plant, and each competitor only gets half revenue.

The supply of light is in precisely the same category as the supply of water or the supply of gas, and the days have certainly passed when the public will tamely submit to the transference of their right to such vested interests as those of water or gas companies.

It is very easy to argue *pro* or *con* on each side. The local authority has to regard the security of traffic, the safety of person, the repression of crime, and the proper supervision of the premises of its ratepayers. It is the custodian of the public interests. It

has to control the health, cleanliness, comfort, and beneficial sanitation of its habitable dwellings. It therefore must secure the best light, and if it can do this, and at the same time relieve the rates, which are generally creeping up to dangerous dimensions, then its action would be wise and economical. But it would be entering into commercial rivalry with an active competitor—the Gas Companies; and its commercial control by such a shifting authority as a committee of a Town Council or of a Local Board, subject to the changes of political warfare—to the vagaries of press dictation, and to the fear of November elections—is a very doubtful proceeding. On the other hand, in many instances, such bodies have successfully dealt with the water question, the tramways, and even with the gas. In fact, one-third of the gas capital (21 millions) in this country is in the hands of 173 Local Authorities, and more than half a million of profits go to the reduction of rates.

Bradford has already grappled with the question. It has established a central station for the supply of the electric light. Brighton, St. Pancras, and Bristol are doing the same, and many other places are following suit. They are shying at the probability of handing over their districts to a speculative company, with a virtual though not a legal monopoly, to supply electrical energy for 42 years. Many corporations contemplate a middle course. They have obtained the power for themselves, but they have farmed for shorter terms the right of supply to private enterprise, which can do what they are afraid to do, viz., speculate and experiment. The Board of Trade has sanctioned and facilitated such a transfer of statutory rights.

It is surprising that Gas Administrations in England have not been more enterprising in developing Electric Lighting. In Vienna, Rome, and Stockholm the Gas Companies have established Central Stations, and the progress of the industry in those cities is very great. The proper function of gas is to supply heat, not light, and as a source of power it has a future more brilliant than its past. If it could be supplied as fuel, it would remove the troubles of coal transit and storage, of ash and dust removal, of smoke and of stoking. It has even been shown that it is cheaper to convert coal into gas on the spot, and to use the gas as the source of power, than to apply the coal direct for the production of steam in boilers. The waste of energy in the use of coal is enormous. The energy contained in one pound of coal if burnt in

one hour is theoretically sufficient to supply 5·6 horse power for that hour. The best practical result yet obtained by the steam engine is scarcely one horse power.

The electric light is unquestionably the light of the future. Its use is advancing with leaps and bounds. Not only is it naturally the proper source of light, but economically it must eventually supplant its rivals. When electrical energy is generally distributed through our towns, and its supply is continuous, and properly controlled, so that it is always within the reach of all; and when means can be devised to wire up houses as cheaply as they are now fitted for gas, every one will take it, not alone for its beauty, but because it is, above all, a source of health and comfort.

W. H. PREECE.

Our New Magazine.

(A SONNET IN DIALOGUE).

- CRITIC. Like poisonous weeds new magazines arise !
EDITOR. Nay, but like flowers to make life's pathway sweet !
CRITIC. What flower is this ? Whose nostril shall it greet ?
EDITOR. The seeker's everywhere, or fool or wise.
CRITIC. So he but seek with dim official eyes !
EDITOR. Nay, use thine own, nor idle taunts repeat . . .
CRITIC. 'Tis but Sir Rowland's Jubilee to greet !
EDITOR. In his bright footprints all true progress lies.
CRITIC. Ah, that's your path ! And does your flowers spring there ?
EDITOR. Yea, but its seeds fly over land and sea ;
CRITIC. Be not too sure, lest it die suddenly.
EDITOR. It will not die, but wax in the popular air.
CRITIC. 'Tis a fair plant, fair may its fortunes be !
EDITOR. May thy words prove its greeting everywhere !

EVELYN PYNE.

The Humours of a Hydro.

"Water, Water, everywhere."—COLERIDGE.



HAVE always held the opinion that the question of annual leave is one of the most vital concerns in a Civil Servant's career. In a life, so much of which is made up of mere routine, a periodical change into something more varied and stimulating is necessary as a preventive against mental depression and suicide.

More especially is the question one of supreme importance to me because I am one of those insane individuals who, not satisfied with one profession, endeavour to run another alongside with it. The result is that, after about ten months' London life, I feel so absolutely played out, and my nerves and character are in so enfeebled a condition, that, while I am simply dying for change, I have lost the power and the energy to choose rightly where I shall go. To get away from pen and ink and the printed page and the necessity to think out things, that is all I demand, but like people who get over-hungry and cannot eat, when my month approaches, I sometimes lose all interest in taking an ambitious holiday. This year, for instance, I had made up my mind at various periods of the spring and summer to visit Switzerland, Norway, the Italian Lakes, and Ireland. Several brother officers were ready to take me on as travelling companion to any one of these places. But I could not make up my mind, and before August was over I found myself wishing that I was not going away at all. I thought I would stay at home and write a work on "The Vanity of all human Hopes and Ambitions." I lost through my indecision two good travelling companions, who both went their separate ways without me, and then I took the motiveless step of postponing my holiday a fortnight. In this way I lost the most beautiful weather we have had this summer as well as all respect for myself. There was nothing to be done but to go in for "a cure" of some sort, and happily the opportunity lay within easy reach. Three diseased friends were making up a party to visit a large Hydropathic Establishment in the Highlands, and they were anxious to take on another "case." When I explained my symptoms, they placed the prospectus of the establishment in

front of me, and I gathered from it that "a cure" could be effected in my case in a very short time. I therefore arranged to give the Hydro a fortnight's trial.

When I announced my decision to my friends and acquaintances a chorus of disapproval was the immediate consequence. "God has given you health and strength, and instead of that you go to a Hydro," wrote one lady with whom I have travelled in years gone by. Another friend said, "With all the continent of Europe in front of you, you go and hobnob with a lot of old men and women and girls: I am ashamed of you: I always thought of you as a vagabond and as a tourist."

Now, I am not going to give my readers a detailed account of my fortnight's stay in the Hydro, but I hope to be able to show them that a man in the enfeebled condition in which I found myself might do a great deal worse than spend his holiday in this way. Apart from all questions of health and "cure," I think one requires sometimes a holiday from holidays. I mean that many of us get into one stereotyped way of spending our leave, just as we get into one groove in the performance of our daily work, and after a time we lose in our holiday that exquisite sense of freshness which has in the past been the foundation of so much of our pleasure when on tour. So, if now and then we can hit upon an entirely new way of spending a leave, we may succeed in obtaining a double-distilled holiday. My holidays hitherto have been generally spent on the vagabond principle. I have been a wanderer on the face of the earth, and I have not much cared with whom I hobnobbed, or under whose roof I laid my weary head so long as I was in new country and was moving on. But a fortnight in one place and a dress suit in one's travelling portmanteau were to me absolutely new experiences.

People in London often sigh to get away into the solitudes of the country, away from the madding crowd, and away from the boredom of suburban social life. Some of this sighing is quite genuine, much of it is the honest feeling of the moment and nothing more; but a very large proportion of the sighs are cant and nothing else. Most of us, thank God, cannot stand solitude for a longer period than twenty-four hours. A day on the moors or on the mountains is followed by a craving for human society, and, if it is only a peasant's cottage which is handy, we fly to it as a relief to the loneliness around us. It seems to me too that to any man with a conscience it becomes increasingly difficult as he

gets older to find relief in solitude. Every year, to a right-minded man, means an added burden on his conscience; it means more bitter regrets and self-reproaches for sins of omission and of commission, and if he have anything of the brooding temperament the solitudes of nature do but awaken his own self-consciousness. The oppressiveness of the vast impersonal elements all around him only brings out into stronger relief the one personal element, himself, in the midst of it all. And this effect is quite as common as the more frequently advertised one, viz., man's feeling of littleness in the presence of Nature. I remember years ago waking up at nights in a cold perspiration as the thought suddenly passed through my mind in a dream that I had left the office without signing off. In like manner, when my mind is left to itself on a solitary walk, it seems to work up, and play round and exaggerate all the follies and stupidities of my life. When I ought to be admiring a grand and rugged mountain, I am in a cold perspiration because I have suddenly gone through a process of unconscious cerebration which has called up the memory of some scene in which I did not distinguish myself.

Now, the charm of a holiday spent as I have attempted to spend one this year is that, while I have had abundant opportunities of enjoying all that is most beautiful in the natural world, I have at the same time been able to associate with large numbers of men and women, and to enter into pursuits and interests entirely apart from those which occupy my mind at home. I know nothing more calculated to help one to forget oneself, and one's own tiresome life than a fortnight at a Hydro. Change of society is a better cure for "the disease" than lonely meditations by the tall rock or the deep and gloomy wood.

The particular Hydro which I selected for my cure is a very large building, situated in one of the most beautiful spots in the Highlands. One of the first things we learnt on arriving in the place was that you must not believe everything you see in print. In every corner of the building were posted up the rules of the establishment. The severest penalties were attached to the breaking of any of these rules, and over every wash-hand basin, and in every available corner of the building, in summer-houses, in the Turkish bath, in the spray bath, and on the pillow and sheets of your bed you were informed that "the Proprietor reserves to himself the right to remove any persons from the establishment who may be considered to be objectionable." We are not a little

proud to think that, in spite of great provocation, the Proprietor succeeded in restraining his right so far as we were concerned. For we certainly began badly. "All lights turned out at 10.30" was one of the objectionable notices which met our eye everywhere. The first night we arrived we sat in the smoking-room, talking, smoking, and drinking a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen until 12.45. A visitor who had been in the place some time said, "Hang the rules, they are not intended to be observed, they are only posted up to quiet the consciences of the old women who abound in these places, and who cannot sleep if they think there are any lights burning when they are in bed." Though we were a bit reassured by this statement, my friend C and myself at 12.45 determined to go to bed. But this we found was an easier matter to determine upon than to carry out. Our bedrooms were on the third floor, at opposite points of the building, and the floor consisted of an endless succession of corridors and passages, the numbers of the rooms being printed on the walls, and not on the glass above the doors. I have only to add that we had not proceeded very far up the staircase before we discovered that all the lights *were* out. Neither of us possessed a match, so I rushed downstairs, leaving C on the stairs, went into the smoking-room again and told the friendly visitor the situation. He grinned horribly, handed me two wax matches, and said "*Bon voyage.*" I did not realise at the time what he meant; the full meaning of the phrase dawned upon me afterwards. Now, my friend's number was 80, and the number of my room was 50, while all that we knew for certain, in a darkness that could be felt, was, that the rooms were situated in opposite parts of the building. We exhausted the two matches in finding room No. 80, which was not far from the top of the staircase, and, after that, the real fun began. I have lost my way in mountainous districts, and I have found myself in very tight places in other conditions of life, but I never felt so helpless, and out of it, as I did that night, wandering about the corridors. We started the search from C's room, making that the base of our operations. Matches being exhausted, we started tearing up pieces of music, with which my friend had intended delighting the occupants of the Hydro. Of these we made torches, and rushed periodically into the darkness. We dared not venture very far into unknown regions, for fear we should lose the one room we had found. The numbers of the rooms were most perplexingly arranged. In order to find No. 50,

we rushed up one corridor, which commenced most hopefully—43, 44, 45, 46—then the light went out, and we were left in total darkness. We groped our way a little further, counting the doors to what we estimated would be No. 50, tried the handle, but only to hear a feminine scream inside, and we plunged into the darkness again. Once, round one passage, I lost my friend, and sat down fully prepared to have a night of it on the floor. Once, too, we lost our base of operations, and spent a wretched five minutes in finding our way back to No. 80. There I agreed to spend the night in C's arm chair, and to give up our fruitless search. I said, "I am quite sure we have been up every passage, and No. 50 simply does not exist. There is some awful mystery about it which only daylight can clear up." But my friend C is of a singularly jovial and enterprising temperament, and he was beginning to richly enjoy the search. "I wouldn't miss this experience for worlds," he suddenly said, when we were left in total darkness in one of the passages, far removed from the base of operations. So, after a few minutes' rest, we took off our boots, tore up more music, converting the same into torches, and got on the trail again—47, 48, 49—you can almost hear my heart beat, and then a window and printed on the wall, "To rooms 54, 55, 56, 57." My friend said a bad word, and I wished I was back in the Savings Bank; the night began to get cold, and my teeth chattered. Finally, after rushing back again to No. 80, we succeeded in finding a plan of the building, and, with its aid and more torches, we discovered a little out-of-the-way passage containing rooms 50, 51, 52, 53. They were miles away from 47, 48, 49, and I was forcibly reminded of what an old chief used to say to me when I was on the ledgers in the Savings Bank, "Sir, your ledgers are not in strict sequential occurrence." Having found No. 50, the difficulty now was to find our way back to No. 80, my friend plaintively saying that he had lost his own life in saving mine. But the plan saved us, and the weary search was quickly over. We both found salvation before daylight, and dreamt we were lost on the moors, seeking in vain for a finger post indicating the way to No. 50. It was only in the morning, when I looked out into the corridors, and could trace our footsteps by the burnt paper which covered the floor, that I saw how well-intentioned our search had been, and how near we had often come to our goal without being aware of the fact.

In a hydropathic establishment baths are, of course, the prin-

cipal attraction. I hope that I am not laying myself open to a charge of uncleanness when I say that I was perhaps more interested in the bath man than in the baths. It is said that in time the appearance of most people is apt to become assimilated with some feature of the profession or trade they have adopted. The publican gradually assumes the shape of a beer barrel, while there is an undefinable "ten to four" look about a Civil Servant which is unmistakable. Now, this bath man's appearance is very difficult to define in a short phrase. Perhaps I can convey some impression to my readers when I say he always looked like a man who had just been saved from drowning. "Like a drowned rat" is a less courteous way of expressing my meaning. An all-pervading melancholy had taken complete possession of him, and the way in which he said interrogatively the word "soap?" after turning on the spray, went to one's heart. He had been for nine years bathing gentlemen and drying them with large and lovely towels, and he looked for all the world as if his ideal paradise would be one in which water occupied a less prominent position than it did in his own life. While we were there he had a quarrel with the big waiter, and he left the establishment for good. My introduction to the new bath man was rather unfortunate. While divesting myself of my clothes I happened to say to him, by way of being pleasant, "You will have a short season." Then the floodgates of that man's wrath were opened, as he informed me in impassioned language that he had been enticed there on the understanding that the position was a permanent one, and that on arrival he found the place was to close in a few weeks. All the time I was bathing he poured out his grievances to me, and emphasised his anger and his determination on my back while he was drying me. I suggested that the occasion was an opportune one for a memorial to the authorities. He said he was no scholar. I offered to assist him, and gave him the draft of an old memorial of the case of my class in the Savings Bank as a specimen of the sort of thing he required. That was my last trial of the new bath man. Afterwards I invariably went in for private baths. It was too much like official life talking to a bath man "with a grievance." My friend C tried a private bath the second night of his visit, and was thoroughly enjoying himself when a knock sounded at the door, and a female voice cried out, "Do ye na ken that the bath is a shellin'?" He hurriedly put on his things, rushed to my room, borrowed the "shellin'," and finished his bath.

The big waiter was a very imposing personage. He had at his command a large staff of waitresses, and his duties were mainly those of superintendence. Like a very large number of Scotchmen, he never understood chaff. He would discuss seriously with us the most idiotic and trivial points which we raised concerning Scotch manners and customs. We used to go to him invariably when we got into any difficulty. We knew his advice would be sound, and that he would always give us of his best. One day, after climbing a mountain, we went into a small inn in the village and asked for a modest glass of ale. We asked for it in perhaps a rather playful Civil Service manner, and the suspiciousness of the young Scotchman behind the bar was at once aroused. He looked at us savagely, and asked us whether we "tuk" him for a sanguinary fool from Inverness. We immediately left his establishment without being served, but sorely perplexed in our own minds as to the meaning of the question the gentleman had put to us. These little topographical points always interest me greatly, and I consulted the postmaster, the tobacconist, and the bath man as to the reason of the ill-feeling which would appear to exist in the village against Inverness. I thought, perhaps, it might be some survival of the struggles of the last century between the Pretender and the English, or that it had its root in prejudices dating from a period very much earlier. But nothing intelligible was offered in the way of explanation from the people I consulted. Then we went to the big waiter. He listened to our story with great interest, and without the trace of a smile on his handsome face; he even listened indulgently to me while I ran cursorily through the history of Scotland by way of suggesting to him some intelligible explanation. When I had finished he began confidently and dogmatically: "It's joost this, sir. The yung marn thart ye was coomin in to tak a rise out of him. He thart that gentlemen from the sarth get the idee into their heads that the farther narth ye get the bigger the fool. He thart that it was because ye was coom into what ye thart was the narth, that ye expected to find in him a fool. He wished ye to understarnd that ye could get farther narth than ye were, and he refaired ye to Invairness as being a plaace where ye might, perhaps, find fools, seeing the plaace was comparatively so far narth, but that if ye thart to find them so far sarth as this plaace ye were joost a wee bit mistaaken." This explanation seemed unanswerable. We asked the big waiter what a man in the position

of the bar-man would think of the inhabitants of Wick, and he said, in his gravest manner, "that he did na ken: that we had been refaired to Invairness as a plaace indicating the narth, and not because the plaace itself had more than its number of fools. Yer see, sir, in Scotland ——" But we left him before he got any further; a light had burst in upon us.

I should, however, be doing an injustice to the big waiter if I omitted to mention one incident, in which he displayed some genuine humour. At the Hydro, when you wanted to change the monotony of hydropathic liquors for something more inspiring and exhilarating, you had to give your order in, twenty-four hours in advance of the time for which it was required. We were told that the particular vintage you ordered was then telegraphed for from a city thirty miles distant, and it arrived at the Hydro by train. Having no licence, the proprietor could keep no liquor on the premises. One evening, at dinner, we were suddenly seized with hydrophobean pangs, and we had made no previous arrangements to meet such an eventuality. We called up the big waiter. We explained the situation. He at once quoted the rule, from which he said there was no deviation. "Ye must order always the day previous; the proprietor can keep nothing in the house." It was a critical moment, but we were equal to it. We said at once, "But we did order it, only you were so busy at the time you wouldn't listen." For the first time I saw a wicked twinkle in that man's eye, as he cracked his fingers, saying, "And so ye did, sir, it's my own stupid forgetfulness." In five minutes a bottle was in front of us, though which of our party ordered it, or where it came from, or whether the waiter lied, or whether we lied, are mysteries I won't attempt to solve. We always noticed that the best Scotch humour had generally "whisky" for its subject. There was very little difficulty in making a native understand a "whisky" joke.

The seriousness of the lower classes was to me, sometimes, quite appalling. While waiting for some hours in Perth Station, I could not but notice the extraordinary solemnity with which the work of the railway was carried on. I never, at any time, heard one official chaff another, nor did I hear any of the cheerful greetings, so common in England, when a railway guard or an omnibus man meets a companion on the road. We once succeeded in making a railway official laugh, and we were so astonished and flattered that we ventured into conversation with him. We left him, however, with an uncomfortable suspicion in our minds that he had

completely misunderstood the joke. What I noticed particularly in Scotland, as compared with Ireland, was the absence of any ready wit on the part of persons with whom one conversed on the road or in hotels. Chaff an Irishman, and you get full change in return; perhaps more than you bargained for. Chaff a Scotchman, and he looks sadly and wistfully at you, as if he were listening to a foreign language, and then is either discourteous or silent. I hope that I am not unjust, because I have many Scotch friends, and I know how singularly unfair it would be to include all Scotchmen in one category. Still my observations would not be worth much unless they were genuine, and the want of *verve* and lightness, and what the French call *bonhomie*, on the part of the generality of Scotchmen one meets in one's travels, is to me one of the disadvantages of a tour in the Highlands.

There were two men sitting opposite to us at dinner in the Hydro. They came from a small town in the Lowlands, and if they were enjoying themselves they certainly did not show it. They never spoke to anybody unless spoken to, and then they only contented themselves with "Yes" and "No." I don't believe they were intentionally "stand-offish" as the phrase goes—they were simply fish out of water in the midst of so much gaiety and humour. Their demeanour reminded us of the story of the provincial Scotsman, who, after visiting Paris, Vienna, Rome, Switzerland, and London, returned home with the verdict, "For puir pleasure give me Peebles." In like manner our friends seemed to be afflicted; they sat with their eyes fixed on their plates, never speaking even to one another, but, apparently, sickening for Peebles.

On the other hand, there were Scotchmen in the Hydro of a quite different type, who helped us to make our visit pleasant and sociable. One in particular I remember, who was always foremost in getting up excursions and organising ways of amusing ourselves in bad weather. We used to tell him he had Irish blood in his veins, and our opinion was confirmed when, one day, in the midst of a large company of people, who were discussing the change from summer into winter costumes, he suddenly chimed in with, "I never change ma socks." This terrible personal revelation produced a shout of laughter, and the poor man was hopelessly puzzled for some time as to the cause.

A Hydro is an unrivalled place for the study of human nature. It is a little middle-class world, containing all the grades and

varieties of which that class is composed. Perhaps the most objectionable type of individual one meets in these places is the man whose one idea is to impress upon everybody the fact that he is a gentleman. *Ars est celare artem*, but of this he seems utterly unconscious, and he is never easy unless he is making it felt all around him that his character as a gentleman has to be considered in every step he takes. He considers a long time whether he can fraternise with a new arrival; he makes secret inquiries into your antecedents before he can be barely civil to you, and, if in the end you satisfy his requirements, he patronises you rather than makes a friend of you. He is careful to show his disgust at some unintentional act of bad taste on the part of a visitor; he goes through life in goloshes, for fear he should spoil the fine texture of which his character is composed. The hopeless snobbery of the man is unredeemed by the faintest sense of humour, and, could he but know it, he is the most unpopular man in the Hydro. After a conversation with "a gentleman" of this sort it was often a relief to go into the reading-room, and to take down Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University*, and to read "that it is almost the definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain. He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him. . . . The true gentleman carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast—all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment, his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant," and so on, until one rose from the chair with a full realisation of the gulf which separates the true from the false gentleman. In this connection I may mention that a very interesting Scotchman drew my attention to a noticeable feature in Highland life, viz., the obvious fact that almost every Highlander, down to the very lowest class, possesses the hereditary instincts of a gentleman. Some of their phrases, and the manner in which they perform menial duties, are indications of something in their blood very different from that which flows in the veins of the ordinary Lowlander. The servant frequently cuts an appearance to the distinct disadvantage of his master.

One day at dinner I ventured to direct the conversation into literary channels. I did so because there was a man near me who

was setting everybody to rights upon every imaginable question that was raised. He knew something about everything, or at least he thought he did. I did my best to strain that man's intellectual resources, but I failed completely. I enlarged for a few moments on Wordsworth's poetry and philosophy of life, and illustrated my meaning to a lady next to me with one or two quotations from his poems. It seemed to me for some time that I was likely to have all the running. My friend was confounded for the moment, as nothing was plainer than the fact that he had never read a line of the poet's. But he was not to be outdone by this disability. When I had finished, he observed, in his most sententious manner, that he had always held one opinion of Wordsworth, and that was, that the most unfortunate step the poet ever took was his selection of "the Lakes" as a residence—a place, he said, with a greater average rainfall than almost any place in the United Kingdom. He spoke as one having authority, and everybody's attention was at once turned from me to him, as he skilfully diverted the conversation into the realm of meteorology, a domain where he was at perfect ease. The unfortunate part of the matter was that everybody seemed to regard his criticism of Wordsworth as an effectual answer to all that I had previously said. But, perhaps, they also were glad to be brought back to the prose of life.

One word on the scenery of the district before I close this somewhat inconsequential paper. The first time I ever saw Killiecrankie was in the month of October, eleven years ago. I saw it again five years later in August, and I then experienced a rather bitter sense of disappointment. What had been on my first visit a mass of gold, and red and brown and purple, was now a bright green throughout. It was still beautiful, but it was not the Killiecrankie I remembered, and had treasured up as one of my most cherished recollections. This year I have again seen the Pass in all the glory of autumn colours, and the old picture has been restored to my mind. People who have never seen the Highlands in "chill October" have never seen that country at its best. The loveliness of a Scotch autumn is simply indescribable.

Finally, I must say a good word for the Scotch people, whom I have, perhaps, unfairly reviled. Their defects, let me say, are those which strike a casual visitor, because they consist of the absence of certain qualities most valued by the passing traveller. But, when you have broken through the outer covering of reserve

and suspiciousness which envelops so many good Scotch folk, you find, in greater proportion than in either English or Irish, faithfulness to their friends and principles, and genuineness in word and deed. At the Hydro we were of many nationalities and counties, but I think, without exception, the most objectionable of all the many types we met was the Cockney. There is no dialect in the kingdom so offensive and so barbarous as the Cockney dialect; and there is no manner so wanting in sweetness and light as the Cockney manner. Happy Scotland! She takes time to see a joke, but the poorest Highlander sounds his "h." Happy Scotland! She is serious, solemn, and not prone to larkishness; but the sardonic humour of her sons is of a finer kind than the 'umour of 'Oundsditch. And just as the finest humour is not that which proceeds from the fulness of a merry heart, but that which has its foundation in tragedy or in a troubled life, so the humour of Scotland, peculiar to herself, rugged like her own rocks, and without the gentle humanity which we find farther south, is often all the more vivid and effective because of the hard granite out of which it is hewn. When the enthusiastic southerner laid hold of Carlyle, and in opposition to his pessimism pointed out to him the starry firmament, and appealed to his sense of beauty and of grandeur to admit that all things were very good, the great prophet looked up into the midnight sky, and said, "*Ay, mon, and it's a sad sight.*" It has always seemed to me that in this sentence the peculiar point of view and the sardonic humour of the Scotchman are concentrated. "It's a sad business, but we must get through it somehow," is the Scotchman's philosophy of life, and, though he makes money and thrives and outdoes his fellow Britons, he does it sadly and because the business wants doing. Perhaps it does, but, other things being equal, if I am to be ruined, I would rather have it done humorously, than with that "something lingering" with a touch of "boiling oil in it" which is often the method of stern Caledonia.

EDWARD BENNETT.

SAVINGS BANK DEPARTMENT,
GENERAL POST OFFICE.

Mr. W. J. Godby.



It is with very mingled feelings that we record the retirement of this gentleman after an honourable and distinguished service of 56 years.* For, while we are glad to know that he will now enjoy the repose he so well deserves, and of which surveying duties do not admit, we feel that the Department is losing the services of one of its best Officers and most trustworthy counsellors.

Mr. Godby was the son of Mr. Augustus Godby, successively Secretary of the General Post Office in Edinburgh and Dublin. In 1834 there were no Civil Service Commissioners to question would-be civilians on their acquaintance with rigid dynamics or the Greek particle, and even limited competition had not yet been introduced; so that, when young Godby entered the Secretary's Office, Dublin, in that year, all the necessary preliminaries were satisfied when the fiat of the Postmaster-General, the Duke of Richmond, had been obtained.

At this time railways were just beginning to spread over the land, and, if on the 17th December following his appointment Mr. Godby had walked down to Westland Row, he might have seen the first Irish railway train start from the "Station-house" on its journey to Kingstown; while in the intellectual world John Henry Newman, but recently returned from his Sicilian voyage, was settling down to continue the "Tracts for the Times;" Charles Dickens, weary of pasting labels on blacking-bottles, had become a Parliamentary reporter for the *Daily Chronicle*; and Thackeray, deeply imbued with the idea that he was born to be an artist, was studying painting in Italy. Of illustrious men still living, only two had begun to be known, Alfred Tennyson, who had just published his first volume of poems; and Mr. W. E. Gladstone, who had entered Parliament four years previously, and was now "the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories" who followed Sir Robert Peel while detesting his politics.

* At the present time there is but one Post Officer who has seen longer service than Mr. Godby, viz., Mr. C. J. Whiting, the Postmaster of Brighton.

Glancing at our own line of life, we remark that Anthony Trollope entered the London office in this same year, while Rowland Hill was directing the operations for the Colonisation of South Australia, and giving his leisure time to the consideration of Postal Reform.

In 1840, at the age of 21, Mr. Godby was appointed by Postmaster-General the Earl of Lichfield to be "riding surveyor" of the Midland District. Colonel Maberley, who had not long succeeded Sir Francis Freeling as Secretary, protested against this appointment on the ground that he was too young for such an important position; but it is honourable alike to both men that a short time afterwards the Colonel wrote to Mr. Godby, and expressed the pleasure which he felt in being able to say that his forebodings had not been realised, and that, on the contrary, he was entirely satisfied with the new Surveyor's work. This was a very high testimony to Mr. Godby's abilities and conduct even at that early stage of his career, when we consider that no position in the gift of the Department offers such temptations to the thoughtless and unwary as a post on the surveying staff. Health and strength, energy and judgment, impartiality and good temper, absolute uprightness in money matters, a just perception and a power of keeping to the point, due consideration for inferiors together with perfect courtesy of demeanour to low as well as to high, should be the essential qualifications for every surveying officer, and still more so for every surveyor; of each of them, it should be said, as once said of an English king by a bitter opponent,—

"He nothing common did or mean."

At that time Surveyors had not, as they have now, a numerous staff to superintend,* and travelling occupied nearly all their time. They received an allowance of 6d. per mile, on which sum, with judicious management, they could keep one, or even two horses, as Anthony Trollope did. Post offices were few and far apart, and surveying duties allowed plenty of time for a run with the hounds, or a day's shooting or fishing. Mr. Godby was extremely fond of all these forms of sport. He believed that good workers should

* Up to 1837 they had no clerks at all, but in that year one was appointed to each of the seven districts into which England was divided. Amongst the Surveyors' Clerks of 1840 we find the names of George Pellatt (until recently Postmaster of Southampton), James Newman (afterwards Surveyor, and still living), John Beaufort, the late much-respected Postmaster of Manchester), and Frederick Maberley, who is still working on the staff.

be good players. On a hunting morning he would rise early and do what many men would consider a good day's work, in order to have a day with the hounds. Then, after dinner, he would return to a long evening's work. His capacity for doing hard work was in a great measure due to his fondness for all out-door sports and amusements. As a young man he could walk under a bar, and jump over it, and up to quite recently he could hold his own at tennis against any member of his staff. He was a keen fisherman, and excellent shot, but hunting continued to be his principal recreation until advancing years and the increasing pressure of modern work compelled him to abandon it.

Among the improvements introduced by Sir Rowland Hill was the system of rural posts, and the extension of suburban deliveries, and for some years after Mr. Godby's appointment a large portion of his time was occupied in planning and carrying out these extensions. His activity in this work, together with his power of placing his ideas on paper in a concise and lucid form, soon gave him the high reputation which he has ever since maintained, and so when, nearly forty years ago, a vacancy occurred in the Assistant Secretaryship, the gossip of the London office coupled his name with Mr. Tilley's as the two most likely candidates for the position * which the latter obtained.

As the postal work increased, and railroads were extended, surveyors' meetings began to be held, and Mr. Godby was in November, 1856, appointed Chairman of these gatherings. It consequently became his duty not merely to preside at the meetings, but to collect and master beforehand all information necessary for the full discussion of the various subjects under consideration, duties involving much additional labour, and the successful performance of which naturally led to his being frequently appointed to take part in inquiries of importance not directly connected with the duties of a surveyor. Thus in 1868, in conjunction with another gentleman, he was appointed to reorganise the Dublin Office, and here his great power of work and personal influence stood him in good stead, and the somewhat difficult task was brilliantly and successfully accomplished.

When at the head of the Midland district, Mr. Godby's headquarters were at Derby, but he was subsequently transferred to the Welsh district, where he resided, first at Rhyl, and afterwards at Shrewsbury.

* Mr., now Sir John, Tilley entered the Service in 1829, and was made Surveyor in 1838. He was thus senior to Mr. Godby.

Probably no surveyor has succeeded in getting so much work out of his staff, and that not by driving but by leading. His secret of success as a chief has been his kindness and consideration to all who knew him. He trusted his men; and, to use his own words, he liked those who worked well to play well too. He is particularly proud of the fact, that many of those who have served under him have subsequently distinguished themselves in the Service.

Active in body as in mind, he once astonished a Postmaster many years younger than himself by dashing after and stopping a runaway horse and carriage, much to the relief of the ladies occupying the latter, and this before any other onlooker had realised the situation. On the occasion of a fire at a country hotel, seeing the lack of organisation amongst the servants, &c., he took the lead, introducing order and succeeding in extinguishing the fire.

One who has long worked under him writes: "He is one of the most conscientious and painstaking men I ever met, and examined the most trifling reports in the most searching way. 'Put yourself in the place of the men in London' was his frequent remark 'and see if your report would enable them to understand the case without your local knowledge.' He is essentially a man to be respected and loved, I shall never forget my astonishment at the kindly friendliness with which he received me. I was a raw boy, accustomed to the then rigid discipline of the—— and to chiefs who kept aloof from their men; and it was therefore something new to be treated as a friend and equal by a chief whom I at once recognised as infinitely more cultivated, and at the same time more able, than any I had left behind. Yet he was a strong man, master in his own district, and we have all felt instinctively that we could not take any liberties."

An inferior nature, suddenly raised to occupy a position of almost absolute authority over others, fearful of being despised by them, is sometimes tempted to try to fortify his position by a haughtiness of demeanour which naturally fails in its object, and often only succeeds in making him ridiculous. If he be wise, he will soon learn, what Mr. Godby always knew and acted upon, that to be courteous and considerate to his inferiors, whether mental or social, to mingle with them in daily life, to help, encourage, and spur them on by word and example, neither lessens his authority over them nor dims his own self-respect. Nothing can do this but a man's own actions. The man who is always

considering what the dignity of his position allows him to do is sure to receive, or imagine he receives, a thousand slights, while, if he only remembered and acted upon the grand old motto, "*Fais le droit adviennent que pourra*," as, despite the Pessimists, most men who win success in their chosen careers do, there would be no necessity to blazon his own merits or dignity before the eyes of contemptuous inferiors or politely sceptical superiors.

We close our brief and imperfect sketch of Mr. Godby with the feeling that his retirement will cause a void which it will be difficult to fill, and we heartily wish him many years of peaceful rest and abundant leisure.

Surveying in Donegal.

I found in the Land of Tyrconnel
 Brave victorious heroes,
 Fierce men of fair complexion
 The high stars of Ireland.

I found in the province of Ulster
 Long-blooming beauty, hereditary vigour,
 Young scions of energy,
 Fair, yet fit for war and brave.

SONG OF ALDFRITH.



IN three papers which appeared in the last numbers of "BLACKFRIARS," I endeavoured to set before my readers the impressions produced on me by three months' sojourn in Connaught, and I now propose to give a slight sketch of a month's travel in Donegal. It was my good fortune to spend the greater part of my surveying life in these wild western regions where the Irish problem presents itself in its acutest phases, and where the confused succession of crag and bog and lake gives a sense of desolation almost unequalled among regions inhabited by man. It is not so much that the county of Donegal is wilder than Sutherlandshire, which is about the same size, but it is that while the latter county contains 23,000 inhabitants Donegal contains nine times as many.

Leaving Dublin one fine December morning, I travelled through Carrickmacross to Clones. There I found myself in a country having quite an English appearance of prosperity and comfort, and between that place and Enniskillen I passed a number of such towns. Enniskillen itself is situated on an island formed by the river which connects the two beautiful lakes of Erne, and there I spent New Year's Day. This town is no longer the exclusively Protestant settlement which it was when Colonel Wolseley sallied out at the head of an inferior force of yeomanry, and shattered Anthony Hamilton's regiments at Newtown Butler; but the descendants of the English settlers still form the majority of the inhabitants of the town, and of all the region to the north and east of it as far as the sea.

From Enniskillen the railway passes through a dreary and infertile district to Omagh ; but from thence a succession of thriving towns and villages is passed until Strabane and Derry are reached. This line roughly speaking forms the western boundary of anti-Nationalist Ulster. To the east of it every town and almost every village has its linen factory, so that there is plenty of employment for all ; while to the west (as in the rest of Ireland) the people have little or no employment except agriculture. Here too I found that hotel-keepers were not as haughty and inefficient as those I had previously met with. I actually saw them and conversed with them, and was even made comfortable by them, "Boots" being relegated more or less to his proper functions. Another point about the hotels was that they actually possessed each a separate commercial room and coffee room. In the greater part of Ireland the trade is so small that these two are practically rolled into one, but here they were as rigidly divided as they are in English hotels.

Donegal is perhaps the least fertile and the most unimproved of all the Irish counties, and the least capable of improvement. There is, it is true, a fertile strip of country between Rathmullen and Raphoe, and another between Killybegs and Ardara ; but the remainder of the county is made up of lake and bog and mountain, as Western Mayo is. There is, however, this difference that, while the poorest land in Western Mayo is almost uninhabited, the Donegal bogs bear a comparatively large population. Of the two I prefer the solitude of Mayo, because there man is not waging an utterly hopeless battle with the forces of nature, and laying on others the blame of the inevitable failure.

My first trip into the country was made from Rathmullen on Lough Swilly. Starting one fine morning, I crossed a hilly, but well-wooded country to Milford, at the head of Mulroy Bay. Milford is, of course, an imported Saxon name, and the Irish name for the place was Ballynagolloglough. In this case the change of name appears to have been in the direction of euphony, but as much cannot be said for hybrid words like *Londonderry* or *Ballyjames-duff*, or such vile compounds as *Wilkinstown*, *Cookstown*, or *Jonesborough*. Names ending in *town*—never *ton*—are common all over Ireland, but they lie thickest in Ulster and Leinster. *Town* is, no doubt, a noun of multitude meaning many, but in Ireland it does not necessarily imply *much*, as Lord Palmerston said of the word *deputation*. A friend of mine was once driving through a part of the country with which he was not well

acquainted, and, coming to a place where there were two cabins, one on each side of the road, he asked a woman where Snookstown was. She looked up at him gravely and said, "Sure, your honour's in the middle of it now, entirely."

To call Mulroy a *bay* is a misnomer, just as *harbour* is a most misleading designation for the Killeries. Mulroy is really a lough, a broad expanse of water, with a very narrow winding entrance, and thus the surface is unruffled by the swell of the ocean, and forms a resort for thousands of wild ducks and other aquatic birds. The shores are hilly, the villages few, and the numerous plantations on the banks give unusual variety to the scenery. Not far from Milford I passed the spot where Lord Leitrim was murdered, with his driver and secretary in 1878. The murderers, after completing their work, ran down the hill to the bay, and rowing across took refuge in the Fanet, as the peninsula between Mulroy and Lough Swilly is called. Captain P——, the resident magistrate of the district, told me that the men were perfectly well known, but that it would be useless to prosecute them as no evidence could be obtained. At the time of the murder Lord Leitrim was driving into Milford from his country house at Ballyvaughan, and it is noteworthy that another car on which were several of his servants happened to be a long way behind, and only arrived after all was over. An attempt has recently been made to represent the murder as non-agrarian, and to assign as the cause certain acts of immorality which Lord Leitrim is alleged to have committed, but the truth of which was denied at the time. Although I conversed on the subject with several persons in the immediate neighbourhood, no one mentioned these allegations, and all of were clearly of opinion that the murder was agrarian. Lord Leitrim appears to have been tyrannical to all persons who did not do exactly as he told them, although just and even generous to those who humbly did as they were bid. Such a landlord could hardly have been popular anywhere; but in Ireland, where even if you want to help people you must do it in *their* way, not *yours*, he was greatly detested. I was informed, for instance, that he had been known to pull down buildings erected on a tenant's land without his permission; while in other cases he had voluntarily spent considerable sums of money on the holdings. A few years earlier he had become notorious for a gross insult offered to the Earl of Carlisle, then the Lord Lieutenant. Lord

Carlisle, in a progress through Connemara, came to Maam, where he was refused entrance by the hotel-keeper, who produced the following extraordinary letter as his justification :—

“ King,

“ I will be obliged to you to fill the hotel with my tenants forthwith. Let every room be occupied immediately, and continue to be occupied; and when so occupied you will refuse admittance to Lord Carlisle and his party. If there should be the slightest difficulty as to the filling the hotel, or the occupation of the rooms, my desire is that you will fill each with the workmen; but you must not admit Lord Carlisle, and consequently the rooms should be filled previously to his coming there. Any orders you may have received notwithstanding, I rely on you observing my wishes to the letter.

“ LEITRIM.

“ P.S.—I will pay for the tenants using the rooms.”

It is difficult to imagine how any man in his senses could have written such a letter within the compass of the British Isles in this nineteenth century of ours, and the abjectness with which it was acted on sheds a sad light on the condition of the Irish tenantry less than thirty years ago. Too often gross oppression on the one side was answered by and mutilation and murder on the other. One is hardly surprised to learn that on the evening of the day on which the murder took place, Milford was illuminated and a general carouse was held. Two years later Lord Mountmorres was murdered not far from Maam, for no particular reason, except that he had been heard to make disrespectful remarks about the Fenians, and on the following day “five persons were seen, with joined hands, shouting and jumping and dancing, in a circle, around the spot where his blood was on the ground.”*

Still continuing along the shore of the bay, I arrived at Carricart, where was a fine new chapel, built of stone, and in the most approved style of modern Gothic. “Ah,” said the priest, with a sigh, “it is a fine building, but it is not half as comfortable as the old one yonder,” and he pointed to a low and ugly edifice, with plastered walls and thatched roof, which stood a short distance

* Atrocious as was the murder of Lord Mountmorres, it was outdone by that of Mr. Curtin, of Fries, near Tralee, which, as the Nationalists themselves felt, did an immense amount of injury to their cause. Mr. Curtin was a member of the Land League, but he had actually paid his rent, and, moreover, he dared to resist when moonlighters demanded his arms. Every right-minded man, whatever his politics may be, must have heard, with pleasure, that Miss Curtin, who so heroically defended her father and brothers, and helped to bring the assassins to justice, and who was, in consequence, boycotted by the neighbours, subsequently entered the service of the Department as Postmistress of Wicklow. She has lately been promoted to a similar position at Wokingham.

away. Plaster and thatch do not make good architecture, but nothing keeps the damp out so well as these humble materials, and nothing, therefore, is better suited to the Donegal climate.

One of the objects of my journey was to determine whether a certain village should be gifted with a post office. Having decided in my own mind that it should, I thought it as well to see what place would be suitable for an office. I was recommended to the cottage of a constabulary pensioner, and found it in every way suitable, for it was clean and central, while the pensioner was an educated, intelligent man, who had plenty of time to attend to the duty. But another candidate had been mentioned, widow Moloney, who kept the only shop in the village. It was a dark and noisome den, small and inconvenient, and the widow was a most illiterate woman. Had the choice rested with me I should have nominated the pensioner without hesitation. Now, of course, my driver knew everything I had done in the village, and being a man of some common sense he knew that I should be in favour of the pensioner, although these were not his views. So as soon as we had started on the return journey, he remarked that it would be a shame to give the place to the pensioner who was already well off, while widow Moloney was much in need of money; and he added that everybody in the village thought so too. I replied that the object in establishing a post office was not to provide a very small salary for any particular person in the village, but to meet the convenience of the inhabitants generally and to enable their letters to be posted and delivered. If (as he admitted) the pensioner was the more suitable person and his house the more suitable house, why should the work be given to one who was far less able to do the duty properly? "Well, sir," he said, "I know that is the way you English people look at things, but it ain't the way we look at them in Ireland." This is quite true, and I believe that in many cases where post offices are asked for, the principal object in view is to bring a little extra money to some one in the village.*

* The following is a copy of an application made some time ago for a new office:—

"We want a post office here badly. My sister Mary in her fine new house would keep it well and very correct, Postmaster H—— in C—— is a lame useless creature, and indeed our place would do for the C—— letters too, for we would send them round and oblige everybody. We will give big honest bail for our part. Write fast to me,

Your friend, Patrick B——

In other words the writer proposed to deprive the important village of C—— of a post office and transfer it to his own home in the hamlet of K——, some distance off.

Frequently at an office of the smallest class the sub-postmaster would apply for an increase of salary, and when I remarked that if he took every stamp off every letter which passed through his office in a year he would not take enough to pay his salary, he could reply, "England is a rich country and can afford to pay." This phrase, which I have repeatedly heard, when money was wanted for some utterly indefensible object, always left an unpleasant taste in my mouth. It seemed the last appeal of some poor relation whose abject poverty had divested him of all manliness and self-respect. Once a young woman complained that she was obliged to sit indoors all day to attend to her office, and yet only got 2s. 6d. a week for her services. So I asked a few questions and found that she had a stock of stamps value about 5s., and that she sold about 1s. 6d. worth a week. I suggested that such an office could hardly pay, and that she might while away her time by knitting, but she could not knit, and from her tone she evidently did not want to knit. Though she did not say that England was a rich country and could afford to pay, that was clearly what she meant.

Donegal possesses fewer railways than any county in Ireland, the only lines being two or three "light railways," and even these hardly penetrate beyond the borders of the county. When proceeding to the town of Donegal, I took leave of the ordinary gauge of railway at Stranorlar, and while waiting for the narrow gauge train to Druminin, I was amused to watch the manœuvres of the engine which had brought me thus far on my way. It was necessary to turn it round, and as the turn-table was far too small to turn engine and tender together, the two were with much ado separated. The engine was then turned without difficulty, but it needed the hard labour of ten men to push the tender on to the turn-table and push it off again. I could not but wonder why, if a larger turn-table was too expensive, the company did not employ an engine and tender combined, such as those in use on the Metropolitan Railway. But, then, I was in the land where broom-handles are regularly used to keep windows open, and where "I'll see about it to-morrow" is the order of the day.

The town of Donegal is a neat little place having in the centre a square which according to the usual practice in Ulster towns, is called "The Diamond." It is the only place in Donegal where there is a considerable population of English descent, and to these perhaps its tidiness may be partly due. Thence I started on a tour along

the north shore of Donegal Bay, and one of the first places passed was Mount Charles, the seat of a former pupil of mine, then Lord Slane, but now the Marquis of Conyngham. His lordship's estates extend as far as Glenties, and there seem hitherto to have been no such difficulties with the tenants as occur further north, where the land is poorer and landlords are less considerate.

At Killybegs I for almost the only time during my visit to Ireland, slept in a private house—that of Lieutenant B., then inspecting officer of coastguards. Although he had lived for some years at Killybegs Mr. B. had seen little of the country out of the range of the six coastguard stations which it was his duty to inspect once a month, but he wanted to see more. Now, an outside car is never properly balanced unless there is one person on each side, with the driver in front, and so we came to the conclusion that it would be well for the car if he would by his bodily weight prevent it from going lop-sided any longer. Thus in this, the last journey I made in Ireland, I for the first time had a genial companion to enliven the long journies and lonely evenings.

At Carrick, or Teelin, harbour we found a very comfortable hotel, much frequented by tourists in the summer. After assisting at a coastguard inspection at Teelin and doing my own work, we walked up the Slieve League, a mountain very similar to Croghan in Achill Island, which I have already described. The height is about the same, and there is the same precipice on the seaward side. The day was fine, but the ground was covered with snow and very slippery, so that we were unable to visit the "One-man Path" as the sharpest part of the knife-edge summit is called; but as far as I could make out from the somewhat confused description given by one of the coastguards who accompanied us, the path is to be "negociated" only in a sitting posture with one leg dangling down on each side—a mode of progression which is neither comfortable nor dignified.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

F. J. BECKLEY.

[*To be continued.*]

The Tyranny of the Press.



It is always dangerous to attack established opinions, especially when they are powerfully supported, and it may be not only dangerous but ungracious to inquire whether we do not suffer at the present day from the tyranny of the Press. Newspapers have done so much to advance the wellbeing of society, in the widest sense of the word, have sometimes fought very hard battles, and have become so necessary to our comfort, that common gratitude should make us willing to endure a moderate amount of oppression if at times they appear dictatorial and overbearing. But even a worm turns when trodden on, and the most patient of readers may occasionally feel that the guide, philosopher, and friend to whom he reverently looks for instruction and information is carrying matters too far, and entrenching himself too strongly and defiantly behind the editorial "We."

The great power of the Press is of very modern growth and is largely due to modern inventions. It is little more than a hundred years since Crabbe referred to

" . . . the ills the teeming Press supplies ; "

and it is not quite so long since Burke declared that " newspaper intelligence ought always to be received with some degree of caution." Southey complained in 1817, of course after he had abjured his earlier opinions, of the intolerable license of the Press, and in 1819 Wilberforce wrote " seriously the newspapers are among the very greatest, if not the greatest evils of the country." These prejudices died hard. Even in the reign of William IV. a Lord Chancellor gave great offence to many supporters of the Government by asking the editor of *The Times* to dinner. What would these respectable gentlemen have said in 1859 when the great seal was entrusted to a former reporter of the *Morning Chronicle* ? or a few years later to three Ministers hastening from Downing Street after a Cabinet Council each eager to be the first to communicate to Mr. Delane of *The Times* an important decision at which they and their colleagues had arrived ?

The English newspapers are probably the best in the world.

In size they far surpass Continental journals and are not inferior to the newspapers of the United States. The information they publish is fairly accurate and is obtained at an enormous expense. The leading articles and editorial notes are often smartly written, and if accepted with proper caution would not do much harm. But caution is not an usual attribute of the reader of newspapers. He has his favourite journal and believes implicitly everything he finds therein, however wild and extravagant. Reports totally at variance with fact are accepted by a number of presumably intelligent people because they have appeared in print, and their accuracy may no more be questioned than the correctness of Mr. Justice Stareleigh's notes in the trial of Bardell against Pickwick. "If the witness did not make the statement how did it get on my notes?" said the learned judge, assuming his own infallibility; and in a similar fashion the newspaper reader assumes the truth of everything his favourite editor gives to the world.

Now, if editors were infallible, as they always appear to consider themselves, this would be very well. Unfortunately, human nature is sadly liable to err, and editors are, after all, men of like passions with ourselves. They may have the most honest intentions, and be deceived. Too often their intentions are not to seek the truth, but to set forth such aspects of it as are suitable to their own purposes. Truth is many-sided, and editors select for publication as much of it as will advance the cause of their party. Frequently there is no time to make proper inquiry as to the truthfulness of a report. It must go in at all hazards, or the paper will be behind its rivals. The hurry and bustle of modern life is nowhere more faithfully represented than in our newspapers, and editors must be prepared at a moment's notice to discuss and pronounce judgment upon the latest discovery of science or a constitutional change in Patagonia. The wonder, indeed, is not that they are sometimes inaccurate, but that they contrive so often to hit so near the mark.

It is said that Garrick, as he lay upon the stage in the last scene of "Hamlet," while preserving the appearance of death on the side of his face towards the audience, used to smile with the other side on his friends in the wings, inviting them to observe how he was cajoling the public. The story is probably untrue, but I think it may represent the feelings of an able editor when he has been obliged to follow the leader of his party in some total change of policy and yet to persuade his readers that things

are still moving in the old groove, that there is really no inconsistency in the apparent alteration of purpose, and that the old principles are being maintained. I need not quote examples. If any of my readers, be he Conservative or Liberal, will retrace the history of his party for a few years he will find one. At such crises the task of editors is rather delicate, but they have only to follow Mr. By-Ends' course and success is probable. That excellent gentleman, as John Bunyan tells us, on being asked how he got the name, replied, "The worst that ever I did to give them an occasion to give me this name was that I always had the luck to jump in my judgment with the present way of the times, whatever it was, and my chance was to get thereby; but if things are thus cast upon me let me count them a blessing, but let not the malicious load me therefore with reproach." The able editor must jump in his judgment, and not trouble himself about minor virtues.

It may be objected that all this is theoretical. Let me adduce some illustrations of the dangers of depending too much upon newspaper information and editorial guidance. During the late agitation arising out of the licensing proposals of the Government, a Member of Parliament made the astonishing discovery that in a little market town in the West of England, the licenses to sell intoxicating drink were in the proportion of one to every forty-eight inhabitants. The town happens to furnish the second title to a ducal family, whose interests have not been forgotten by a grateful nation, and although this fact does not appear to have much bearing upon the matter of licenses, the discoverer of the temptations to excessive drinking very ingeniously contrived, in a letter he wrote to a London evening paper, to connect the duke, who has not a square yard of property in the place, with the magistrates who had permitted so many licenses to be issued. The editor to whom the letter was addressed, might have been a little cautious in verifying his correspondent's figures, but the opportunity of striking a blow at the Government was too good to be lost, and the letter appeared. Two days later, another correspondent of the same journal pointed out that the case had been grossly overstated by representing the population at a third of the actual number, but the story of the thirsty little town had forty-eight hours' start, and has been copied into other journals as if it were undoubtedly true. It has, of course, been commented upon in temperance publications, and has formed a basis for much

oratorical denunciation of the wicked ways of county magistrates.

Hi vacuas implent sermonibus aures
 Hi narrata ferunt alio, mensuraque ficti
 Crescit, et auditis aliquid novus adjicit auctor.

This example of newspaper inaccuracy was furnished quite recently by a leading Liberal newspaper published in London. I desire to be strictly impartial, and I will select my next instance from that ancient and respectable organ of Conservatism in politics, science, and literature, the *Quarterly Review*. Many years ago the late Dean Milman wrote an essay in which he had occasion to quote the definition that a proverb is "the wisdom of many and the wit of one," attributing it quite correctly to Lord John Russell. The editor of the *Quarterly*, perhaps unwilling to allow that a Whig statesman could have framed so happy a definition, qualified the Dean's statement by inserting the words "it is alleged." Lord John, vexed that his old friend had cast a doubt upon his claim to the authorship of the phrase, expressed his annoyance to Dean Stanley, and Stanley subsequently asked Milman why he had questioned the origin of the definition. "I did nothing of the kind," was the reply; "I know very well whose it is, and I said so. It was the editor who raised the doubt."

The name of a former Dean of St. Paul's suggests that of a distinguished dignitary of the Cathedral whose death has been announced as I am writing. It is pretty well known that the late Canon Liddon never married, yet an evening paper states that Mrs. Liddon was not present at her husband's death, which is true enough, as there is no such lady. It is not, however, to the death but to an incident in the life of the Canon to which I desire to refer. Travelling on the Save in 1876, at the time of the horrible massacres in Bulgaria, he saw, or believed he saw, the bodies of several men impaled on high stakes, and he concluded that this was the murderous work of the unspeakable Turk. His conclusion was questioned at the time, and his death has revived the story. In an obituary notice one London morning paper has referred to the service he rendered by thus exposing a horrible practice; while another paper mentions the story and rejects it as fictitious. Canon Liddon, who would have been the last person to invent a fable, honestly believed he was reporting what had really occurred, but the question remains unsettled whether what he saw was really as he described it.

It may fairly be said that these instances are of little importance,

as they refer to very trivial matters. I might multiply them did space permit, but the same objection would still lie. Straws, however, are sufficient to show the direction of the wind, and, I infer, from inaccuracies that have come under my own observation, the untrustworthiness of a good deal that appears in our newspapers. I am not competent to pronounce an opinion on many of the grave political questions which editors treat with such light hearts, or to discuss the accuracy of the foreign and special correspondents of our leading journals. These clever gentlemen go everywhere and know everything. They disclose the deepest secrets of cabinets, and penetrate the inmost recesses of diplomacy. The present accomplished correspondent of *The Times* in Paris, the confidant of Prince Bismarck, and of all the leading statesmen of Europe, is equally at home with ladies of the fashionable world, with dramatists and actors, with theologians and men of science. Nothing is too great or too small for his all-piercing eye—a secret treaty involving the partition of Europe, the latest fashion in boots and bonnets, a new farce, a controversy between an Old Catholic priest and a learned Cardinal, or a daring experiment in surgery; he takes them all up in turn, explains and illustrates them for the benefit of the unenlightened, and then forms judgment upon them so swiftly and surely that there is no room for anybody to hesitate or doubt. Other newspapers appear equally fortunate in their foreign correspondents, and I have only selected Herr von Blowitz as a type of his numerous and able rivals.

The special correspondent does not flourish in peaceful times like the present, but, let a war break out, and he will be very much in evidence, criticising the movements of troops and directing sieges and minor operations with the skill of a veteran commander. I do not forget the valuable services rendered to the country during the Crimean War by Dr. Howard Russell, of *The Times*, or the marvellous descriptions of the conquest of France by the Germans forwarded to the readers of *The Daily News* by another well-known special correspondent. The energy and ability of these gentlemen is beyond controversy. But I remember a series of letters, by Matthew Arnold, collected in a little volume entitled "Friendship's Garland," and now, unfortunately, out of print, in which that eminent critic wrote a very amusing sketch of the special correspondents at Versailles during the siege of Paris. Prince Bismarck was represented as leading the charger of one of

these gentlemen until his owner was ready to come forth and mount, while the Emperor William and the Crown Prince Frederick were in waiting to help him into the saddle; and this fiction did not appear extravagant to readers of the correspondent's daily letters. I have myself heard another special correspondent describe, in a very interesting lecture, an interview with the late Czar, which left upon my mind the impression that Alexander II. felt himself highly honoured by a visit from so illustrious a person as the lecturer.

Statements of this kind, especially if printed, impose upon us far more than we think, and the newspaper has become so essential to our daily existence that we too readily accept its authority and submit ourselves to its guidance. The evil might probably be mitigated if we sometimes read the expression of opinions opposed to our own with the same care we devote to our favourite newspaper. We should then see both sides of the shield, and might perhaps be able to form more correct conclusions; but the gain in accuracy would be at the expense of our convictions, and none of us likes to give them up, or to discover on how slight a foundation they rest. Our able editors are well aware of our weaknesses, playing upon them with the skill acquired by long practice, and we submit to be imposed upon. We boast indeed of our independence, and flatter ourselves that we are not priest-led or governed by tyrants, but we little know how much we are indebted for our opinions to others, and how incapable we are of arriving at just conclusions. Few of us have much time, and still fewer much inclination for careful study, and the newspapers are always with us, ready to tell us everything we want to know, and to fit us with a complete set of opinions as quickly as a ready-made tailor fits us with suits of clothes. Originality and accuracy are lost, but these qualities are superfluous luxuries, only obtainable by care and effort. We have no time for such things, and are content to do without them.

J. A. J. HOUSDEN.

SAVINGS BANK.

The Jubilee.



THE year 1890 will be remembered by Post Office men for two remarkable events—the Jubilee and the Strike—events which though apparently far apart are yet closely connected.

The Jubilee celebrations began with a dinner at the Holborn Restaurant, on the 17th January. The chair was taken by the Rt. Hon. H. C. Raikes, who was supported by two of his predecessors in office, Sir Lyon Playfair and Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, as well as by Sir A. Blackwood, Sir John Tilley, Mr. Pearson Hill (son of the late Sir Rowland Hill), and some 250 past and present members of the staff. A full account of the proceedings appeared in the morning papers, and *The Graphic* of the 18th January, published a double page engraving of most of the leading men. *The Daily Graphic*, generally the soberest of papers, came out with a series of sketches of the most comical description. One curious medallion portrait has been variously taken for Sir John Tilley and Mr. Smith of the Returned Letter Office, while no one could possibly have identified a certain genial private secretary in one ferocious individual with the wicked eye there portrayed unless the legend surrounding the sketch had supplied a key to the enigma.

The mutual relations of the Post Office, the Treasury, and the Public were touched on by several of the speakers, and as the remarks on this subject were of more than passing interest we give some extracts.

The Postmaster-General said :—

We are always told that we ought to be making a new departure. We are always making new departures. If the public only knew the secrets of the Post Office they would find that there is no Department on the face of the earth which is so prone to ventilate and push new ideas. We are being held up occasionally by ill-informed persons to public obloquy as if we did not go with the times, when the fact is that our endeavour is, not merely to go with the times, but to keep ahead of the times. But we have a partner—Mr. Jorkins. The Post Office is never in the position to give effect to its own promptings without consulting that very formidable person in the background.

Sir A. Blackwood said—

Though styled a revenue department, and most valuable as a machinery for indirect and unfelt taxation, I should deeply regret if we came to be

regarded, or to regard ourselves, as a mere tax-collecting department. Nothing, in my opinion, would be worse for the Department, and consequently for the public, than for the former to consider as the be-all and end-all of the Post Office service the extraction of a large revenue from the country; and, indeed, such a limitation of its functions would defeat the very object for which it exists—namely, the greatest possible convenience to the public by the multiplication and acceleration of every form of communication which properly falls within its limits. Nothing would be so calculated to chill the ardour, to stunt the energies, and to repress the inventive zeal of the officers of the Post Office as for them to feel that there are barriers in the path of postal progress which they are forbidden to surmount. There may be many ways in which the Service can render itself more useful to the community at large, and thus minister to the general progress and prosperity of the country; and I cannot but regard it as the bounden, if not the paramount, duty of a great commercial department like the Post Office to do its utmost, without undue interference with private enterprise, to invent and bring into operation such methods of general utility as will best promote the common weal. I believe that there is a variety of directions in which the Post Office could render very great service to the community which have as yet been unattempted, and that, with its unexampled facility for reaching the public in every corner of the kingdom, it might do much to help forward the social and commercial interests of the country. It is not for me, as a servant of the State, to attempt to criticise the doings of my superiors, but I confess that I should like to see the Post Office, which is the greatest commercial department in the country, administered on something like true commercial principles, and a portion at least of its large annual profit utilised for developing and extending its work for the general benefit of the public.

Mr. Shaw-Lefevre said—

Sir Rowland Hill not only carried his great scheme, but gave a great blow to the obtuse and ignorant and prejudiced officialism, from which it has, I rejoice to think, never recovered. It survived in fact for a time; but Sir Rowland inspired the Department with a new spirit, and founded a new school of officials. Up to that time no improvement had ever been devised in the Department. Post Office reformers had always forced their schemes upon the Department after a long struggle. It is demonstrable that of late years there has been a great change in this respect. All the great changes and improvements and extensions have been devised and carried out within the Post Office by such men as Mr. Chetwynd, Mr. Scudamore, and Mr. Patey, and I have often heard Mr. Fawcett say that he owed all his schemes to men within the office, and found them the most ready agents for carrying them out; I can bear the same testimony from my short experience. I desire to emphasize this, as there is a disposition in the Press to complain of the tardiness of the Post Office to adopt improvements. The difficulty does not rest there. It rests rather with the Financial Departments of the Government. If it is insisted upon that there shall be an ever-increasing net revenue, it stands to reason that many reforms and extensions which the public desire must be postponed. He would be a bold man who would beard the Chancellor of the Exchequer and ask him to give up the whole of this net revenue for Post Office improvements, though it is to be remarked that

no other country in the world draws a revenue from its Post Office. It is not, however, necessary to contemplate this. What I have at various times suggested is that we should estimate at a liberal amount what net revenue we should draw on the average of years from the Post Office, and what there is beyond this of growing net revenue should be applied year by year to the improvements and extensions of the public service. The present would be a very good opportunity for applying this principle, for the net revenue is now double what it was before the introduction of the penny post. I can conceive no better way of celebrating the jubilee than by applying at all events the increase in the growing net revenue to improvements. (Cheers.)

Sir Lyon Playfair said :—

"There is one feature of the Post Office which has contributed greatly to its success—I allude to its perfect freedom from political action. I believe that the only survival of politics in it is in the appointment of rural messengers by Members of Parliament for the district. This miserable remnant of patronage ought to be swept away. I do not think that I ever knew, and certainly never asked, what were the political convictions of any candidate for office when I had to deal with the patronage, and this must be the practice and experience of my successors. How different is the administration of the Post Office in the United States! At every change of a political party in the Presidency there is a sweeping change of officers, on the principle that "spoils belong to the victors." The present President has been in office only a few months, but when I left America in November, 17,000 postmasters had been dismissed because they were Democrats, and the party newspapers were urging increased activity in the process of disorganisation. It is because our Post Office has been an efficient servant of the public, having only one thought as to how to do its duty without fear or favour, that it stands so high in public estimation."

On the 16th of May a *Conversazione* was given by the Lord Mayor at the Guildhall. The Post Office Jubilee Committee, presided over by Mr. Baines, took immense pains to provide a most interesting exhibition for the occasion, while the Corporation provided the hall, the sandwiches, most of the money, and almost all the guests. The exhibits comprised, not only a representation of all the Post Office work of the present day, but also a large collection of postal antiquities. A carefully prepared catalogue, preceded by a concise and carefully-written history of the Post Office, enabled the visitor to study with intelligent interest the various objects shown. A great many of them consisted of old notices and other documents, some of which we hope, in time, to print.

This was by far the most interesting Post Office exhibition which has ever been got together, and we can only regret that, when so much trouble had been taken by the Post Office, the officers of the Department should have had so little to do with

the management of the show, and, that so few of them, and of the general public, should have had an opportunity of visiting it. While thousands of guests of the Corporation attended the *Conversazione*, listened to the Post Office choir and admired the Post Office exhibits, the number of Post Office guests was strictly limited, the vast majority being furnished, along with the sandwiches, by the Corporation.

The Prince of Wales gave *éclat* to the proceedings by his presence, and viewed, with special interest, the work of the telegraph operators. He was attended round the exhibition by Sir Arthur Blackwood, and also by Alderman Sir James Whitehead, Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, who is the brother of the late, and uncle of the present, Postmaster of Appleby.

The exhibition was kept open on the 17th and 19th May without the sandwiches, and on these days some 21,000 persons visited the Guildhall, the great majority as before being invited by the Corporation.

There was one special feature of this gathering which we must not omit to mention, viz., the letter-card which was issued for the occasion, and which was sold in the Guildhall at sixpence for the benefit of the Rowland Hill Fund. Only 10,000 of these cards were issued, and all were disposed of to the early comers who purchased them with avidity. They are now worth 10s. a-piece to their fortunate possessors.

It appears from the interesting report of Mr. Tombs on the work done at the Guildhall Post Office that, during the three days on which it was open, 20,500 ordinary post-cards were sold, most of them singly. So eager were the visitors to get *something* impressed with the special dated stamp used on the occasion that when the post-cards gave out registered letter envelopes were eagerly bought, while a £5 stamp was observed on one letter which was posted at Guildhall on the 17th. One young gentleman hastily pulled from his pocket a sheet of paper on which he wished the dated stamp to be impressed, but retired somewhat abashed when the document proved to be an unpaid tailor's bill; while a young lady, anxious for an impression, had one placed on her pocket handkerchief. A reply post card addressed to the Guildhall Post Office came to hand, inscribed, "Have come many miles, cannot get in. Please post reply half of card and oblige—DISAPPOINTED." Several letters were noticed in the Sorting Office which had passed through the post in the year 1840, and bore the penny

gummed and cut stamp of that time in addition to a postage label of the present day. One jubilee card was posted with a piece of blotting paper round it to keep it clean, and when it reached its destination at Derby the blotting paper was still there.

To judge by Mr. Preece's report, telegraphy as practised on this occasion was instructive rather than amusing, the whole technical staff being assiduously and zealously engaged in explaining the history and working of the various telegraph systems. Mr. Preece assures us that it was very popular and interesting; but joining up appears for the time to have choked the joking down, for the only funny thing on view was a stuffed woodpecker who had made a hole nearly through a telegraph post, probably under the impression that there were some bees inside. No one, however, who knows Mr. Preece will accuse him of a want of humour, and we can only suppose that he was then ruminating the great jest which was to enliven the South Kensington proceedings, and that, meanwhile, he scorned all meaner things in that line.

The Corporation Committee has also issued its report, a portentous Blue Book which by the aid of large print and heavily leaded type has been extended to forty folio pages. There we may learn how some forty Aldermen and Common Councilmen formed a committee which, with many dinners and much debate, nominated the persons who were to be admitted to see the exhibition provided by the Post Office and what refreshments were to be given them. At the foot of the page on which the names of the forty appear is a small space reserved for what is called the "Post Office Committee of Co-operation," by which apparently is intended the committee which got together the Post Office Exhibition, and thus provided the backbone of the evening's entertainment. This committee we are informed "attended" the great Aldermanic Committee which conferred on it the privilege of "assisting."

The last of the great Jubilee celebrations was the *Conversazione* at the South Kensington Museum on the 2nd July. Symptoms of this final outburst appeared long before in the Post Office Circular, which, abandoning for once its usual dry and hard tone, dilated in eloquent language on the glories which would meet the eyes of the guests what time the beauteous building and its sparkling contents were lighted up by the electric light, and the galleries were crowded with a numerous and genteel company.

The *Conversazione* was attended by hundreds of Officers from all parts of the United Kingdom, and was most successful. The Postal and Telegraphic Exhibition was very interesting, but as we have stated, the historical objects which had been shown at the Guildhall were not available on this, the real jubilee gathering, and thus one great element of interest was unfortunately absent. As at the Guildhall, the newly formed Post Office Choir, under the able direction of Mr. Sydney Beckley, played a most important part in the entertainment, while Mr. Sims Reeves, Madame Valleria, and many other well-known artistes, most kindly gave their services. On the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, a procession was formed, which if it did not in all respects come up to what was originally intended, was certainly the most picturesque feature of the evening.

A special postal envelope and correspondence card at the price of 1s. which was sold, not only at South Kensington, but at a large number of post offices in the United Kingdom. Altogether about 250,000 were issued, and of these 149,000 were sold in London, including 21,000 at the General Post Office counter. As all our readers have doubtless seen the envelope and card, it is unnecessary for us to describe them here, but two imitations which have since appeared deserve remark. The first, published by a Mr. Elliott, is a fairly close copy of the original, except that the mail train and the mail coach are evidently taken from very old dies, which no doubt served to illustrate the advertisements of a newspaper of forty years ago, while the postmen are feeble copies of those on the original envelope. The legends "V.R." and "Postage One Penny," which appeared on Mr. Elliot's travesty, brought it within the reach of the law, and it was promptly suppressed.

The other envelope and card are far more interesting, as may be inferred when we state that they are signed "Harry Furness." The mail coach has here given place to a jumble of citizens on foot and in cabs, rushing to get their own letters in consequence of the strike of the postmen, while the mail train is represented by a number of railway waggons containing the Post Office profit which are disappearing within the open jaws of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The postman of 1840 is a sleek curly gent., with a beautiful waist, who daintily handles a single letter, while the postman of to-day is a wretched object, sweltering under an enormous load which bends him almost double. The crown,

supported by the rose, shamrock, and thistle, is replaced by a drawing which is the most successful part of the performance. Three ludicrous heads of postmen on long stalks support between them an enormous sack of letters, bearing the inscription, "We've too much work to do-o-o!" The correspondence card bears a portrait of the Postmaster-General, with the inscription, "He did not give us penny postage," and also a very comical view of a sorting table, with a new broom and a pair of blacklegs.

The great joke of the evening, to which we have already alluded, is thus described in the official programme :—

"In the Textile Gallery there may possibly be met with a telegraph office of 1990, where special facilities for the transaction of new developments of Post Office business will be provided, and where, by means of contrivances which are certainly not as yet publicly known, the expectation will be held out of instantaneous communications passing between London and all parts of the world by sight and speech, and not by the old-world contrivances of the nineteenth century, and its so-called electric telegraph. Moreover, the greatest invention of the age, the electrophonoscope, will be shown there for the first time."

By this invention, a person standing at a telephone and conversing with another through it, sees the features of the person with whom he is conversing. Every great invention from the time of Tubal Cain to the present day has been the subject of depreciation and we are hardly surprised, therefore, to hear it confidently asserted that vision was effected not by electricity as claimed, but by an ingenious arrangement of mirrors, and that this can be effected only when the interlocutors are not more than a few yards distant from one another.*

"A plan's in agitation—as nought can genius fether—

"To let us have the answer back before they get the letter."

So sang a picnic poet of 1840, and in the "Post Office of 1990," the Jubilee Committee set themselves a task which, if not quite as difficult as this, certainly seems to indicate that, in the age of which Mr. Bellamy has written, a girdle will be put around the earth in less than the orthodox period of forty minutes. The plan was, to go to the above-named office and drop in a post card, addressed to Jerusalem, or Madagascar, or North and South Amerikee, and then to walk very slowly indeed to the other end of the building and ask for an answer at the *Poste Restante*. Any

* Was it through a phonscope or a scopophone that Pyramus looked when he exclaimed—

"I see a voice; now will I to the chink

"To spy an' I can hear my Thisbe's face.

further information can, no doubt, be obtained on application to the special staff, who generously gave their services on the occasion, and who consisted of Mrs. Dion Boucicault (the original "Colleen Bawn"), Miss Patrice Boucicault, Mrs. Charles Lamb Kenney, Miss Rose Kenney, Mrs. Conyers d'Arcy, Miss Grace Winall, Mr. Conyers d'Arcy, Mr. Edwin Gilbert, Mr. Egginton, and Master Conyers d'Arcy.

In his report Mr. Tombs says nothing of these proleptical proceedings, but it is clear that common every-day work of 1890 was quite enough to tax the energies of his staff, for 23,000 Jubilee envelopes were posted that evening as well as 13,000 letters and postcards. Some 600 persons appeared to have thought that the Jubilee cover was merely for the purpose of keeping the Jubilee correspondance card clean, so they pocketed the former and posted only the latter. As at the Guildhall, Mulready envelopes and old black stamps of 1840 once more passed through the post. The report goes on to state that whilst at the Guildhall the public office had for its guardians the grim giants Gog and Magog, at the South Kensington Museum the young ladies at the postal counter had above them a statue of a nobler kind—that of David.

Some 4,000 people in all attended the *Conversazione*, and that the gathering was a thoroughly representative one may be gathered from the fact that several postmen from distant places attended with wives, families, and in some cases babies in arms. One man had come all the way from Cornwall to be present, and others came from Morpeth and Durham.

We must not omit to mention that on the following morning at Exeter Hall a breakfast was given by about 140 postmasters to the Postmaster-General and Sir Arthur Blackwood.

St. Martin's Letter-Bag.

Ourselfes.

THE first number of a new magazine should contain within its pages some apology for its own existence. It has no history, and no pleasant or unpleasant memories upon which to dwell. It begins with an absolutely clean record, and all that can be fairly demanded of the little stranger is an answer to the question, "Why are you here?" We can answer that question very shortly. We are here because nearly a thousand Post Office men have promised to support a magazine which shall devote itself mainly to their interests. We have many other ideals and objects, but the root idea at the bottom of our enterprise is to serve the interests of the officers of the General Post Office. Now it is impossible to conduct a Departmental Magazine of this kind unless we receive plenty of generous assistance from all our readers. We want each subscriber to feel that he has not discharged all his responsibilities towards us when he has paid his subscription, but that he has a duty to perform in keeping the editorial department in touch with any interesting official information which may have come under his notice. We want also to hear the views of subscribers as to the conduct of the magazine, and we shall be glad to receive suggestions from any quarter as to the means by which our opportunities for usefulness may be increased. We are prepared to be criticised, attacked, or even abused, provided that practical suggestions are sandwiched between the "damnatory clauses" of our correspondents' letters. Angry letters are among the most encouraging contents of an editor's letter-bag. They are witnesses to the fact that he is exciting interest among his readers. A terrible fate is his when he receives no letters at all, when no one is sufficiently interested in his production to either praise or blame him. One word as to our first number. A first number is always an experiment, and its production is generally effected under peculiarly difficult conditions. For this reason we plead for, on this occasion only, a little indulgence. Give us time and good advice, and we shall improve. Judge us, not solely by our first appearance in public but by the high aims and ideals with which we are starting. It has been said "that at the birth of every journal there is a good and a bad fairy in attendance." The former says "May you be just, may you be wise, may you be prosperous"; the latter mutters all sort of evil things, and is very distinct with one piece of advice—"Never apologise." We have shown our contempt for the bad fairy by commencing with an "apologia."

THE EDITOR.

A Birthday Welcome.

The poet, according to Plato, is a "light and sacred thing." How light and how irresponsible the modern minor poet is can only be learned from an exhaustive study of the magazines. Till research is thoroughly endowed, it is improbable that any sane person will earnestly attempt the diagnosis of the minor poet.—*Daily News*, August 21st, 1890.

Somebody sends us the following:—

HAIL! Strut thine hour upon the scene,
Newborn official Magazine!
And witch a scoffing world a while
With graces of official style.

One style, I say, and only one,
Deserves to live beneath the sun,
That style of sweetness and of light
Which only Civil Servants write.

Those bards who saw the visions vast
When Arthur or when Pippa passed,
Though fashion's slaves before them fall,
Were only mortals after all.

That Burke, who cursed the maniac dance
Of revolutionary France,
And talked of *queens* and *leaping swords*,
Was master but of common words.

What cares the heir of all the years
How Hastings stood before the Peers,
How counterfeited beauty fled
When Mary Queen of Scots lay dead?

They want their *vates sacer*—Yes,
We know them but in common dress,
We merely have the record crude
Of some Macaulay or a Froude.

But here the Civil Servant's pen
Electrifies the sons of men,
He *states* his fact, *submits* his view
As *in the circumstances* true.

Said I, he *states* his facts? Not he!
He says they *would appear to be*;
Submits his views? He's not so bold,
He takes whatever view he's told.

His chief's eliminating knife
Shears off the phrase that dares show life,
Till o'er his style Nirvana's shed,
And leaves it quiet—like the dead.

Then stiff on stilts he stands on high
 To share the Theban Eagle's sky,
 Oh, mayst thou "breathe its pure serene,"
 Thou little new-born Magazine.

But copy not the laurelled seers
 Of bygone or of modern years.
 What matter though the scoffer smile,
 Hug closer thy official style.

A short time ago we were told, in a letter which appeared in a certain weekly newspaper, that our new publication would be a kind of glorified Post Office Circular, and now we have Mr. Scoffer aspersing our parts of speech, although, as this is our first number, he cannot possibly have seen a single one of them. Who is our censor? Is he an Irish Postmaster? and, if so, would he kindly inform us whether he ever ended a report on any subject whatever without adding the words "I beg to say." Is he a clerk who initials letters intended for the public? and, if so, did he ever omit to interpolate a comma after "that," or to cut up a letter because "begin" was written instead of "commence." Is he one of those who, if they cannot come in time with the Theban Eagles, at least go (to roost) early with Charles Lamb and the barn-door fowls? We cannot say; but it is clear that, if he does not possess the "pride and ample pinion" of a Pindar of Thebes, he, at any rate, may claim intellectual kinship with another Pindar, whose Christian name was Peter, and who was always ready to libel kings, lords, commons, civil servants, and magazine editors without mercy and without remorse.

The Post Office and the Press.

ACCORDING to Mr. Oscar Wilde, the difference between journalism and literature is that the former is unreadable, and the latter is not read—a dictum which the success of the *Review of Reviews* abundantly justifies. Following humbly in the footsteps of Mr. Stead, we propose to give our readers each quarter a short summary of the principal notices of the Post Office and its work which appear in the press. To do this efficiently we shall need the co-operation of our readers, who will, we hope, send us from time to time any cuttings which may meet their eye.

The Ruin of the Civil Service.

UNDER this startling title, Sir Robert Hamilton, K.C.B., the Governor of Tasmania, writes, in the September number of the *Nineteenth Century*, to complain of the stoppage of the supply of First Division Clerks. He contends that the best men that can

be got are wanted for the higher positions in the Civil Service, and that open competition is the best method of securing them. He believes in promotion to the higher posts by fitness, not by seniority. "It is," he adds, "an undoubted fact that in the past more harm has been done to the Service by the promotion by seniority of hard-working, and, in so far, meritorious fossils steeped in routine than by the most glaring cases of promotion by favouritism."

The Post Office gets its Due.

IN the October number of the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Louis Jennings, M.P., gives an account of "A Model Government Office." When we saw the title the idea at once struck us that he was writing in praise of the Post Office; but we soon found that the title was writ sarcastic, the article being really a strong indictment against the Admiralty. However, we perused the article, and got our reward when we found it stated that "it might be a salutary change for the Admiralty Clerks if they were turned into the British Museum or the Post Office with the duties and salaries there awarded, while the over-worked and underpaid clerks in those departments were transferred to the Elysium of the Admiralty." We have nothing to say against our colleagues in the Admiralty, but we hail with pleasure the recognition on the part of a public man of the fact that the Post Office is exempt from the usual charges brought against Government Offices. Whether we are a model Government Office is not for us to say. With Mr. Jennings' salutary change perhaps we might be.

Ocean Cables.

AN interesting article on the laying of ocean cables will be found in the October number of *Scribner's Magazine*. The author, Mr. Laws Webb, was employed in the expedition which laid a cable from Cadiz to the Canary Islands, and he gives a lively account of the pleasures and perils of the expedition. The submarine system now established consists of upwards of 120,000 of nautical miles of cable, which have cost altogether more than £40,000,000 sterling. The North Atlantic is spanned by no fewer than eleven cables, all laid since 1870, though some are not actually working. The largest share in the world's submarine cables is owned by the Eastern Company. Their system covers the ground from England to India, and is represented by 21,860 miles. For the maintenance and extension of the whole vast net-work of the world's cables, a cable fleet exists which comprises thirty-seven vessels, of an aggregate gross tonnage of about 54,600 tons.

In Praise of Sir Rowland Hill.

THE Penny Post Jubilee has not, as far as we are aware, inspired Mr. Lewis Morris, or any other candidate for the position of poet-laureate, with the idea of composing an ode; but Mr. H. A. Morriss, of Queen's Park, has stepped into the breach with an acrostic of fifty lines. Of Sir Rowland Hill he says,—

Enormous force was used, to baulk this earnest man.
Enough almost to make, him sacrifice his plan.

But things are very different now, and we may smile with complacency as we reflect that

Our Post arrangements now, are managed with much care,
We cannot well complain, delays are very rare.

Further on we read,—

O'er this stupendous work, C. Raikes, Esq., presides,
Firm and just his ruling, and kind his heart besides.

We will not venture to assert that these are *needless* alexandrines, but the reader will at any rate see that they resemble, in some degree, those described by Pope, in that, like wounded snakes, they are each cut in half by a comma or bacillus which has no relation to the sense and merely acts as a cæsura.

Public Control of the Telegraphs.

THE June number of the *Forum* contains an article by Bronson C. Keeler, entitled, "Public Control of the Telegraphs," from which it appears that in all countries, except Canada and the United States, the telegraphs are public property, while in Denmark, the Argentine Republic, and Mexico, the state and the companies divide the lines between them. Some interesting statistics of the various countries are given, and a comparison of the relative telegraphic progress of England and the United States leads Mr. Keeler to conclude that the latter country should also take the lines into its own hands. Western Australia, one of the most thinly peopled territories of the world, sends more messages per head than any other country, viz., 7.5, while for Great Britain the figure is 1.43, and for the United States, 1.25.

Dr. Richardson on Post Office Life.

DR. B. W. RICHARDSON, in an article on "Working Hours and Working Men," which appears in the October number of *Longman's Magazine*, says:—

There are some callings which, on account of their monotony and steady wear and tear from constant work, require the same regular limitation of time. The postman is an excellent illustration of the class of worker included under this head. The work

of the postman is one continuous busy go-round; he is on his feet during the whole of his working hours, except in the few, far too few, instances in country districts where he is able to use a velocipede. The result is that the postman wears out too fast. The late medical officer to the General Post Office, Dr. Waller Lewis, was fully alive to this fact. He referred to it in his reports, and he several times spoke to me about it. There were some men, he told me, who sustained the tedious labour fairly; but none bore it well, and the weaker ones badly. The effect generally, was to produce and premature old age; in other words, shortening of the life of the worker.

The lesson which Dr. Richardson draws from this and other cases is, that eight hours' work is as much as any man can do.

Mail Coaches.

IF any of our readers were previously unaware of the existence of the special Mail Train consisting solely of Post Office carriages which leaves Euston nightly at 8.30 p.m., they can no longer plead ignorance on that point, now that its counterfeit presentment drags it (not usually) slow length along the foot of the Jubilee envelope. Since the 4th August, an important acceleration has taken place in this train, which now reaches Aberdeen at 9.5 a.m. instead of at 10. a.m. as before. It now starts on its return journey at 3.40 p.m. instead of 2.45 p.m. and arrives at Euston at 4.16 a.m., four minutes earlier than before.

In connection with this change the Irish Night Mail now starts at 8.35 p.m. instead of 8.20 p.m., but the time lost in starting is made up on the journey to Holyhead, and we have good reason to believe that no fresh Irish grievance will result from the change.

The number of parcels too and from London which are road-borne is steadily increasing. In addition to the Brighton and Watford coaches, which have been established some time, four others have recently been put on—one to Colchester and Ipswich, another to Oxford, a third to Gravesend and Chatham, and the fourth to Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. Of course these all run at night, when time is of small importance, and thus the suggestion of the *Daily Graphic* that passengers might like to travel by them in the summer is evidently founded on imperfect knowledge.

The Oxford coach leaves London at 11.30 p.m. and conveys parcels for thirteen head-offices. As far as Reading four horses are employed, but beyond that town three only. In addition to 9,000 parcels a week this coach carries a number of letter-mails, thus accelerating the cross-post circulation.

The parcel post seems far more adapted to convey the manufactured products of the town, than the raw material of the country, and so we find that while 6,000 parcels a week are carried on the down journey, only half that number is carried on the journey up.

It is a curious fact that the same proportion obtains between the number of parcels sent to and received from the Colonies.

A Postmaster-General's Sharp Practice.

THE United States Postmaster-General, Mr. Wanamaker, is also a publisher of essentially American type—that is to say, he reprints English books and sells them cheap, because, as he expresses it, his books are “without authorial expense.” He is now engaged in photographing the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on this principle, and issues the volumes at 90 cents each. This is probably the boldest use to which the combined arts of photography and piracy have ever been put. Still, there are some in America who object to this sort of thing, and one of the newspapers stated that Wanamaker “ought not to be able in any civilised community to sit down comfortably at a dinner table with honest men.”

Changes at the Head Office.

WE have to note that great changes have been and still are in progress in the Civil Service in general, and that the Post Office seems likely to have its full share of these alterations. In April last the seven-hour working day was introduced into the Savings Bank. The Second and Third Classes were placed on the Second Division with a scale of pay rising to £350 per annum, whereas previously the maximum of the Second Class was £300. In September a similar change was made in the Receiver and Accountant-General's Office, and also among the Second Division Clerks of the Secretary's Office. The question of the amount of annual leave to be granted has not, we believe, been settled as yet.

An Order in Council has also been issued under which a Civil Servant may be made to retire on reaching the age of 60, while he must retire at 65, unless, for special reasons, it is desirable that he should remain until 70. This order has not, we believe, yet been applied in the Post Office.

The Recent Cavalry Manœuvres.

ONE of the most interesting features of the recent cavalry manœuvres was the brilliant performances of the Telegraph Battalion, R.E., under the command of Major Beresford, so well-known in the Post Office Service as until lately the Superintending Engineer for the Southern Division of England. For the first time the battalion acted with a force consisting entirely of cavalry, and proved that it is possible to keep pace with such a force in the erection of a military telegraph. No less than 64 miles of line were erected in two days, and during the manœuvres

3,700 messages were transmitted without any interruptions of consequence.

An Electric Shock.

THE *Daily News* is responsible for the following:—There was a curious scene in Paris the other day just outside the Opera House. Traffic was in full swing, when a lady who was crossing the street and had got on to one of the refuges sunk to the ground with a scream. She had put her foot on a large metal plaque, and immediately felt an electric shock. The usual crowd collected, and the usual police arrived. But the cause was clear to all. Quite close to the scene of the accident was a standard of clustered electric lights, and the wire which supplied the current passed close to the metal plate. With great presence of mind the police sent for several electricians, keeping a cordon in the meantime round the plaque. The experts went to work quickly and cautiously. The metal plate itself was raised. It communicated with one of the subterranean passages that lead to the drainage system of the city. Then at last the cause of the accident was discovered. A workman employed in the drains wanted to emerge, and happened to push up the plate at the moment the lady's foot was on it. Hence the earthquake and the shock. Thereupon the crowd dispersed, the electricians went home, the police preserved impenetrable silence, and the lady, who really showed considerable imagination, decided to say as little as possible about the accident.

Bilston.

ON Tuesday evening, September 9th, a number of influential gentlemen assembled at the Pipe Hall Hotel, Bilston, for the purpose of presenting the Postmaster, Mr. F. Nokes, with a purse of gold (twenty guineas), a handsome timepiece, and a pair of side ornaments, in recognition of his many public services. The timepiece is of Italian bronze, and on an inlay of silver is inscribed the following:—"Presented to Mr. F. Nokes, Postmaster of Bilston, (together with side ornaments and a purse of gold) by some of his fellow townsmen, to mark their appreciation of his many public services to the district, and to commemorate the opening of the new Post Office, Bilston, September, 1890." A dinner preceded the presentation, and speeches were made in praise of Mr. Nokes, and in commemoration of the opening of the new Post Office buildings.

English as She is Wrote.

A CORRESPONDENT sends us the following:—"It is always that to do for liking cases. You can, may, and are obliged to say what you can do for that." Such were the words, hastily traced on a piece of paper, at which my friend Briefless gazed with amazement, as the writer—an ancient French woman, of

uncertain temper, but of proved conceit—flounced out of the office. She had called to make inquiries about something, and as Briefless could not understand her English he replied to her in French. This seemed to irritate her, and she laboriously explained that she wished to talk to him in English, but that, as she could not follow spoken English, he was to write his answers in English on a piece of paper. Obviously, the French language offered the line of least resistance in this case, and so my friend politely but firmly addressed her again in that language, which led her to write the oracular sentences above recorded. As Mr. Gilbert observes, "How strange are the customs of France!"

The Postmaster-General's Report.

THE Thirty-sixth Report on the Post Office is very like its predecessors. On each page, many-figured totals show the measure of the vast business, the details of which, too, regularly in the month of August, fill the British public, or, at any rate their spokesmen in the newspapers, with wonder and admiration. For our own part, the transaction of the business hardly seems so marvellous as the increasing energy of the British Public in letter writing and other modes of postal activity. In realising the fact that every additional item of "Postal Matter" implies some new relation between man and man, trivial, perhaps, in itself, but in the aggregate of immense significance, and that it is therefore, an emblem of the growing complexity of social relations, one cannot help wondering for how long the present rapid rate of increase can be sustained. But a part of the increase has no very serious import, as it appears that recently our old friends *Tit-bits* and *Ally Sloper*, and their many imitators, have indirectly been adding to the Post Office revenue very considerably by their prize competitions, for we are told, in the report before us, of 31,000 post cards delivered at one time at one magazine office, and of half a million delivered in one week at another, including one delivery of 195,000 letters and post cards. In spite of the spread of education, which is supposed to be responsible for most of the increase in correspondence, we notice that there has been a rather large increase in the numbers of misdirected letters and post cards. For some reason, however, there has been a decrease of very nearly of 50,000 in the number of book-packets and newspapers which have reached the Returned Letter Office. Such a decrease is, we believe, unusual, and seems to be a little mysterious. Can any of our readers offer any explanation?

Another curious fact to which the report calls attention is the very rapid increase in the sale of thick postcards since the reduction of price on July, 1889. Since then, thick cards have sold at the rate of 112 millions a year, as compared with 64 millions previously. It is not improbable that in the near future the thin cards may cease to be required—a result—for many reasons to be desired.

In one respect the Department seems to have been neglectful lately, namely in the provision of accommodation for the domestic arrangements of Tom-tits. It is a bitter disappointment to be told nothing more of that intelligent bird which last year made its nest in a box, among the letters *and hatched five young ones*. We can scarcely be consoled even by the touching story of the sucking pig scantily clad in brown paper, which lately wandered through the Bath Parcel Office.

Most of our readers have probably long been aware that the number of inland money orders was decreasing year by year, because postal orders were superseding money orders for small amounts. This decrease has hitherto been so great as to mask the steady increase in the number of orders for amounts over £1, but in the first quarter of the present year this decrease has been stayed, and an actual increase has taken place in the number of inland orders as compared with the number in previous years. Very noticeable also is the steady growth in the number of payments which by means of money orders the Post Office makes for other Government Departments. The telegraphic money order system shows fair results, perhaps sufficient to justify its institution, although the figures in themselves seem by comparison insignificant.

Two other points only call for notice, one is the exceedingly slow growth—or perhaps stagnation is the proper word—of the Post Office insurance business. It is the one branch which seems to make no progress. Here is an opportunity for another Rowland Hill. But let him not propose to use the postmen as collecting agents—in the vernacular, *touts*—for that has been vetoed by the House of Commons, nor to distribute more handbills and pamphlets, for enough have already been distributed to carpet three times the United Kingdom.

The noticeable features in the telegraph business of the year are the satisfactory increase in foreign telegrams, consequent on the transfer, to the Post Office, of the business of the Submarine Telegraph Company; the reduction of the interest from 3 to $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on the capital stock, representing the purchase money of the telegraph system, whereby about £27,000 a year has been taken off the annual deficit; and the very unsatisfactory increase in the number of railway telegrams, which the department has to transmit without charge. In 1871 these numbered only 116,000, but in 1889-90 they were 1,291,788 in number. Officers, with a little superfluous zeal, might very usefully expend it in observing and calling attention to the many ways in which the railway companies are straining to extend their privilege to the utmost.

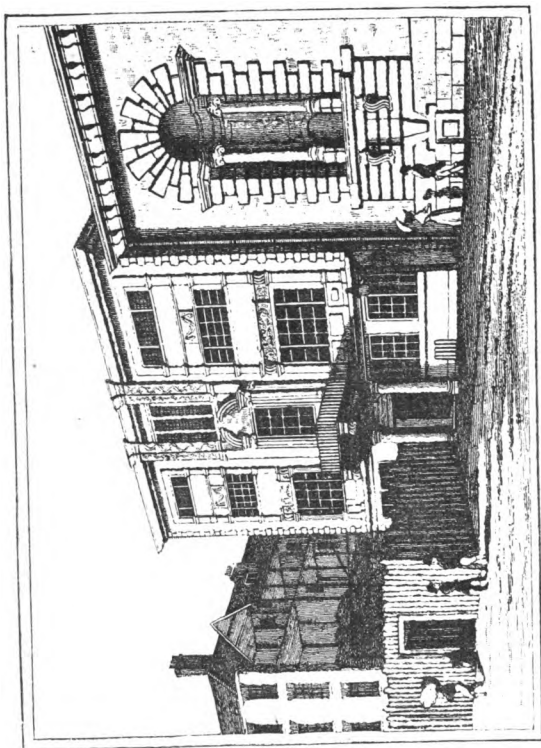
We have only touched on a few topics which lie a little below the surface, and have given no general particulars of Post Office business in the year—but, if any of our readers require such statements, are they not written at large in the September issues of all the public prints of the United Kingdom?

Major Viall.

THE sudden death of Major Thomas Viall at Farnborough, on the 2nd October, came as a most unexpected shock to his many friends in all branches of the Service. Major Viall entered the Post Office in 1872 as a clerk in the Receiver and Accountant-General's Office, where he worked for thirteen years. In 1882, after having for a considerable time been a most active and efficient officer in the Post Office Volunteers, he was selected to go to Egypt as second in command of the Army Post Office Corps. In that campaign he enjoyed, with Major Sturgeon, the distinction of being one of the first Volunteer Officers employed on active service. In 1885 Major Viall was appointed to the Surveying Staff, and was employed at first in the North-Western District under the late Mr. James, and latterly in the South-Western District. The energy and ability which he devoted to his official work never failed to win for him the regard of his official chiefs, while his cheery friendliness aroused warmer feelings which were shared by numerous friends in all branches of the Service. To his brother officers in the Post Office Volunteer Corps his death is the loss not only of a good comrade alike in work and play, but of an officer who had contributed in a very considerable degree to establish the efficiency and reputation of the regiment.

To Our Readers.

WE have alluded on another page to the necessary imperfections of a first number. The remark applies especially to the contents of St. Martin's Letter Bag. For the success of this portion of the Magazine, we shall have to rely mainly upon the assistance given us by our correspondents all over the kingdom. We are anxious to know whether in the opinion of our readers, we give undue prominence to the official element, or whether, in their opinion, the introduction of any special feature into the Magazine would increase our usefulness. We are most anxious to fall in with the wishes of our readers. Readers of "Blackfriars" will notice that we have abandoned the non-official notes which appeared at the end of that Magazine. We have thought that notes of this kind are perhaps out of place in a journal which is of a distinctively departmental character, and as they would necessarily be written with full editorial responsibility, the Editor is unwilling to commit his brother officers to views and opinions which would inevitably take their colour and expression from him. Still if our readers can suggest any means by which the Magazine may be made more interesting to the general reader, we should be delighted to make the required reform.



GENERAL POST OFFICE, LOMBARD STREET, 1793.

ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND:

The Post Office Magazine.

JANUARY, 1891.

The Dead Letter.

“**Y**ES, indeed, it has always struck me how little regard we pay in such matters to the ordinary rules for the acceptance of evidence. If a man, whose statement on a question of fact would be accepted without hesitation in a Court of Justice, tells you that he has, himself, witnessed some phenomena of the kind which in its wisdom the world calls supernatural—as if the limits of nature were clearly defined—he is set down at once as a fool or madman, if not an impostor. Well, I will run the risk and tell you something that once happened to me: and I shall be curious to know what explanation your rational common sense can give of it.”

The speaker was Parker, in whose snugly curtained little study our after-dinner chat had drifted on the subject of ghosts and ghost stories. Not very long before, I had received an appointment in the Post Office and, after a probation of some months at headquarters, had been entrusted with certain work which had involved a stay of some weeks in a quiet country town in South Wales. While there, I had made the acquaintance of my friend Parker, who had recently retired on a pension from the Post Office

service, having been Postmaster at a large and important town in the North of England. Parker was a shrewd, hardheaded man of business, of about sixty-five, still vigorous in mind and body, and I was not a little astonished to find him demurring to the materialistic, and as I held them to be rational views, which, with all the ardent scepticism of youth, I urged on the subject we were talking of. Giving the fire a stir and bidding me fill my glass, Parker began his story as follows :—

“ Before I was Postmaster at X—— I had, of course, held other appointments in the Post Office, and one of these involved my being sent occasionally to take temporary charge of country Offices which had become vacant from any cause. On one such occasion—more than thirty years ago—I got orders to proceed to Lorton, a small town in the Midlands, where the Postmaster had suddenly died. On my arrival there, I was met by an official of the District Surveyor’s Staff—as you know, of course, Post Offices are divided into groups or districts, each of which is for purposes of control and discipline placed under a Surveyor—and this official forthwith inducted me into my charge, telling me that I should find things in much confusion and that, to use his own words, ‘I had better buckle to at once.’ I did so with a will, busying myself in the first place with the arrears of accounts and papers, till the recurrence of certain irregularities in the Sorting Office called my special attention to the work there. .

“ Now, in order that you may clearly understand what happened, I must give you a somewhat full description of the Post Office premises. They formed part of a very old detached house which stood at the junction of two streets (one the main street of the town) a house which, so far as the residential portion was concerned, was already in process of demolition, the lease having just expired. The Post Office authorities had obtained permission to retain the use of the Sorting Office, a long low room, shut off completely from the residential part, until a new Office then in course of construction could be finished. At one end a wooden partition, about eight feet high, with a swing door, divided the public entrance and counter from the Sorting Office, down the centre of which were ranged the usual tables for opening bags and stamping letters. At the end opposite the partition were the seats where the letter carriers arranged their letters, whilst round the walls were fixed sorting shelves and boxes. On the left side as you stood facing the partition, and just where the range of sorting

boxes ended, not far from the letter carriers' seats, was a window with frosted panes, just over the letter box, into which the public posted their letters by means of two apertures, within a few feet of the latter, on the pavement in the main street stood a large gas lamp. The last incoming mail at night reached the office about half-past eleven o'clock, the last outgoing mail having been despatched about an hour before, and with the sorting of the letters brought by the former the day's work was ended, and the office was locked up for the night.

"Well, one night, it was the 31st October, 18—, I was in the Sorting Office superintending the sorting of the last mail, which was nearly finished. I was standing at one of the sorting boxes near the window, and was looking through a few letters which I had taken out to see if they had been properly sorted, when it suddenly seemed to me as if some one was looking over my shoulder. I turned sharply round. There was no one near. The four clerks, who formed the staff then on duty, were all busy working, with their backs to me, at the opposite side of the office. I turned round to put the letters into the box again and, as I did so, the same feeling came over me, accompanied by an indescribable thrill, half anxiety, half dread. I suppose my hand shook a little: at all events I dropped some of the letters on to the sorting shelf beneath the box. Half angrily, I hastily picked them up, and was turning to go away when I saw that, apparently, I had left one on the shelf. I was rather astonished, for I could have sworn I had taken them all up and, besides, the letter itself was a very noticeable one. It was exceptionally bulky, bulging out in one part as if it contained some small but hard enclosure, and further, it seemed to be of an old-fashioned shape, and bore two postage stamps of a kind which I knew had been out of use for some years. It was addressed in a legible business-like hand to—

" 'Mr. Le Breton,

'24, Irongate Street,

'Barford.'

and to the right of the address were two, apparently, accidental blots. The fact of a letter for Barford being in that box was, in itself, extraordinary, as the mail for Barford had been despatched some time ago and the letter boxes had not been cleared since. I was a practised sorter, you must remember, and accustomed to read addresses, and in far less time than it has taken me to tell you this, I had made up my mind that the letter had been noticed

in the process of sorting by one of the clerks, to contain coin and had been put on one side to be registered and taxed in accordance with the regulations.

"I turned round and called for the chief clerk to bring the registration book, and then back to the table to pick up the letter. But it was gone! Staggered, and in a sense, frightened though I was, I merely told the chief clerk, who came up at that moment that I had mislaid a 'coin' letter for Barford, and together we made a thorough search both of that box and the whole office. Not a trace of such a letter anywhere, nor had any of the clerks seen it. Dissatisfied and uneasy, I could do no more then. The work was all finished. I saw the clerks out, turned down all the gas except one tiny jet over the postmen's tables, and carefully locking the doors went home to the lodgings which I had taken at a short distance from the office.

"But I felt strangely worried and excited, and after a hurried supper, I determined before going to bed, to make one last effort to clear up the mystery. So I strolled through the deserted streets of the quiet little town back to the post office, and unlocking the front door, went through the swing door of the partition into the sorting office. All seemed just as I had left it. Complete darkness, save for the tiny jet over the letter carriers' tables. I went slowly down the left-hand side of the office, lest I should stumble over any bag that might have been left there, till, turning the corner of the large stamping table, I came into full view of the window over the public letter box, through the narrow frosted panes of which the lamp outside threw a dim square of light on the sorting shelf close by. In that square of light, in the very spot where I had seen it before, lay a letter in size and shape the exact counterpart of that which I had come to find. I made a step towards it, but stopped. It seemed to me that *something* else was in the office besides myself. Yes, there could be no doubt of it. A shadowy form, which seemed to gradually shape itself out of the gloom into a man's figure, was standing before the sorting box near the window. Its back was towards me. I could not see its features, but it seemed to be searching eagerly for something in the box, whilst ever and anon it would wring its clasped hands above its head, as if in an agony of hopeless despair.

"For a few moments, I stood spellbound, my knees shook, a cold perspiration broke out on my forehead, then recovering myself a

little, and staggering back to the faintly burning gas jet I turned it full on. The figure and letter had both disappeared.

"What could it mean? Was I mad or going to be ill? Could it be a dream? I pinched myself, I touched the tables, I even put my finger into the burning gas, an experiment which soon satisfied me that, if dreaming, I was at all events awake. With a trembling hand I lit all the other burners, and examined every nook and crevice, but in vain. There was nothing for it but to go home, and I began to turn the lights out again, but just as I got the last, the bell of the neighbouring church boomed—One! The same indescribable horror which I had felt before thrilled through me. I could not stay a moment longer. I dashed through the swing door, and, scarcely stopping to bang the front door to, I hurried to my home through the cold raw air of a November morning.

* * * * *

"I remained a few weeks longer at Lorton, but, though I never went into the Sorting Office without a feeling of apprehension, I did not see either the figure or letter again. Then came the appointment of the new Postmaster, which was followed by the transfer of the office to other premises, and by my release. Shortly afterwards an important Postal revision took me to quite another part of England, but neither change of place nor time has effaced from my memory what I saw that night. I have never told it to anyone till now, except to my poor wife. I did not care to suggest any doubt of my sanity to my official superiors. I wrote, however, to the Postmaster of Barford, whom I happened to know, and asked him to find out confidentially if a Mr. Le Breton lived at 24, Irongate Street, in Barford. In due course I received a reply saying that there was no such street in Barford, and the oldest Postman knew no person of that name."

* * * * *

Such was P——'s story, which, while the serious earnestness of the narrator made it impossible to doubt his sincerity, seemed to me not difficult to explain as the outcome of bad dreams induced by worry and anxiety respecting his work. It was clear, indeed, from P——'s own enquiries that, not only the letter, but the addressee had no actual existence. So I reasoned, with something like pitying contempt. It was not till many years after P——'s death that I found cause to modify my opinion.

In 18—, I happened to be in the town where the Post Office Surveyor resided, in a remote corner of whose district Lorton was situated. The Surveyor was a comparatively young man, who not

very long before had been transferred from the Headquarters Staff to fill the vacancy caused by the death of the old Surveyor, who had died in harness, after a service for considerably more than half a century. I had known the former in London and took the opportunity of calling upon him. I found he was absent on business, and his clerk was up to his ears in a mass of old papers of which he told me his chief had decided to make a clearance, and which were being packed off and sent away to be "pulped," as is the practice with old official documents. As I had plenty of time before my train left, I told the clerk, who was just about going to his lunch, that I would write a letter, and, as he left the office I proceeded to clear away some of the bundles of paper which blocked up the writing table. As I did so one bundle which was somewhat loosely tied with red tape gave way as I lifted it. I was hurriedly replacing the documents which fell out of it, when I caught sight of one which, as it were, froze all the blood in my veins. It was the worn and faded envelope of an old letter addressed to—

"Mr. Le Breton,

"24, Irongate Street,

"Barford."

In a moment all the details of poor Parker's story came back into my mind. Yes! there were the old portage stamps, and the two blots, faded but visible enough, on the right of the address. The dated stamp of the Lorton Office could also be read. It was the 31st October, the very day on which Parker had seen the dead letter, but the year was twenty years earlier.

I turned over the bundle of papers and saw they were indorsed in the usual official fashion—

"Lorton Post Office,

Dishonesty of Clerk A——."

It may be imagined with what eagerness I proceeded to examine the other enclosures. The first documents in order of date were the copies of reports describing the measures which had been taken, some twenty years before Parker had been at Lorton, to discover the cause of the certain serious losses of letters which had occurred there. Suspicion ultimately fell upon a Clerk named A—— (who had previously borne a good character) and a test letter, containing two sovereigns, addressed to a fictitious name and address at Barford, was posted so that A—— alone, of all the Clerks at Lorton would deal with it, whilst a careful check was put on so that it could not be sent away unobserved. The letter disappeared.

A—— was called before the District Surveyor and other Officials and was searched. Neither the letter nor its enclosures could be found, but A—— was forced to admit that it had come into his hands, whilst he could only plead as an excuse for forgetting what he had done with it, that he had hurried over his work that night because of the serious illness of his wife. Ultimately after A—— had been given every opportunity to find the letter, the proceedings ended by a decision from London that A—— must resign his appointment.

The next paper was dated about six months after Parker had left Lorton, and consisted of a report by the District Surveyor, to the effect that in pulling down the old Sorting Office, the workmen had found under the worm-eaten floor (which had evidently been roughly repaired from time to time by the simple mode of nailing slips of board over the holes and crevices) several old letters which it was clear had dropped there from time to time. Among, these letters, with its enclosure intact, except from the effects of damp and age, was the letter which poor A—— had been accused of stealing. Other reports followed describing the subsequent efforts made by the Post Office authorities to trace A——, and, finally a report by the District Surveyor dated about a year before the latter's death of which the following is an extract :—

“ Although no blame whatever can attach to the Department for the conclusion arrived at on the facts of this unfortunate matter, it is an unspeakable relief to my mind to be able to report that the action which was taken in poor A——'s case did not affect his subsequent career so seriously as might have been expected. Through the clergyman of the little town where A—— was born and where he died, I have ascertained that the latter emigrated to America, where he rose to a good position in a commercial house. After many years his wife and children were carried off by cholera and A—— returned to Engiand much broken in health. He died about midnight on the 31st October, 18—. Very shortly before he died, he mentioned to the clergyman who was by his side that he had once been accused of stealing a letter but solemnly avowed his innocence.”

The 31st October, 18—, was the very night when my poor friend Parker saw in the Sorting Office at Lorton, the apparition of the “DEAD LETTER” and of the man who, twenty years before, had striven in vain to find it.

J. P.

A Peep From My Window.

"Adieu, Monsieur Gil Blas ; je vous souhaite toutes sortes de prospérités avec un peu plus de goût."



CAN hardly realise that it is but three years ago, that on looking out of my window northwards, the view was bounded by a blank and grimy wall, below which was a bar where a thoroughly Britannic lunch of most satisfactory character could be obtained in return for a trifling expenditure of current coin. This bar formed the side of the Queen's Hotel, which reared its stucco and brick front in Aldersgate in a vain attempt to rival the proportions of its gigantic neighbour. Beyond it was Bull and Mouth Street, of doubtful etymology, with the backs of its houses on the north side bounded by the old city wall. Beyond this street and fronting on Aldersgate came the French Church, and then the tall gaunt building which served as the Money Order office. The whole of these buildings gradually sunk into hideous ruin before my eyes. Ingratitude, in the person of a man with a pickaxe, balanced itself on the structure, and picked at its own support till down came the wall in noise and dust.

As the buildings sank trees began to rise, and soon I could see that the now vacant space was bounded on the north by a verdant but exiguous strip formed by a churchyard whose expatriated tombstones had been replaced by plashing fountains and flourishing plane trees, among which chirped the ubiquitous sparrow, reminding me of poor Susan's day-dream.

"'Tis a note of enchantment ; what ails her ? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees,
Bright volumes of vapour down Aldersgate* glide
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside."

To the right of this strip is a church such as Johnson loved and Hogarth drew. The elevation discloses an ingenious combination of ugly bits from every possible source, the very nadir of a debased style. No one, now-a-days, would dare to perpetrate

* Wordsworth wrote "Lothbury."

such a building, and, therefore, the principles of its construction are of little practical moment. Still, I have formed a theory as to the way in which the idea of this church might have grown in the architect's brain, and if any one would like to test the endurance of his neighbours by erecting another such edifice, he is welcome to my recipe. Here it is:—Take four very dirty railway arches from the neighbourhood of Bermondsey, pick off the rails and sleepers and clap on a low-pitched slate roof. Glaze the upper parts of the arched openings in as plain a manner as possible, and whitewash the glass. Now select at random from the ruins of Coldbath Fields (otherwise Mount Pleasant) two depressing walls having each a few small windows, and place them one on each side of your railway arches, so as to block the lower parts of the openings. Your sides being thus complete, the two ends must be seen to. First choose a good solid grimy square factory chimney from the neighbourhood of Cubitt's Town; cut off a forty foot length and dump it down in the garden; on it place a packing-case of moderate size and surmount this by a dilapidated wooden meat safe crowned by a weathercock. Having thus produced a really novel and delightful campanile to terminate your edifice at one end, it only remains for you to provide a fitting elevation for the Aldersgate Street front. In designing this some little tact will be required, and, indeed, a family man will probably have the pull over a bachelor architect. Take a stick of chocolate and a good box of bricks (made in Germany). Select two composite columns, two doorways, three round-headed windows, an entablature, and a few plain bricks. Then take a child of five years of age—that is if he will let you, but this is the point at which the tact and the chocolate come in—and coax him to build “a house.” It only remains for you to note the arrangement he makes and copy it on an enlarged scale in lath and plaster. Your church is now complete as to its exterior (I cannot say anything about its interior for it is a Protestant church and is, therefore, closed on

* “I sometimes wonder whether a shut up temple, church or chapel, is not, on the whole, a wickeder thing than the overflowing gin palace round the corner. They stand there, grimly silent edifices, each representing many thousands, sunk in stone and brick and mortar, most of them containing an open organ, a vast potentiality of sweet music, but from Sunday to Sunday they are as idle and useless as if they stood in mid-Sahara. All round them roars and rages the turbulent flood of life. The pavement outside is worn under the weary feet of men and women who are orphaned of the sweet ministry of music which the song-birds afford every dweller in the country, but

weekdays), and I have no hesitation in saying, that for general hideousness of effect, it may fairly hold its own with the most awful productions of the tasteless age in which it was built. Vanbrugh may have erected a heavier edifice, Batty Langley may have produced one more grotesque; but take this building for all in all, I fervently hope that I may never look upon its like again. Was the architect a churchwarden? Was there any architect at all? or is the building merely the result of a fortuitous concourse of automatus atoms, such as happened when

“——casual bricks in airy clime

“Encountered casual cowhair, casual lime.”

which, as some authors affirm, is the way in which old Drury Lane Theatre was rebuilt.

It is only fair to the authorities of this church to state that they are doing their best by means of trees and creeping plants to mask its uncouth appearance, but that is very little comfort to me personally, for long before their arboricultural efforts have attained anything like decent proportions my window will see them no more. In fact to return for a moment to poor Susan.

“She looks, and her heart is in heaven : but they fade

The mist and the river, the hill and the shade.

The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,

And the colours have all passed away from her eyes.”

Enter the garden with me and walk down one of its narrow and devious paths, thickly planted with seats. The first bench we come to is occupied by a bevy of work girls from a neighbouring factory, busy talking over their grievances. I don't know how it is, but girls of this sort are always in a state of exasperation and feathers. I do wish they would exasperate their needles into sewing up the holes in their jackets, and that they would sell their feathers for a good stiff clothes brush—but that is past hoping for I suppose.

not for them or theirs is ever unloosed the caged-up melody of the silent organ. Not a congregation of them all but contains cultured performers of instrumental music, but not even a solitary organ recital per week cheers the ear and gladdens the heart of the toiling crowd outside. Something like Dr. Parker's midday concerts for the people, instead of standing alone, should be a constant feature of the Christian service of every church in every city. And to think that in many cases this is forbidden, lest it should profane a sacred building. Of all the blasphemies of a man, few are more damnable than this—enough to make one swear.”—W. T. STEAD.

The above extract is hardly fair on the Church of England, for many of its churches are now open daily for service of music, St. Nicholas Cole Abbey for example.

The next bench is occupied by two idle apprentices, wasting their master's time and their own by reading a penny dreadful between them. Huddled up on the other corner of the seat is a miserable specimen of broken down old age, dosing in the sun and trying to make up for the sleep of which the cold air of the previous night—for he has been out of doors—has deprived him. And so we wander round the fountain until before us rise the walls of that church. A board informs us that it is named *St. Botolph's without Aldersgate*, and, reviewing the grimy edifice, I wonder how Aldersgate would get on without St. Botolph's.

How strange it is, as I hear the roar of the London streets around me, to think that Milton once had a "pretty garden house" close by. "It was," says Philips, "at the end of an entry, and, therefore, the fitter for his turn by reason of the privacy, besides that there were few streets in London more free from noise than that." Indeed the whole neighbourhood is full of sites associated with the Poet of Time and Eternity. It was to a house in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand that he one day went to visit a relative, when he was surprised to see his wife come from an inner room and throw herself on her knees to beg his forgiveness; and hard by in St. Bartholomew's Close was the house in which he took refuge at the Restoration until he had made his peace with the king. Then once more he moved, this time to Jewin Street, close to which is the church of St. Giles', Cripplegate, where he was buried.

Sometimes, as I gaze at the scaffolding which is rising and spreading fast in front of my window, I wonder what sort of a front the new building will present to the world, and how it will group with its neighbours. It will be massive no doubt, and after all that is something in architecture. One can almost pardon a common place edifice if it is well-built and solid, whereas the best designed building will fail of effect if the walls are thin and the details skimpy. The style will certainly be classical, but the site is so irregular that it would tax the powers of a Palladio to give the Aldersgate front the necessary symmetry. So one must not expect that the new building will be as good a specimen of architecture as Sir Sidney Smirke's edifice across the way once was, and is even now despite the excrescences which rise one after another from its roof; but at any rate one may hope that the third General Post Office will be an improvement on the second or ædilian edifice. Sixty years ago the first architect of the day was

employed to design our office, and if Mr. Waterhouse or Mr. Norman Shaw were employed now we should be certain of obtaining a building to be admired.

When the building in which I am at present writing was erected, architects were heard to murmur that it was against the rules of their art to have a rusticated base of the same height as the superstructure, while a few even dared to compare the columns of the portico to stacks of Cheshire cheeses. It was to silence such malignant critics that the Great Ædile who laid the foundation stone of the building told his hearers that if any one asked them what style of architecture the building presented, they were to reply that it was "post office architecture." A few years ago the proportions were altered by the addition of another story, but even then those architects grumbled because the pediment was removed from above the cheese-rings and plumped down on the roof, while the old cornice remained where it was, and was merely surmounted by a smaller one. But after all what does it matter what architects say, for has not Lord Grimthorpe proved to demonstration that they know nothing at all about their profession, and that he is the only legitimate successor of Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren? He says so, at any rate, and he ought to know. If any one doubts it, let him go to St. Albans and view with his own eyes the new Roman bricks turned out hot from the kiln, and the new rose window of the north transept for all the world like the section of a patent multitubular boiler; and then let him hasten to inspect the ruinous Ladye Chapel ere it too has gone through his Lordship's restoring hands.

Meanwhile, what was happening just below my window? Why, not content with clearing away the rubbish of the old buildings, the contractor began to rear enormous platforms on stilts, and by-and-by these were covered with monstrous cranes whose octopus-arms clutched great buckets bearing the very earth high in the air, and depositing it in carts which took it far away. Sometimes a shadow would cross my window, and there in the very centre of the glass would appear Bill standing in a bucket, and shouting directions to his mates below. Then suddenly the bucket would sink, and Bill was gone. It used to remind me of Alice when she heard some one coming down the chimney and kicked, and the white rabbit called out, "There goes Bill, catch him somebody"—only I think that *that* Bill was a lizard.

Then a change came over the scene, and instead of exporting

earth, the men of Brass began importing brick, and stone, and iron. For months they built until once more the edifice rose above the ground. And then they stopped and began clearing all their rubbish away. Down came the octopuses (I do hope that Dr. Murray, when his dictionary gets as far as "O" will not insist on our writing, "octopods," for why should we change the *s* into a *d* ?) down came all the scaffolding, and the workmen departed. What could it all mean? Had they determined to keep the new building low in order not to spoil my view? Perhaps: but why had they put no roof on? This disquieted me, and I spoke to a Buildingite on the subject. He muttered something about a separate contract for the foundations, and went his way. Those Buildingites have such supercilious ways! And then over that desolate spot there was silence as of death, and the onlooker held his breath,—for a time.

But one day I woke up from the consideration of some twopenny half-penny case or other, to realise that there was a noise in the enclosure—a noise of men and horses, and of planks tumbling about promiscuously. I looked, and there was a fresh troop of workmen building up again those hideous scaffoldings, and building them more solidly than before. I saw with horror that my hopes were vain—the delay was merely due to a change from Brass to Chappell, and not to any respect for *my* feelings.

And I sought out that Buildingite once more, and said unto him, "Dost thou think that when the new building is finished they will give me a room all to myself, on the first floor, with an oriel window overlooking the garden, so that I may enjoy the beauties of the tomb-stones, and watch the warehouseman mumbling his midday meal?" But that Buildingite was very stiff and proud—albeit only a junior—and replied in a sniffy tone "Dost thou think that the office exists for thee, and thee only," and I said, "No—contrariwise. But I know some who do," and he said "Quite so." And I turned away to think it over, feeling as mournful as Aenone and as blighted as William Guppy.

"No more:—where ignorance is bliss
'Tis folly to be wise."

R. S. W. X.

The Old Home of the Post Office.



UNTIL near the close of Elizabeth's reign, the system of posts in this country was hardly used for any other purpose than the conveyance of Government despatches. The Master of the Posts was a Court Official, and, although in exceptional cases, private letters were forwarded by post, there was no need for a Public Office in London. At the end of the sixteenth century, a new branch of business was undertaken, namely, a foreign post, which was largely used by the foreign merchants of London, and was mainly intended for that purpose, so as to give the Government a supervision and control over the extensive correspondence between this country and the Continent, for the conveyance of which special private posts had been organised earlier in the reign. Under these circumstances a Post Office became necessary in the City of London, and, according to Stow's Survey, it was first established in Cloak Lane, near Dowgate Hill, which, as probably many of our readers know, is the hill on which stands the Cannon Street Railway Station, and also the site of the first Roman military town, the germ of London City. Of this Post Office, so far as I am aware, nothing is known but the fact of its existence.

From Dowgate Hill the office was removed some time in the first half of the seventeenth century to the sign of the Black Swan in Bishopsgate Street, where it was situated until the great fire of 1666 forced it to seek another home, and a temporary office was opened in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden. But a permanent settlement so far from the centre of business was out of the question, and, as soon as the City was rebuilt, the Post Office was brought back and settled in a house in Lombard Street, the nucleus of an office which remained in use as the General Post Office for nearly 150 years. It was somewhere between 1670 and 1680 that the Lombard Street Office was established, and it remained the centre of Post Office business until the present General Post Office East, was opened in 1828. In the present paper I design to piece together a few bits of gossip about this

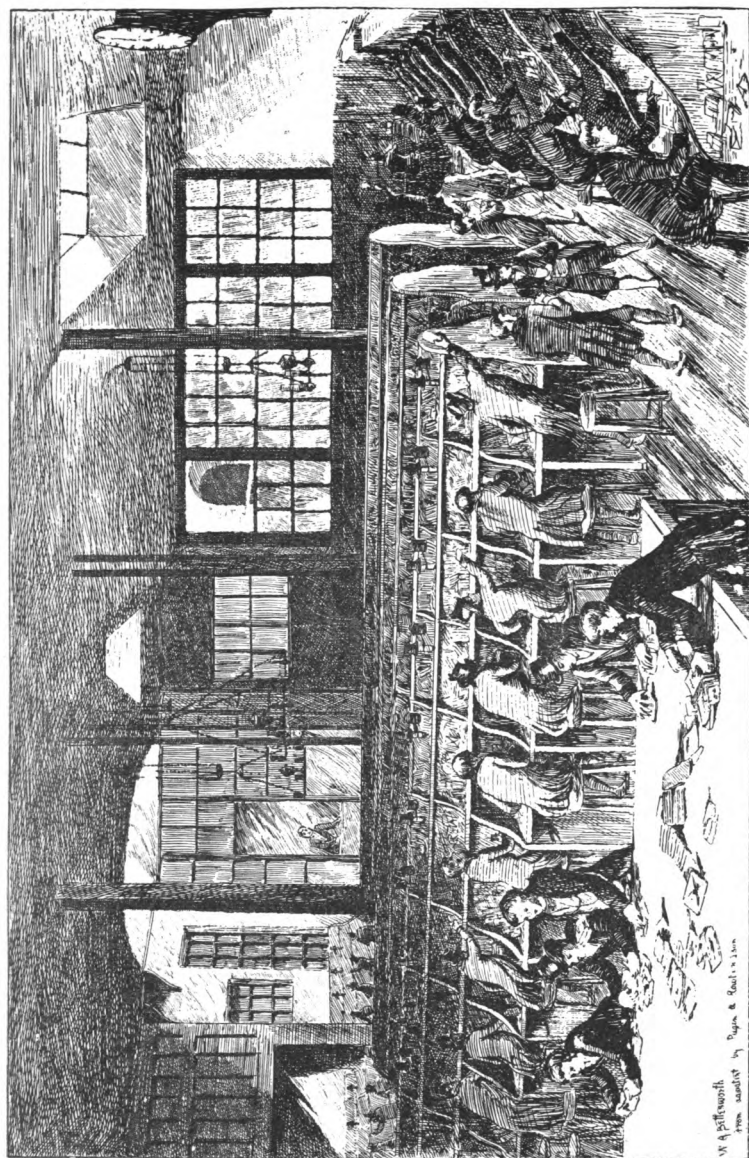
old home of the Post Office, but in doing so one cannot escape a feeling, half of wonder and half of shame, that no worthier records should remain of the office where possibly Milton and certainly Dryden posted their letters, and which yet survived to be the scene of Sir John Tilley's youthful labours.

The house chosen in Lombard Street is shown in the illustration which forms the frontispiece of this number, and was rented, not bought, either from Sir Robert Viner, or from his son Mr. Thomas Viner. The accounts of incidental payments since 1688, which have been preserved in the archives of the Post Office, regularly contain entries of the payment of rent to members of the Viner family until late in the eighteenth century. The picture is taken from a reproduction, made about 1820, of an engraving of 1793, and shows the house, standing next to the Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, as it then existed, and probably not very unlike its appearance when first built in 1660. It was then the house of Sir Robert Viner, who in that year happened to be Lord Mayor of London. Sir Robert seems not to have continued to live in it, and he owes his fame chiefly to a story told by Steele in No. 462 of the *Spectator*, as an illustration of the easy good nature of Charles the Second. "He delighted," says Steele, "though a mighty king, to give and take a jest, as they say . . . He more than once dined with his good citizens of London on their Lord Mayor's day, and did so the year that Sir Robert Viner was Lord Mayor. Sir Robert was a very loyal man, and, if you will allow the expression, very fond of his sovereign; but what with the joy he felt at heart for the honour done him by his prince, and through the warmth he was in with continual toasting healths to the Royal Family, his lordship grew a little fond of his Majesty, and entered into a familiarity not altogether too graceful in so public a place. The king understood very well how to extricate himself in all kinds of difficulties, and, with a hint to the company to avoid ceremony, stole off and made towards his coach; but the Mayor liked his company, and was grown so intimate, that he pursued him hastily and catching him fast by the hand, cried out with a vehement oath and accent, *Sir, you shall stay and take t'other bottle*. The easy monarch looked kindly at him over his shoulder, and with a smile and graceful air (for I saw him at the time and do now) repeated this line of the old song—

He that's drunk is as great as a king,
and immediately turned back and complied with his landlord."

The memory of that festive evening seems to have dwelt in the memory of the good Sir Robert, for in 1675 he erected near his house and on the site of the present Mansion House a statue of Charles the Second. On his travels in Italy he had bought a bargain at Leghorn in the shape of a statue of John Sobieski trampling on the Turk, which had been left on the sculptor's hands. A few small alterations converted Sobieski into Charles the Second and the Turk (still with a turban on his head) into Oliver Cromwell. The statue was put up in 1675. The site was then an open space known as the Stocks Market, which received its name from a pair of stocks erected near it as early as 1281. The Mansion House was built on the same site in 1738, and Sir Robert's statue was then removed, and lay as lumber in an inn yard, until in 1779 it was handed over to one of his descendants.

At its first establishment the New Post Office was very well accommodated, and the building seems to have been an object of admiration. I am not aware, however, of any picture of the building or of the work done there than one of the date of about 1730, a copy of which used to hang in the Post Office Library at St. Martin's-le-Grand. It is a copperplate engraving, or rather etching, showing the Court Yard, as seen by a person entering from Lombard Street. Probably the street front was very much like in its arrangement that shown in the accompanying picture. The doorway in the centre appears to have been a public passage leading to a courtyard, round which the house ran. This passage is, I believe, now represented by the passage in which is the entrance to the present Lombard Street Branch Office. Along one side of the courtyard ran a gallery built above the ground-floor rooms; and at the further end are seen two small windows occupied by two "Windowmen and Alphabet keepers." Their ordinary duty was to distribute letters to callers. The alphabet keeping was, so far as I can make out, the indexing of official correspondence. It is difficult to see, however, why the two functions should have been united; possibly the "Alphabets" in these cases may have been merely indexes, giving the names of persons for whom letters had been received. All through the eighteenth century it appears to have been to a great extent the custom for country and foreign letters to be fetched from the General Post Office. The other windows of the rooms overlooking the court were lofty and much in the same style as those of the newer parts of Hampton Court and Kensington Palaces, built about



INTERIOR VIEW OF THE G. P. O., LOMBARD STREET, AS RE-BUILT IN 1702.

the same time, and exhibit an architecture in which is seen the descent from the ornate Renaissance style to the sombre squareness of red and brown bricks which prevailed in the reign of good Queen Anne and later.

It is difficult to recall in imagination the General Post Office of those days. There must have been a stateliness about all its proceedings which is very much missing now. Instead of huge bodies of clerks organised into branches, the administrative staff consisted of a Board composed of the two individuals, who together exercised the office of the Postmaster-General. There were never two Postmasters-General, although the office was a dual one. In the early part of the 18th century the office was non-political, and there can be no doubt that its holders took a very large share in the actual work of the office, one attending chiefly to the inland branch of the business and the other to the foreign packet service. They appear to have met daily with the other members of the Board, the Receiver-General, the Accountant-General, the Controller of the Inland Office, and the Controller of the Foreign Office. There was not, then, until the middle of the 18th century, any Secretary of the Post Office, but only a Secretary to the Postmaster-General. The method of doing business appears to have been for the responsible officer to submit verbally to the Board the information contained in the letters of his subordinates. A decision was then arrived at and communicated in a letter to the officers charged with its execution. The correspondence appears to have been personal to the officers concerned, and probably no papers or records were preserved except a hand copy in a letter book of the letter conveying the decision. The system of keeping and recording papers now practised was not initiated until about 1790 by the then Secretary Mr. (afterwards Sir Francis) Freeling.

At the beginning of last century the Postmasters-General lived, or were entitled to live, at the General Post Office, and also had free coals, candles, and tin ware. Probably when the office became a political one, held always by noblemen, this system ceased. For the same reason their Secretary became gradually the chief administrative officer, and succeeded them in the official residence. This system lasted on into the present century, and even when the General Post Office East was opened in 1828 it included a residence for the Secretary, situated in the front corner near Cheapside. Besides the Secretary, the Clerks in the Foreign Office

were lodged in the General Post Office in order that they might be ready to deal with foreign mails at whatever hour of the day or night they might arrive.

In 1702 the staff of the office consisted of the following officers, with the salaries mentioned: A Receiver-General, Mr. Stephen Lilly, £150; an Accountant-General, Mr. George Searle, £200; a "Comptroller" of the Inland Office, Mr. Isaac Manley, £200; six Clerks of the Roads and six Assistants, one Clerk of the Chester Road receiving £100 and the others £60 or £50; Mr. Underhill Breese was Windowman and Alphabet Keeper at £60, another Windowman received £50; ten Sorters had £50 or £40 each; Mr. Benjamin Waterhouse, Secretary to the Postmaster-General, had £100 a year; and the Postmaster-General's "Clerke," Mr. Christopher Smelt, £60. There were also the Receiver's Clerk and the Accountant's Clerk with £50 each; "The Comptrowler of the Fooreign Office," Mr. Ashburnham Frowde, £150; Mr. James Lawrence, his Alphabet Keeper, £100, and seven other Foreign Officers with £50 each. There were thirteen Letter Receivers at Gray's Inn, Temple Bar, Westminster, St. James's, Covent Garden, East Smithfield, Ratcliffe Cross, Wapping, Strand, "Houlborn," Bloomsbury Market, Sherard's Street, and the Fleet Ditch, who had salaries varying from £27 to £5. There was a "Mail-maker," *i.e.* a maker of leather bags for letters, who received £100 under a contract. Mrs. Francis Sheene, the housekeeper, had £20. Three "Letter Bringers" from Westminster, "Pell Mell," and Gray's Inn received £16, £12, and £9 respectively, and there were eight Foreign and 67 Inland Letter Carriers at 11s. a week, four Porters at 10s. a week, and one Doorkeeper to the Postmaster-General, at 10s. a week. The whole establishment cost £5,437 a year, the expenditure of which was authorised by the Lord High Treasurer, Lord Godolphin, "to my very looeing freinds Sr. Robert Colton, Knt., and Sr. Tho. Frankland, Bart., her Ma. Postmaster-General."

The accounts of incidental expenditure of which records have been preserved illustrate a few curious points in the life of the office. In 1702 Mr. Isaac Manley received two amounts of £30 each, as the year's allowance for beer for Clerks and Sorters; once a year at least £20 was allowed for "a feast" for the resident staff. One such feast always took place on the Queen's (or King's) birthday, and many of our readers will remember, a song, published some time ago, in *Blackfriars*,

written by Mr. Peter Motteux, one of "the Fooreign Officers" to be sung at one of these feasts by "Mercury attired as a Post-boy." Mr. William Hester used to receive £1 a year for his work as ratcatcher, and Mr. Michael Wilson, scavenger, £3 6s. a year for services which drainage now renders unnecessary. The tallow chandler's bill for Christmas quarter, 1702, was £158, and the stationer's for the same time only £41. Mr. Thomas Wells received 7s. "for discovering of carriers," and Mr. Richard Barnaby £1 a week "being employed aboute lookeing after carriers," which shows that infringements of the letter monopoly were attracting a good deal of attention at the time. The carriage of money to the Exchequer and the purchase of "tallies" cost £63 in 1703, and Mr. Underwood Breese received £12 "for box money given to Post boys at Christmas, 1702."

A. M. OGILVIE.

[*To be continued.*]

The Old Year.


THE year is dying—let it pass ;
 It leaves sad memories of regret,
 It leaves the eyes all dim and wet,
 Seeing strange sights—as through a glass.

It leaves regrets sincere and deep
 For joys that will not come again,
 It leaves the scars of half-healed pain,
 Pain that has forced my heart to weep.

So let it go—reluctant quite,
 And yet half pleased to know it past,
 Clinging, and still not holding fast,
 A long Good-bye, Old Year! Good Night!

C. C.

Cornwall and the Cornish.

T may probably be thought, from the title of this paper, that I am about to write a very learned treatise on the County of Cornwall, historically and ethnologically; that having to deal with a district rich in relics of the past, where cross and cromlech, cairn and barrow, ivy-clad tower, and mouldering keep, link it to a bygone age; where a belief in the supernatural still lingers; where witchcraft still prevails,* and where the natives, up to a comparatively recent date, spoke a language of their own, more guttural than the Welsh—to which it is allied—and rejoicing in a combination of more unpronounceable vowels and consonants, I should seek to emulate men like Borlase, Boase, Blight, Bottrell, and many others, who have made the history and antiquities of their native county their particular study. I can only say that I have no such intention. In the first place, the ground is so well covered that it is exceedingly difficult to find anything new, and, secondly, for me to try my 'prentice hand at a task so utterly beyond my reach, would be the rankest folly. No; in the few notes which I hope to be able to string together, my aim is rather to amuse than to instruct; to glean in the field where others have harvested, and, perchance, picking up a grain or two here and there, to atone for my want of knowledge, by my interest in the subject and my affection for the land of my birth.

Geologists tell us that, at some remote period, to be measured perhaps, by thousands of years, the earth was in a state of fusion, and has been gradually cooling down ever since. I am not enough of a scientist to determine the correctness of this theory, but, assuming its tenability, we can well understand that, as the molten mass revolved through space, centrifugal force may have whirled

* It was only a few months ago that the Magistrates of the West Penwith Petty Sessions had before them two respectable farmer's sons who were charged with assaulting an old woman living in the parish of Gulval, and in reply to the bench they stated that the prosecutrix had ill-wished their cattle, and they expressed their firm belief that the "Old Witch" had the power to do so, and that it was only by, as they said, "giving her a good basting" that the spell could be exorcised.

a small chunk to the surface, with its apex towards the setting sun. Let us suppose, then, that this chunk was Great Britain, and, taking it for granted that it has always stood in the same relative position to the rest of Europe as it does now—which is by no means certain by the bye—we can imagine that, for all time, this “tight little island” has sat on the broad Atlantic, with its western extremity, known to us now as Cornwall, pointing to a world, which for countless ages, remained undiscovered. I will not stop to enquire how, or when, this “gem of the ocean” first became inhabited, or by what means the natives survived the deluge, always supposing that the books of the Pentateuch are not allegorical and Noah’s Ark a myth. Be this as it may, it is within historical record that long, long before the Christian era, it was peopled by an aboriginal race who dwelt in caves, worshipped strange gods, and hunted the elk and the wild boar in their native forests; that it was, subsequently, colonised by the Romans, overrun by the Danes, and finally subjugated by William the Conqueror. None of my ancestors having come over with the Normans—my name itself has a good old Celtic ring about it—I am unable to search among the family muniments for any trace of the struggle which the Cornu-Britons carried on with the invaders. It is beyond all question, however, that the Welsh and the Cornish were the last to bow their necks to the yoke, and, even to this day, there is a sturdy independence in the Principality and Royal Duchy, which bodes no good to King or Commons who may seek to interfere with their rights and liberties.

It is like saying that Queen Anne is dead, to start with the statement that Cornwall is the western county of England, though I have known people, and educated people too, who thought it was an island “somewhere down West,” and who addressed their letters “Mr. So-and-so, Cornwall” as if it were merely some third-rate town where even the name of the street is an unnecessary distinction. As for any signs of civilised life, I believe there were folks, not long ago, who, when they crossed the Tamar, expected to find the Darwinian man roaming in a state of nature, and who would not have been surprised had the “noble savage,” armed with some rude flint implement, rushed out upon them from the nearest thicket, and demanded their scalps. Yet it is the fifteenth in area and the twenty-third in population of the English counties, and from Saltash to the Land’s End it is not much short of one hundred miles. In shape, it may be likened to an irregularly

formed wedge, having its base resting on the Tamar,—

“Where King and Caw divide the Strand,
In sight of Plymouth Sound,”

its sides notched and serrated, and the thin end jutting out into the Atlantic at the Land's End point. Here, metaphorically speaking, it shakes hands with America, only a matter of three thousand miles or so of sea intervening. Indeed, without much straining of the truth, it may be said to be literally joined to America, the cables of the Western Union Telegraph Company forming the connecting link. These twin cables are landed at Sennen Cove, and with the Anglo, Direct, Commercial, Paris and New York, and Brest Cables, landed at other points around the coast, serve to keep up communication with the great Western Republic, and the other states and dependencies occupying the American continent. Nothing puts in a stronger light the triumphs of modern science than these deep-sea cables. It is less than forty years ago since the submersion and working of a long telegraph cable was deemed impracticable. Now, they are a necessity of commerce, and ramify over three-quarters of the globe. Standing on the shore at Whitsand Bay, where the Western Union Cables disappear into the depths of the Atlantic, to emerge again at Dover Bay, Nova Scotia, 2,600 miles away, it is difficult to grasp the fact, that one link more and the chain is complete. When the Pacific is bridged—as sooner or later it will be—it will be quite possible, on this very spot, to join up the two poles of a battery, and, without any break in the metallic conductor, to complete the circuit by sending the current round the world.

Sennen Cove itself, where these cables first touch English soil, is worthy of a passing notice. Nestling at the foot of lofty, overhanging cliffs, in the bay formed by the Land's End and Cape Cornwall, with the outlying rocks of the Longships and the Brisons on either hand, it is the most quaint, out-of-the-world spot imaginable. It consists of a hamlet of some fifty cottages, perched on a shelf of rock scooped out by the sea; and, until recently discovered by a certain school of artists, who revel in its lights and shadows, the warm tints of its lichens, and the glorious colours of its seas, was as much off the beaten track as Syria or Norway in the “Pre-Cookian” age. The inhabitants are a hardy race of fishermen locally called “Covers.” Their trim little lug-sail boats may be met with right across the Channel from Godrevy to the Seven

Stones, and, in the pursuit of their calling, they are as fearless as lions, and as daring as the old Vikings. I remember, on one occasion, many years ago, there was a cry of fish—and fish in the West Country always means pilchards—flashed through the cable from Scilly. It was blowing half a gale, and the “great coombers”—as they call a particularly heavy sea, broke on the outlying rocks and shoals, and tumbled mountains high into the cove. Scilly was thirty miles off, and could only be reached, if reached at all, at great risk, and by the exercise of almost superhuman skill and bravery. There were the fish, however, and nothing short of a typhoon would have deterred the Covers from making the attempt. The seines—and it may be as well to explain that pilchards are mostly caught in seines—were stowed away in the big boats ready for service, and the smaller boats were also at hand with all their gear on board. The Covers had just speculated in a second-hand steam launch, whose tin-pot boiler, little better than a bucket of water in a perspiration, primed at a very low pressure, and required constant stoking to keep up any steam at all. With this motive power, hardly safe to go from Barnes to Mortlake, they determined to launch out into mid-Channel, taking the two big seine boats and the smaller boats in tow. It was getting dark, and a man was stationed in each boat for the double purpose of steering and holding a lantern, in which flickered a rushlight, to mark the course of this strange and weird flotilla. By sheer good luck, and careful handling, they managed to get clear of the land, and ploughed along, more under water than above, till they were abreast of the Wolf Rock Lighthouse, some miles to the south of them, where, if there is any wind at all, there is a heavier sea than at any one point between the Lizard and Sandy Hook. Here, to add to their difficulties, the sternmost boat parted her warp, and drifted away a helpless hulk to leeward. The faint glimmer of her solitary lantern, bobbed up and down like a marine glow-worm, now on the top of a wave, now in the trough of the sea, and all the time getting more and more hopelessly separated from her convoy, which screeching and spluttering, and still hampered with a long trail of little else than half-tide rafts, attempted to wear round to pick up the virtually derelict boat. No landsman can possibly picture the horrors of that night. Fancy this deckless cockleshell of a launch, ten miles from land, labouring in a sea, the like unto which is never seen off any other part of the coast, tied to a string of boats laden like sand barges,

and making frantic efforts to recover the truant seiner. The thing was done somehow, and the men lived to tell the tale, but, I need hardly say, they failed to reach Scilly, and returned to the cove the next day worn and battered, having used up everything combustible for fuel, and, what was worse, having caught no fish.

Speaking of fish, the capture of which is one of the leading industries of the county, it has puzzled naturalists like Yarrell, Conch, and Buckland, to understand the laws and conditions regulating their migration, and which frequently impel them to forsake their favourite *habitat* and feeding ground, and betake themselves to fresh fields and pastures new, apparently without rhyme or reason. Take the pilchard for example. For many years, long before living memory, with a regularity almost phenomenal, during the months from August to December, they bore down on the Cornish coast in countless millions, filling every creek and inlet from Looe to Padstow, and darkening the sea for miles with the density of their masses. They were caught in such enormous quantities as to be used for manure. Hundreds of thousands were "bulked," and, in the form of "fair maids," exported to Italy. They gave employment to a large portion of the population. The capital engaged, in boats, nets, and other gear, must have run into six figures, and whole communities were dependent on them for their livelihood and support. Yet, following some inscrutable impulse, which no one has been able to fathom, they have now almost entirely deserted the coast and are only found by the drift boats in deep water. Seines are abandoned, cellars are falling into decay, and, in short, the trade is threatened with extinction. Many theories have been advanced to account for this. Some say that both Channels being so much frequented by steamers, the shoals are broken up and dispersed by the motion of the screw; others, that trawling within the three-mile limit, the prevention of which is a nut the Board of Trade is still trying to crack, destroys the spawn, or the algæ on which the fish feed. But, whatever the cause, the fact remains that an industry occupying the foremost place in the Cornish motto—"Fish, tin, and copper"—is waning year after year, and must utterly collapse unless the mysterious conditions are restored which rendered the periodical visits of the fish almost a matter of certainty.

As not many of my readers will ever have seen a pilchard seine shot—and once seen it is never to be forgotten—let me describe

the modus operandi :—the shoal, or in local parlance “school” of fish, has been sighted from the neighbouring heights, and, sweeping into the bay—let us say of St. Ives—delights the eyes of the expectant fishermen. In a moment the whole place is in arms. Cries of “Hevah!” are heard on all sides, and to the blowing of horns and beating of drums, the entire population, men, women, and children, rush to the beach. Premising that the “school” comes within “shooting” distance—that is in sufficiently shallow water to ground the nets—arrangements are at once made to secure the prize. The seines are already in the boats, and the boats drawn up above high-water mark. Each company or set of adventurers has a certain number of turns or “stems.” No one is allowed to shoot out of turn. When the critical moment arrives, the company having first “stem” shoots,—an operation which consists of rowing rapidly around the school of fish, paying out the net the while, and enclosing as many as possible of the struggling mass. Then No. 2 “stem” shoots, and so on. The success of the haul depends on the size of the school, and the skill with which it is meshed. If the water is too deep, the fish are liable to bolt under the foot-rope, or, if there is much ground sea, the seine may burst, and the fish escape in this way, but, given favourable weather, a large quantity is generally secured. I have known as many as 6,000 hogsheads, each hogshead containing 35,000 fish, taken at a time; and as a hogshead of fish is, or was, worth something like £3 10s., this meant literally dipping £20,000 out of the sea.

The next process, after the fish are secured, is that known as “tucking.” A small net, called a “tuck-net,” is introduced within the larger seine, and with this the fish are gradually dipped out into maunds, guries, pails, and every other available vessel for conveyance to the curing cellar. To one who has never seen a seine “tucked,” it is a most novel and interesting sight. The leaping, struggling masses of imprisoned fish, glittering like molten silver in the sun; the eager faces of the crowd; the noise, the bustle, the chattering of the fishwives, and the haggling of the “jousters*” who come with their carts from all the country-side around to partake of the harvest of the sea, go to make up a picture which Frith perhaps, might depict, but could never faithfully copy. The fish are washed, heavily salted, and then “bulked,” that is, packed in layers from floor to roof with the heads all looking one way; and

* A “jouster” is an itinerant vendor of the fish, moving from village to village and town to town, to meet local requirements.

such is the dexterity with which the women perform this operation, that a pile of fish, one hundred feet long by ten feet high, will be absolutely straight and perpendicular, not a single head being out of line. After an interval of three weeks or a month, when the oil has all been expressed, and the fish flattened out to one-third their original size, "bulk" is broken, and the fish, now converted into "fair maids," are packed in casks, headed in, and got ready for exportation. The principal, and, indeed, the only markets, are the ports along the Italian seaboard, Leghorn, Genoa, and Naples, from whence they are distributed over the interior as "*fummadoes*," and at one time were much in request as a sauce for the black bread and grapes which usually form the Italian bill of fare. The importance of this industry, when in its prime, may be gauged by the fact that a good season would produce from fifty to sixty thousand hogsheads, worth at a fair computation £150,000.

My friends the "Covers" participated in this prosperity, and have had to bear their share in adversity; but the law of compensation, which seems to run like a golden thread through all human affairs, has come to their aid. They have lost the pilchard, but the delicate grey mullet has stepped in and taken its place. These fish frequent the creeks and "zawns*" of the Land's End, feeding on the maggots bred in the decomposing seaweed, which is thrown up in enormous quantities during the winter months. They are taken in nets, frequently many thousands at a time, and being remarkably fine fish, and much esteemed for the table, fetch from 1s. to 1s. 6d. each on the spot. What they must cost when they reach Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, where, during the Lenten season particularly, they are mostly sent, having had to run the gauntlet of the Great Western Railway monopoly, Continental carriage, and sundry salesmen and middlemen, I have never been able to estimate; but, there, all consumers of fish are aware that they have to pay some three hundred per cent. over the original cost of the article, and calmly submit to it, because it has become the custom to be fleeced in this way. Besides the pilchard and grey mullet the "Covers" have other strings to their bow. They are most industrious crabbers, setting their pots on every patch of broken ground from Carne Baise to the Seven Stones, and, in addition, they fish with hook and line for cod, ling, whiting, and conger, which attain a large size off the Cornish coast.

* A "zawn" is an indentation in the coast line, where the soft strata have been washed away, leaving the sides of the bare rock exposed.

My gentle reader, have you ever had a night's fishing with a Sennen Cove or Porthgwarrah hooker? You have not? Then you have missed one of the joys of life. It is, let us say, an evening in August. A dreamy haze hangs over land and sea. The bell on the Rundlestone reef buoy, rising and falling in the lazy swell, sounds like some distant chime. Seabirds, hastening home, seek their nests along the cliffs, or, perched on beetling crag, preen their silvery plumes. The sun—a fiery ball of many-coloured flame—just dips his outer rim into the western sea, and, flinging his expiring rays athwart the broad expanse of water, illumines all the coast in tints of burnished gold. Wavelets, no bigger than ripples on a land-locked lake, lick the bearded rocks, and lap the shingly strand, while overhead, shadowed in the limpid blue, the hoary piles of Castle Treryn and Tol Pedan Penwith cleave the sky. Let us have Robert Jackson for our coxswain, plenty of bait, a few creature comforts—nothing is better than a good Cornish pasty and cold tea—and, clad in guernsey, sou'wester, and top-boots, we step into the staunch little boat, haul the sheet aft to catch the western breeze, and make for the fishing ground. Now, I need hardly say, that fishing for conger in the chops of the Channel is a very different thing from luring the dainty trout, with toothsome fly, in the upper reaches of the Thames. The follower of Isaak Walton may be of a contemplative turn, and as he whips the placid stream with rod and line, his eye wanders over the fair surroundings, and his mind drinks in the beauties of the scene. But the man who goes fishing for conger must have all his wits about him. There is no time for fooling about. He must put aside the sentimental, and get down to a good solid, practical bottom, or he will surely come to grief. A story is told of a man who went out fishing with a "Cover," and who, despising the rock-loving bass and the silvery whiting—with the temerity born of ignorance, and the cockiness characteristic of amateurs generally, who "rush in where angels fear to tread"—elected to try for conger. The conger is a most voracious feeder, and when he takes the hook, which he does with a gulp, it requires a firm hand, and much careful manipulation to land him. Those who are "in the know," use a gaff, and getting his head and shoulders well in over the gunwale, "scotch" him by severing the spinal column just below the gills. Even then, he is a nasty customer to handle, and lashes about in a way very trying to the nerves of a novice. Well, our amateur had not been on the

ground long before a tug at the line, like the "kick" of an old muzzle-loader, told that something had swallowed the bait, and was in the throes of indigestion. Up came the prize, hand over hand; but, at the critical moment, when the old hand should have been ready with the gaff and the knife to administer the *coup de grace*, it so happened that he was busy with his own lines, having also had a bite, and, before he could give his companion warning, flop came the quarry, which turned out to be an enormous conger, into the boat. You might safely bet the National Debt against a string of Chinese cash that that man will never forget that conger. He (the conger) literally took charge of the boat, chasing his captor about from thwart to thwart, barking like a dog and, finally curling his slimy length around him like a boa-constrictor, with open mouth and glittering eyes, threatened to eat the terrified landsman alive, till Jan George, the Cover, taking in the situation, and armed with a friendly boat-hook, managed to give the ugly brute his quietus. "Conger," said our Cockney friend, relating the tale afterwards, "it was the devil, and if he had not been killed or gone out over the boat, I should."

Before taking leave of the "Covers," it may be as well to notice one peculiarity about them. They intermarry with a freedom which would shock the opponents of the Deceased Wife's Sisters Bill, and in defiance of all the laws of affinity and consanguinity. Families can be traced down through several generations without the admixture of any fresh blood. They are all "Nicholases," "Georges," "Penders," "Humphreys," "Trenerys," and "Bonds"; uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, cousins and sisters-in-law, galore. Yet, in spite of the deterioration of species said to follow on such close blood relationships, the Covers are noted for their strength and longevity. Not long ago, there might have been seen at Sennen Cove five generations in direct lineal descent. They were all called Matthew Nicholas—the Christian name being corrupted locally into "Mathey"—and here are their ages and the distinguishing epithet by which they were known:—

1. Old Mathey, aged 95.
2. Young Mathey, aged 74.
3. Boy Mathey, aged 54.
4. Little Mathey, aged 33.
5. Mathey's Mathey, aged 13.

Together, they formed a boat's crew, with "Old Mathey" as stroke, and "Mathey's Mathey" as coxswain, and, thus equipped, they were more than a match for any other crew up and down the coast. They also manned the lifeboat with the assistance of other members of the family, and were ever foremost at the post of danger. I employed them occasionally to do some cable repairs, and can testify to their skill, courage, and endurance. Once, when paying out a heavy shore-end from an old smack called the *Anglo-Saxon*—the company I represented could not afford a steamer—we were caught in a south-west gale, in a dangerous position, dead to leeward, and, but for the coolness and judgment of the Nicholases, "ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND" would not have been graced (or shall I say disgraced?) with this effusion. As it was, we just managed to claw off the shore, and running the gauntlet of the "Kettle's Bottom," the "Shark's Fin," and other pleasant reminders of this rock-strewn coast, gained open water.

I asked Young Mathey one day how he accounted for the extraordinary vitality of his family. I am afraid his answer will somewhat shock the Secretary, though, at the same time, it may help to throw light on the 12 per cent. increase in the consumption of alcohol, which was so alarming a feature of last year's Budget. For, according to Mr. Nicholas, our present degeneracy is due entirely to the falling-off in the quality and quantity of rum. Whether his disciples have been preaching this doctrine, and thus brought about the use of this medicinal agent to the tune of 30 millions of drams in a single year, I am not prepared to say, but, at any rate, Mr. Nicholas was perfectly convinced that, given good rum, and a plenty of it, a man might live as long as "he got a mind to," and—"experientia docet"—he pointed to his father, the Old Mathey, as a striking example. "Why," says he, "there's faather, who never took a dose of med'cine in his life. He do suffer from qualms sometimes, an' is bra' an' bad with the rheumatics, but, Lor' blessee, sir! only giv'um a glass o' rum and he's as right as a trivet. 'Tis my belief that the doctors would all starve to death if we could only get good rum." But, rum, or no rum, the Covers are as sturdy a lot of men as will be found in a day's march, always on the look out for 'hobbles,' and ready to risk their lives night or day at the call of humanity.

J. G. UREN.

PENZANCE.

(To be continued.)

A Lay of the Telegraph Service.

YES, I worked an acoustic circuit
 To Lisbury, L Z U :
 Not much effort was needed to work it,
 For the tels were undoubtedly few ;
 But though scanty the business transactions,
 And though seldom I saw an S P*,
 It brought fear, joy and care, hope, delight and despair
 Did that Lisbury circuit to me.

L Z U was a telegraph station
 In a town I had never seen,
 But the lamp of imagination
 Shed o'er it a golden sheen,
 And encompassed it round with a splendour
 In all probability due
 (Hah, yes, 'tis the old old tale retold)
 To the lady at L Z U.

From the sound of her dots and dashes,
 Which were light, artistic, and sweet,
 I was sure she had curling lashes,
 Bright eyes and elegant feet,
 In short, all kinds of attractions,
 But my bosom, I freely confess,
 Would thrill most of all at her soft sweet call
 " T S, you there T S ! " †

One day—it was June I remember,
 D K X ‡ I believe was the time,
 And I fancied her mood would be tender
 Because the Z M § was sublime—
 With faltering fingers I signalled
 A tremulous " understand ;"
 An encouraging " G " || came back to me
 And I offered my heart and hand.

* Press message.

† The code signal for the Central Telegraph Office.

‡ 4.54 p.m.

§ Weather.

|| Go on.

No answer! My dream, was it ended?
 Was she hardening her heart to refuse?
 And then—though my sending was splendid—
 She womanlike asked for RQ's!¶
 Did she mean it to signify blushing,
 Or the turning away of the head?
 Or was she afraid some mistake had been made
 And I hadn't quite meant what I said?
 Days passed in suspense and confusion,
 How I yearned for R. D., or plain "yes"! **
 But she made not the slightest allusion
 To that cry from a heart in distress;
 So I sat by the D. P. sounder††
 Like a criminal biding his doom,
 Till at last I was sent for, and sadly I went,
 To the Superintendent's Room.
 Well, he isn't so stern as he's painted,
 And with much considerate tact
 He proceeded to make me acquainted
 With a very unfortunate fact:
 "That my conduct," he said, "was straightforward
 Was as plain as plain could be,
 But was I aware that the lady out there
 Was married—and forty-three?"
 'Twas enough: and the end, shall I shirk it?
 I withdrew, and was promptly transferred
 To a new metropolitan circuit,
 Where I sat like a wounded bird:
 Yes, I grieved! Yet it might have been worse, friends,
 For I might have been told to do
 Two hours without pay for my talk that day
 With the lady at L Z U:
 And she might have been stoutish, or thinnish,
 She might have been waspish and vain,
 She might have been wanting in finish
 And most unmistakeably plain.
 And she might, with all this, have been single,
 And only too eager to wed,—
 Yes, my grief should abate when I think of my fate
 And of what might have happened instead.

T. S. CLARKE.

¶ Repetition. ** RD for "received," the acknowledgment of a telegram.
 †† Double-plate sounder. An instrument used on unimportant circuits.

Surveying in Donegal.

(Continued.)

“And all is well tho’ faith and form
Be sundered in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm.”

In Memoriam.



THE view was magnificent. Far south, across the bay, I could dimly discern the outline of the mysterious north coast of Mayo, which I had vainly tried to penetrate. The sea was calm, but hardly a sail was to be seen, and the only sounds heard were the dull boom of the waves as they swelled up against the base of the cliffs far below, and the sharp scream of the sea-gull flying in and out among the rocks. Northward, the Donegal mountains rose one above another in endless snow-clad ranges, the great isolated peak of Errigal showing up conspicuously, while, at our feet, were dotted about a number of small lakes and the winding bays of Teelin harbour.

It was a cold journey from Killybegs to Dunglow across the Donegal Highlands, but the weather was bright, and, being well wrapped up in coats and rugs, and with a bundle of hay to keep the feet warm, we enjoyed it amazingly. We looked in on the “Protestant Priest,” as he is called, a Catholic clergyman well-known for his liberal views and his fondness for salmon-fishing—a great contrast, too, in personal appearance and manner to the ordinary priest,—and, after winding in and out among the numerous little lakes of The Rosses, we crossed the Clady and reached the well-known hotel at Gweedore.

There we found a party of magistrates and solicitors assembled for the Bunbeg Petty Sessions, which were to be held next day. One of the latter told me that one of his principal difficulties in defending prisoners was that they rarely told him the truth about their cases. He had recently been called on to defend a girl who was charged with stealing a postal parcel containing a dress. She was caught wearing the stolen article, but when he saw her in prison nothing would induce her to tell him the facts; she

persisted in saying that some woman she did not know gave it to her. As soon as she appeared in court she pleaded "Guilty"!

Let me now recall one or two incidents of the post offices I visited on this my last Irish journey. One office was in a potato store, and on examining the stamp drawer I found it full of dust, the stamps being in a very dirty state. I pointed this out to the sub-postmaster, who said, "You see, sir, there is a crack in the drawer." I suggested that the crack might be filled up with putty or papered over; but evidently this was not his view, and probably the crack is there still. However, I waited while he cleared out the drawer, and that was all I could do. I am bound to add one thing, he made no promise of reform, which shows that he had some regard for truth if he had none for cleanliness.

In a recent number of *Blackfriars*, Mr. Uren mentioned the case of a letter deliverer in the West of England, who could neither read nor write, but whose deficiencies in these respects were obviated to some extent by the use of a coat in which his daughter had devised an extensive system of pockets into which she sorted his letters before he started on his round. In Donegal, I came across a woman who delivered letters and who could neither read nor write. Her plan of campaign was more casual. She simply let people pick out their own letters as they pleased. Of course she was thoroughly unfit for her place, but she was a widow, old and miserably poor. The pittance which she received from the sub-postmistress alone kept her from the workhouse, and I was not sorry therefore that I merely had to report on the case incidentally, and that if it went any further somebody else was responsible for it, and not I. Every surveying officer must occasionally, come across cases like this one, in which duty and feeling are as hard to reconcile as they were when—

"The Prince-Bishop muttered a curse and a prayer,
Which his double capacity hit to a nicety;
His Princely, or Lay, half induced him to swear;
His Episcopal moiety said 'Benedicite!'"

One of the funniest cases I had to investigate arose in this way. A post ran to a village, which we will call Ballybog, and from thence a branch post went three times weekly to Trottertown. For some time past the bills of this latter post reached the surveyor bearing irrelevant remarks in a feigned hand. The number of parcels was altered say, from "1" to "1,000," and observations about a *chapel* were of frequent occurrence. So,

when at Ballybog, I enquired into the matter. The sub-postmaster was a grocer and general dealer. He assured me that he had not written anything improper on the bills, and he was sure the lad who carried the mails had not. He was confident that the Sub-Postmaster of Trottertown had done it. There had been some unpleasantness between them about a chapel, which he explained to me thus:—Both the villages were in the same parish, and the parish chapel was close to his shop. The Trottertown people came over to Mass on Sundays, and very often made purchases at his shop before they returned. Now, the Sub-Postmaster of Trottertown was also a grocer, and he viewed with much jealousy an ecclesiastical arrangement which took away trade from himself, so he agitated to have a chapel built in Trottertown. This, the Ballybogites, headed by their grocer, opposed, and the Trottertown grocer had scribbled on the bills with the two-fold object of venting his spite, and getting Ballybog into bad odour with the surveyor. Having satisfied myself that the postman was not to blame, I went on to Trottertown, where I found the sub-postmaster packing a great crate of eggs for the English market, but he soon finished, and then he told me the same story about the chapel, only he ended up by assuring me that Ballybog had done the scribbling to get *him* into trouble. So I seemed as far off a solution as ever. I then suggested that he should drive over to Ballybog with me and confront his rival. He consented, though I could see that he was not altogether willing. However, I brought the two face to face in the Ballybog drawing-room. At first they were very polite to each other, but soon my little friend from Trottertown began about the chapel, and by the time he had worked himself into a white heat. I had formed a pretty clear notion that he had done the scribbling, which was further confirmed by a comparison of handwriting. I hope, for the sake of the peace of the district, that that chapel has long ago been erected.

This is by no means the only occasion on which want of candour on the part of those with whom I had to do, gave a great deal of trouble. At one very small office, the daughter of the sub-postmaster could produce only about a dozen dirty stamps instead of the thirty shillingsworth of clean ones, which were allowed on credit; but she glibly explained that her father had locked up the rest before he went out. After some pressing she showed me a cupboard in the wall which contained the hidden treasure. There

was a solid, square, black door, sunk in the wall, and looked so like the door of a safe, that sheer curiosity to know whether it was of wood or iron induced me to put my hand on it to ascertain. I found it was of wood, and I also found it was unlocked; but I did not find the slightest trace of confusion on my companion's face as I asked her in which corner of which shelf the stamps were. There was merely a slight giggle as she confessed that they did not exist.

And now that I have brought my readers to Gweedore, the most typical of the distressful districts of Ireland, let me finish my narrative by giving as briefly as possible a few notes on one or two aspects of the great land question. Of the subject as a whole, I am not qualified to write, nor would a dissertation thereon be at all in keeping with the objects of this magazine; but it has many sides, and some of them are brought very forcibly before all who travel in Donegal.

But first, let me say that I am conscious that in the preceding pages, I have given a somewhat gloomy view of the character of the inhabitants of the West of Ireland. My endeavour has been to put down the incidents that struck me most, and I must confess that what struck me most was what Mr. Morley, in a recent speech at Sheffield, described as the great thing wanted in the congested districts, viz., "a stronger consciousness of manhood, and a greater sense of responsibility." But while recognising this, let us not forget that Ireland as a whole, and the West of Ireland in particular, is in a great degree what England has made her. No doubt the Ireland of 1170 A.D., was far behind the England of that date in civilisation, but it should have been the mission of English statesmen to pacificate and elevate the people whose destinies the fortunes of war had placed in their hands. The very opposite was the case. For centuries English dominion, extending as it did over only a small part of the island, acted like a running sore in irritating and exhausting the people. When at last the whole island was conquered religious intolerance stepped in to supply a perpetual element of discord. Time, which heals most hurts, here brought no relief, and the words which Byron applied to Italy are still more true of Ireland—

"On thy sweet brow is sorrow ploughed by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame."

The result has been to impart to the character of the Irish peasant a twist which it will take centuries of good government and fair dealing to eradicate. The sins of our forefathers have indeed been a "funeral dower of present woes" to their descendants who are striving each in his own way and after his own light to make amends for the wrongs of past ages.

How the bad old past affected the character of the peasantry is easily seen. Thus it is a constant remark with travellers in Ireland, how miserable are the cabins of the people—no comfort inside, no flower-beds outside, and little or no attention to neatness inside or outside. To explain this it is only necessary to remember that landlords had no sympathy with the people and left all transactions with them to agents, whose one idea was to get all the rent possible out of them. Under these conditions a man who whitewashed his cottage, mended the roof, and trained a Virginia creeper against the wall would be certain to have his rent raised when next the agent came round.

Some thirty years ago, two brothers, Mick and Pat, held between them a plot of land which had belonged to their father, and for which they jointly paid £2 a year rent. They were unable to agree as to a division of the land and they called in the agent to divide it. So the great man drove over one day, and having inspected the plot divided it fairly between them, and then told them that each must in future pay £2 for his half share. Under the Land Acts such a proceeding is now happily impossible; but the peasants have not got out of the habit of dissimulation and untidiness which such a state of things engenders, for the evil that men do lives after them.

Reparation for the past would be easy if only one could see that the leaders of the Irish people were men who rose superior to the prejudices of their countrymen, if one could only peruse the speeches of an Irish leader or a political article in an Irish newspaper without being shocked and disgusted by the violence of the language used, the extravagant crudity of the views expressed, and the pettiness of the spite manifested.

One man alone has stood out from the throng as a born statesman. In him many Englishmen were beginning to trust, for they believed him to be a calm, determined man, with a head on his shoulders. And now, by his own act, he has rendered himself impossible, and there is no one to take his place. Such has ever been the destiny of Irish movements—there has always been at

the head a Keogh or a Sadleir to sell his country for gold, or a Smith O'Brien to ruin it by ill-advised rashness.

Western Donegal is divided into the two 'Poor Law' Unions of Dunfanaghy and Glenties; and in a recently published pamphlet, Mr. Tuke, who is well-known for his philanthropic exertions in Ireland, records the extraordinary fact that while the population of the country at large, and also of the county of Donegal as a whole, is decreasing, the population of these two unions is increasing. And yet it is no exaggeration to say that the soil of these unions is the poorest cultivated land in the British Isles, and that they possess absolutely no economic advantages of any kind to atone for the niggardliness of nature. A man has, say, ten acres of poor land. By and by his son grows up and marries, and the father gives him up half his holding. The ten acres do not produce enough to sustain the vitality of one family, and yet two are now trying to get a living out of them. By increasing the number of acres under potatoes they succeed for a time; but soon an unusually damp season brings a failure of the potato crop, and the two families, having nothing to fall back on, either starve or accept relief from the poor rates. This is the problem as presented in Gweedore and the other congested districts, and the observer naturally asks himself what is the cause of this state of things and how can it be cured.

Politicians of course profess to answer these questions. Recently, at Swindon, Mr. Morley said:—

"There is this remarkable fact that in some of these districts the population has actually increased since the great famine of 1846 and 1847, and, that that increase of population has taken place exactly in those districts where the holdings are the smallest, and where the poverty is most abject. What is the cause of all this? It is an old cause. You are not responsible, but our forefathers were; it is the abolition of the Irish Parliament, which would have kept a healthy public opinion at work upon those districts that is responsible."

One would like to see this answer worked out in more detail, for it is difficult on the face of it to see why the absence of an Irish Parliament should have produced, in the poorest parts of Ireland, effects which it has failed to produce in more prosperous districts.

Looking at the matter from the point of view of an Englishman who has spent a lifetime in ameliorating the condition of the Irish peasant, Mr. Tuke attributes the poverty of the people in Gweedore to three causes:—

1. The absence of employment.
2. Overcrowding of poor land and sub-division of holdings.
3. The apparent inability of the people to make full use of the resources which they possess.

"I cannot conceive," he says, "that the payment of rent has any material influence in causing whatever poverty exists, or that its absence would remove this poverty." He further goes on to remark that great demoralisation is caused by the promiscuous way in which relief is given in times of distress, and also by the Plan of Campaign, which, by teaching the people to disregard the obligation to pay rent, is likely to lead them to ignore other debts, such as those due to shopkeepers, &c.

When a farm, which was originally large enough just to support one labourer and enable him to pay his rent, is divided among three or four families, so many extra mouths have to be fed out of its produce that it is evident that no rent at all can be paid. This is what is taking place daily. The people are very poor and act with the improvidence and recklessness which always characterises such a state of society. They are not properly speaking farmers at all, they are labourers cultivating a small patch of ground as well. Every year they flock over to England and Scotland for the harvest, and their earnings, supplemented by their patches of land, support life. If rent is to be defined as the sum a man can afford to pay after he and his family have supported themselves out of their land, then it is clear that there is no economic rent. But according to the same rule no economic rent arises when an English labourer takes an allotment. It does not support him: he lives by his wages, and the allotment merely increases his wages by enabling him to employ his leisure in a profitable manner.

But Mr. Tuke is not a Nationalist and his views may not be accepted by those of an opposite way of thinking, so, to prevent all cavil let me present my readers with the views of Father James McFadden, of Gweedore, the typical patriot priest of the day. He also has recently issued a pamphlet on the subject*. It consists of a number of unconnected letters and papers written at various times and under various circumstances, and the whole is so profusely powdered over with head-lines as to obscure the subject and make the pamphlet a most uncomfortable one to read. It is nevertheless valuable as giving the tenants' view of the land

* *The Present and The Past of Agrarian Struggle in Gweedore.* Derry Journal Office, Londonderry, 1889. Price 1s.

question, and it should be read by all who wish to discover for themselves the kernel of the difficulty in the congested districts.

It appears that up to 1887 there were 800 tenants on Captain Hill's Gweedore estate; but that by the terms of a settlement, which was then forced on the landlord, 120 sub-tenants were recognised as tenants, although there had been no increase in the area under cultivation. On the Glasserchoo estate there are 37 tenants recognised by the landlord, and no less than 19 unrecognised sub-tenants—in other words, land which a few years ago supported with difficulty 37 families has now to support 56. In 1841 there were 54 persons on this estate, while now there are 209! In view of these facts it might be expected that Father McFadden would above all things set his face against subdivision, but never once in this pamphlet does he say a word against this suicidal practice. On the contrary, at page 35, he speaks of the fact that Captain Hill was forced to recognise the sub-tenants as a great victory. At page 43 he alludes to the subject again by saying, "I have never known the landlord to sincerely object to subdivision." Here was an opportunity for the Father to express his opinion against a practice which he must know is radically bad, but he does not do so, either here or elsewhere in his pamphlet.

Father McFadden's tract establishes beyond cavil the fact that absurd prices are constantly paid for the tenants' interest on land in Gweedore. The following extract from a letter addressed by him to *The Times* (but which never appeared in that journal) will be read with interest by all who think that "hesitancy" is as bad when spelt with an "a" as when spelt with an "e." Clergymen in England are not reputed as good business men, but few of them would care to sign their names to a letter containing as many reservations and qualifications as are contained in the following sentences—which refers to a case in which a man had paid a very high price for a tenant-right—

"The purchaser in the case of Hugh Sweeney is a shopkeeper who is as far forward with the payment of his rent, *I am sure*, as any man on the estate; and *I daresay* he has met all demands yet made upon him in this way and *I don't believe* that he professes that he is unable to pay absolutely. *I am sure* he is not able to pay from the produce of his holding. Even the purchaser in this case, shopkeeper though he be, has yet paid only one-half the purchase money."

This letter is curious also as showing the idea of a double personality in tenant-farmers, which one so often hears of from Irish orators, and of which the well-known Mr. Moroney is a

typical instance. Here we have Hyde Sweeney, the farmer, and Jekyl Sweeney, the shopkeeper. Only one of these persons is taxed, only one is discernible to an English eye, only one wears the green on St. Patrick's day, but to the reverend Father and to Mr. O'Brien both are clearly and distinctly visible. Unless Hyde Sweeney can make enough out of the farm to leave a good profit Jekyl Sweeney will pay no rent. To the logical mind it might appear that if Sweeney the shopkeeper, cannot make farming pay he had better give up his farm and stick closer to his shop; but that is not the Irish view.

We have another instance of the same thing in the following dialogue between the Father and the well-known Colonel Dopping, when the latter was holding a rent audit.

Col. D.—“Well Mr. McFadden, I see you down here for a 15s. rent, and you owe me 30s.”

Father McF.—“I am the occupier of several small holdings.”

Col. D.—“You are able to pay.”

Father McF.—Yes, I am, out of the charities of the poor people, but not out of the product of the land, and I refuse to pay on that principle without deduction.”

The question then would seem to arise, why the Father did not give up cultivating land which did not pay, and devote the time thus gained to his clerical duties and the study of political economy.

Here is another extract from a letter addressed to the *Times* :—

“In the third case, that of Owen Boyle, *your correspondent states an utter falsehood in saying that Boyle sold a rental of 12s. 6d. at £51. He only got £40 for it.* And this transaction illustrates the folly of the simple peasants of this place in the matter of land purchase. Sweeney, the purchaser, was not the master of a shilling the day he bought in this holding. He was not able to pay the auctioneer's fee, and in this, as in many cases, it is quite likely that the sale will never be perfected, and that Sweeney will be obliged to sell it again, possibly at a tremendous sacrifice On this very day he pledged portion of the land just purchased to raise £6. He got his sister's only cow and sold it too, and he *sold the potatoes he required to support himself* and his aged mother, and by all these shifts and schemes he made up half the purchase money, £20. The other £20 has not been paid yet, and will probably not until the place is again put to the hammer.”

Several other cases are mentioned, as, for instance, that of Fanny Ferry, who sold her interest in a “worthless patch of bog and rock,” rented at £1 0s. 10d. a year, for the sum of £40!

Father McFadden seems to see that the comparatively enormous sums paid for tenant right tell very much against him, as they

obviously must; but he endeavours to discount the value of the evidence which he himself supplies by saying that—

“The circumstances of the place, and the nature and habits of the people, being that (*sic*) of migratory labourers, who return to their homes to rest their wearied and worn bodies for a few months every year, and the fact that only a circumscribed area is cultivated, or at the disposal of the people, make all thoughtful and competent judges to throw the matter of price for tenant right out of their heads entirely when estimating the agricultural value of the miserable holdings of this place. The facts are patent and are the outcome of the inborn idiosyncrasy of the poor people, and it would be as unreasonable and cruel to punish them for this second nature, as it would be to crucify the Zulu for the colour of his skin.”

This statement speaks for itself, and it certainly seems to imply that in the Father's opinion the people are not farmers, but merely allotment holders, and that they are all more or less afflicted with a twist which prevents them from taking an ordinary common sense view of their situation. Are men who act in this way more fit to govern themselves than the Zulus to whom he compares them?

Englishmen will know what to think of this proposal to fling reason to the winds when considering the condition of the Donegal peasant. We get only too many such invitations when considering Irish questions—

“Knock down the Muses, wit and sense destroy,
Clear our new stage from reason's dull alloy,
Charm hobbling age and tickle capering youth,
With cleaver marrow-bone or Tunbridge toy,
While Wisdom weeps and Folly plays his pranks,
And moody Madness laughs, and hugs the chain he clanks.”

(*To be continued.*)

Ocean Penny Postage.



THIS subject has now been before the public for four years, and, as it commands much interest, we propose to give a slight sketch of its history up to the present time. At the Jubilee Dinner Mr. Raikes mentioned it in the following terms:—

I am not going to say that there may not be reasons of high State policy calling for a great reduction of our external postage rates.

I do not propose to discuss that question here this evening, but I wish to point out the hollowness of the agitation which has been maintained upon this question by simply putting it to the test of the example of Sir Rowland Hill. Now, Sir Rowland Hill, when he devised the penny postage for the United Kingdom, had satisfied himself of what I will call the enormous area of productivity, which he might look to in order to recoup the revenue. There are 36,000,000 of people in the country; there were about 25,000,000 at the time when the penny post was established; but if those 36,000,000 of people were each to write one letter a day—and I think it is not impossible—if we may arrive at that happy state of inter-communication, we should have a circulation of letters nine or ten times greater than that which subsists at present. In fact, the area of productivity is almost immeasurable, and to that Sir Rowland Hill looked for the recovery of the revenue. Take the cost of the Indian post. There are 200,000 British-born persons in India, including the Army. Suppose that each of them writes a letter by each post. There are only 52 posts to and from India in the year, not 365. Supposing four times as many of the native community write their letters, say, one a year, you would have one million people writing 52 letters in the year as against 36,000,000 people writing a letter 365 times a year. If you take the case of Australia, although the figures are more favourable to the reformer, they still land him in the hopeless position of inability to prove that he has that area of productivity, or anything approaching to it, which, Sir Rowland Hill saw before him when he proposed his scheme. Sir Rowland Hill had satisfied himself that in the British Islands the cost of transmission was so small that it might be absolutely disregarded. But in the case of the transmission of a letter between this country and India, China, or Australia, we know that the cost of such transmission must be three times, if not more, the total sum which the reformer proposes to levy by way of postage. I would sum it up in this way—Sir Rowland Hill proposed a great change because he believed it was for the good of all, especially of the poor, at the same time that it was shown to increase the revenue. We are asked, on the other side, to adopt a change, which must necessarily largely diminish the revenue, and must do it for the sake of the few at the expense of the many.

A reply from Mr. Henniker-Heaton appeared in *The Times* of the

28th January, in which he asked for a Parliamentary Committee on the subject, and contended that the adoption of his plan would cost only £60,000 a year, and would be of immense advantage to the empire. On the 3rd February Sir Julius Vogel replied that hitherto the Colonies had found it more advantageous to obtain rapid rather than cheap postal communication; and that, as long as subsidies are necessary to obtain the former object, ocean penny postage is impossible, unless the post-office is to be made a charitable institution for the benefit of letter-writers. He thinks that Mr. Henniker-Heaton should first seek to obtain a halfpenny instead of a penny rate for inland letters. In a further letter (6th February) he points out that the internal postage in most of the Australian Colonies is at present 2d., and asks whether that should not be reduced before ocean penny postage is tried? The Colonies themselves have shown no willingness to adopt an ocean penny rate; but on the contrary at a recent conference at Melbourne Mr. Raikes' proposal to reduce the rate to 3d. was rejected in favour of a 4d. rate.

Mr. Henniker-Heaton's reply to this (February 11th) was somewhat feeble. According to him England can and ought to carry out the scheme without consulting the Colonies at all. All the Australian Post Offices are carried on at a loss, and this is some excuse for their opposition to the scheme. He asserted that the Colonial Post Offices give greater facilities than the English Post Office gives, but the only instance of this liberality cited is that in New South Wales newspapers can be sent inland free of postage, while the newspaper postage thence to England is only 1d. per pound.

A question asked by Mr. Henniker-Heaton in the House of Commons, on the 17th March, drew attention to the effect which his scheme would have on the Postal Union. Mr. Raikes stated that, in order to carry out the project, England would be obliged to give notice to withdraw from the Union, and would thereby incur the risk of cutting off her postal communication with the rest of the world.

Mr. Goschen made his Budget speech on the 18th April, and among the proposals which it contained was one to appropriate £80,000 to reducing the colonial postage to the uniform rate of 2½d. This was made conditional on the Colonies agreeing to the arrangement, which most of them have since done, and, as our readers are doubtless aware, the reduced rates take effect from the

1st January, 1891. It is obviously an anomaly that letters could be sent from the continent of Europe to our Colonies for 2½d., while from England the charges were much higher, and this will now cease. *The Times* considers this a proper and statesmanlike course, and states that "Mr. Henniker-Heaton has weakened a very strong case in seeking to apply the inland rate of 1d. to the enormous distances over which a letter must travel between the home country and one or another of her Colonies."

The Member for Canterbury, however, is by no means satisfied with the concession granted, and is still pursuing his favourite scheme. *The Review of Reviews* has taken up the question and is engaged in getting up a monster memorial in favour of "penny postage throughout the English-speaking world," including of course the United States. Mr. Stead's idea is that these penny letters should be carried by steamer to the various countries, and that letters sent by the overland route should pay a higher rate.

In *The Review of Reviews* for November Mr. Henniker-Heaton states that there is already penny postage between the United States on the one hand and Canada and Mexico on the other, and he adds that there is a rumour that the United States is about to negotiate for a penny postage rate to Europe generally. He is strongly of opinion that the real obstacle to his scheme is the *amour propre* of two or three high officials who have committed themselves to uncompromising hostility to a reform which is demanded by the whole of the Anglo-Saxon Press, and which is essential to the prosperity of the empire.

Thus the matter stands at present, Mr. Henniker-Heaton's position apparently resting on rumour and *argumentum ad hominem*. One thing seems very clear, viz., that Imperial or Ocean Penny Postage would introduce anomalies compared with which those at present existing would sink into insignificance.

In March, 1886, he brought forward a motion in the House calling on the Government to open negotiations with other Governments with a view to the establishment of a universal international penny postage system, and obtained about 130 supporters. This was at any rate a proposal which created no fresh anomalies, but apparently he has abandoned it in favour of Imperial Penny Postage under which a letter could be sent to Easter Island for one penny while the English settlers at Boulogne or Dinard would still be charged two pence halfpenny.

Meanwhile a writer in the *Manchester Guardian* of November

18th, suggests that the inland letter rate should be lowered to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for letters under $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., in weight which he estimates at 90 per cent. of the total number of letters posted.

"After a wisely-considered increase of expenditure has absorbed a portion of the net earnings, all over £3,000,000 should be placed to the credit of a fund to be ultimately used to tide over, say, two years of diminished receipts caused by the reduction. This reduction would lower the net receipts from £3,200,000 to about £400,000, but as the receipts from parcels, postcards, postal orders, &c., are increasing much faster than those from penny postage, by the time the fund reached £5,000,000 the net receipts, after the reduction, may be estimated at £600,000 or £700,000. By drawing on the fund an income of nearly £3,000,000 for two years would still be assured, and if the revenue from other sources were in a satisfactory condition no Chancellor of the Exchequer need hesitate to make the reduction. Three years after the reduction the net receipts would be about a million, and increasing rapidly, though it would not be safe to predict the rate of increase under the changed circumstances. The only reason for employing the machinery of a fund for the proposed purpose is that there are so many claimants for relief of taxation in other forms. It would at any time require a surplus of £3,000,000, and in the absence of any public urgent demand for reduction it is not to be expected that income-tax payers and other claimants would, waive their prior claims if such a surplus should again be forthcoming.

K. T. L.

Rondeau.

O MIDNIGHT bells, whose voices clear
 Ring out the swift departing year,
 What mingled memories wake to greet
 Your changing chimes, so sadly sweet,
 Pealing across the meadows drear !
 There are who, listening, seem to hear
 The knell of all they held most dear,
 And fain would hush your solemn beat,
O midnight bells !
 There are who smile, as on their ear
 Your glad tones echo, bringing near
 The rosy future, all replete
 With radiance of Time's flying feet—
 And still ye mingle smile with tear,
O midnight bells !
HENRY F. SMART.

In Darkest England and The Way Out.

"Take the soul,
And so possess the whole man, body and soul."

THESE words, from *Aurora Leigh*, the grand poem in which Mrs. Browning expressed her ultimate faith, and deepest convictions about life and art, might stand as motto on General Booth's title page, for their sense runs through his book like the leading "motif" of Wagnerian drama, and indeed *Darkest England* might be compared to a Wagnerian drama on a world-wide stage, with Eternity for time of performance and the Immortals as actors, since both show forth the never-ceasing battle against evil, God and his angels warring against the powers of the devil, the White Christ once again transfixing personified Materialism and Despair, and that "inner light," which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world," dispersing the darkness of selfishness, crime, and misery.

Darkest England is indeed a book to be thankful for, not only for what it is—a fearless unfurling once again of the spiritual banner amid a society too much given up to material aims and ambitions—but for what it promises of practical redemption to those outcasts who have hitherto seemed beyond all human aid; and we must remember General Booth is not only a religious enthusiast, ready to sacrifice everything for an idea, he is also the founder and head of perhaps the most rigidly disciplined, and therefore easily manipulated organisation that has ever been known. All over the world thousands of feet are speeding on his errands; thousands of hands are diligently toiling at his tasks; thousands of devoted men and women are straining every faculty, every power they possess, in his service, or rather in the service of the Christ of the Gospels, Who has once more arisen with a new light of benediction on His face. And these thousands will not come to their great task unprepared. Gradually, as funds and opportunity allowed, General Booth, helped and inspired by his saint-like wife, has worked out in detail all the chief features of his scheme; every proposal has as far as possible been practically experimented with, so that from the results gained from one labour bureau, one shelter,

one rescue home, he is justified in judging roughly how much money will be required to attempt the wholesale redemption of what he graphically terms the "submerged tenth." Very terrible is the picture he gives of our miserable brothers and sisters—many homeless—all hopeless—and yet above and beyond this awful truth, which has darkened for so many of us the sunshine of a happy home, the joy of a successful life, with the shadow of a vain and helpless regret, shines at last the blessed light of hope!

"Whoever fears God, fears to sit at ease . . .

We blaspheme

"Despairing on the earth for which He died."

So says Mrs. Browning, so says General Booth, and the records of the work done by the Salvation Army, which he quotes, taken as they are at random from a great mass of material, show that this is no mere theory, but a rule of conduct for every-day life. The account of the slum sisters is peculiarly touching—young girls who live amid the foulest sights and sounds in the lowest alleys of great cities, in order to carry the message of hope and salvation both for souls and bodies to the hopeless denizens of these terrible slums.

It is difficult to summarise such a vast scheme in the space at our disposal, and yet make it comprehensible, but, briefly put, it is this: *Work for all—charity for none.* The first step is to provide "Shelters," where, for a small charge, or a certain amount of work (useful educational work be it remarked, not the stone-breaking or oakum picking of the casual ward), supper, bed, and breakfast, are provided for the very lowest. From these "shelters" the inmates will be drafted to the factories of the Salvation Army, and employed till suitable work is found for them. Labour Bureaux will be established at which masters' wants and men's capacities will be registered, and rooms provided to study newspapers, and compose advertisements, arrange interviews, &c., &c., thus avoiding the usual adjournment to the public house for all purposes of bargain or business. After being under strict supervision for certain longer or shorter periods of time, according to character and capacity, these people will be drafted off into farm colonies, prepared for them within a few miles of London, where fruit and poultry will be raised, and other industries pursued under skilled and thoroughly practical officers. The last step will be the over-sea colony, wherein the fully prepared and trained emigrants will find quarters ready for them, and every

opportunity for making happy, prosperous homes, with the exercise of that industry and thrift which the General believes will, by that time, have been so thoroughly grafted on their old habits, as to have become a part of their nature. As offshoots to this the leading portions of the scheme, there will be prison brigades to take charge of prisoners when discharged after undergoing their sentences, and, in cases of first offences, the Army will petition to have the offenders delivered up to them, answering for them to the police. The poor man's lawyer, and the poor man's bank, and the poor man's Métropole will be established, to perform for the poor what kindred institutions do for the rich; nor must we forget the poor man's Brighton, or Whitechapel-by-the-sea, as General Booth calls it, where, by special arrangement with the railway companies, poor men and their families may have a day or more by the sea, for an amount well within their reach by the practice of economy and prudence. In connection with the "Shelters," there will be provided homes for inebriates; rescue and preventive homes for women and girls; homes for children, and cheap food dépôts, all on an immense scale; and the only qualifications for all this will be: *Willingness to work, according to ability; total abstention from alcoholic drinks in every form and from tobacco, and unquestioning obedience.* This is *The Way Out*, stripped of all the practical working detail and copious illustrations, won from a large experience, which *Darkest England* supplies. This is *The Way Out* for the body, but General Booth never for one moment allows his readers to forget that his "only hope for the permanent deliverance of mankind from misery, either in this world or the next, is the regeneration or remaking of the individual by the power of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ." And he says, "The supreme test of any scheme for benefiting humanity is in the answer to the question, 'What does it make of the individual?' Does it quicken his conscience, does it soften his heart, does it enlighten his mind, does it, in short, make more of a true man of him, because only by such influences can he be enabled to lead a human life?"

In reading this last passage, and many others throughout the book, in which the author's shrewdness, grasp, and wide understanding of social problems are clearly shown, we might almost have imagined they were quotations from Mr. Herbert Spencer's essays on *The Man versus the State*; listen to what he says: "There is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden

instincts." "There is the indisputable fact that each human being is in a certain degree modifiable both physically and mentally. There is the fact, also in its broader manifestations universally recognised, that modifications of Nature in one way or other produced, are inheritable. No one denies that by the accumulation of small changes, generation after generation, constitution fits itself to conditions. To which there comes the undeniable corollary that every law which serves to alter men's modes of action—compelling, or restraining, or aiding in new ways—so affects them as to cause, in course of time, adjustments of their natures." Are not these the very same facts expressed in the language of science, which General Booth, over and over again, repeats in the language of religion? And note, too, the philosopher's conclusions: "Were the many who express this cheap pity like the few who patiently, week after week and year after year, devote large parts of their time to helping and encouraging, and occasionally amusing those who, in some cases by ill-fortune, and in other cases by incapacity or misconduct, are brought to lives of hardship, they would be worthy of unqualified admiration. The more there are of *men and women who help the poor to help themselves*, the more there are of those whose sympathy is exhibited directly and not by proxy, the more we may rejoice."

This *helping the poor to help themselves* is the foundation stone of General Booth's scheme, and if ever a man could speak from hard practical experience surely the head of the Salvation Army can; the man who has, in great measure, from the very lowest and most degraded men and women, formed a body of devoted Christians, ready to sacrifice everything at his bidding, in the service of their unseen Master. Whatever we, accustomed to quieter forms of worship, may think of their somewhat sensational services, we must all admire the self-sacrifice and fearless devotion of their lives: "We talk freely about salvation, because it is to us the very light and joy of our existence. We know by our own experience that life is a very different thing when we have found the peace of God, and are working together with Him for the salvation of the world, instead of toiling for the realisation of worldly ambition or the amassing of earthly gain." One of the secrets of the success of the Salvation Army is, that the friendless of the world find friends in it. "What we want to do is to exemplify to the world the family idea, 'Our Father' is the keynote."

Yes, and "Our Father," must be the keynote for all helpful

work, since the Fatherhood of God includes the brotherhood of men; and this scheme is the first step towards that universal brotherhood, saints, poets, and socialists have hitherto vainly prayed for, dreamed of, and toiled to gain! In its present form, General Booth tells us, it is the slowly ripened fruit of two lives given up unreservedly to the service of man. Without one to whose splendid benevolence and unbounded sympathy he says he owes so much of the inspiration of *Darkest England*, the "companion, counsellor, and comrade; the loving, faithful, and devoted wife" to whom he dedicates his book, it would probably never have seen the light, at any rate in its present complete state; and we can imagine that much of the tenderness, of the loving insight, and undoubting faith, which are such strong features of their joint scheme, proceeded from the dying wife, whose patient eyes, dim with pain and blinded with pitiful tears, yet illuminated by that "inner light" George Fox found at last and gave up his life to preach to the world waiting in darkness, grew clearer as she waited in constant suffering those long weary months for the Angel of Death, who came at last, but not until, as her husband thankfully acknowledges, "the book was practically complete and the last chapters had been sent to the press."

And now this book, this blessed thought, is in all hands, before all eyes, and only waits to become a practical reality, until the million, for which its author asks, has been subscribed. Surely, in a land where millions are poured out like water for any petty war in which an irritable governor chooses to engage us, for any plausible scheme promising much and often producing little, for any company issuing a flaming prospectus, surely it will not be long before this sum is subscribed for the redemption of the "submerged tenth," this "submerged tenth" being also our fellow country men and women, nay more, if we believe in the Fatherhood of God, our brothers and sisters. There are only two organisations in the whole world to whom success in such a scheme would be possible—no State or Government could undertake it, because officials must necessarily lack, as a body, the devotion and self-sacrifice which it imperatively requires. Yet besides self-sacrifice and devotion, there must also be rigid discipline, unquestioning obedience, a firm hand to resist aggression, and a heart wide enough to embrace all humanity. These requisites we can only find in the Catholic Church and the Salvation Army: the former has had her chance, and rejected it, the latter sees her chance now, and lovingly

goes forth to meet and fulfil it. Let it not be said, that we, as a nation, dishonoured our country, and blotted the record of our century, by failing to cast each one his mite into God's treasury, because we did not agree with all the ideas, or beliefs, or actions of the Salvation Army, or because we doubt the efficacy of the remedy it offers for the crime and misery in our midst; or for any reasons, save that we can do better with our one pair of hands and narrow soul, than General Booth with his thousands! Before all things let us not be like those

“Good Christians who sat still in easy chairs,

“And damned the general world for standing up!”

EVELYN PYNE.

After Office Hours.

DURING some weeks of the past autumn I have undergone what was to me a strange and unpleasant experience. I was forbidden by my doctor to read. My eyes had been going wrong, and a temporary abstinence from reading and writing was considered necessary. I sat for days in a darkened room meditating "on man, on nature, and on human life," and on the human eye in particular. For the news of the outside world I was dependent on the kind offices of friends and relatives. Everything was read out to me, but so self-absorbed and weak is human nature I listened with only a languid interest to the reports of the most exciting events. A little book entitled "Diseases of the Eye" aroused my interest in a greater degree than General Booth's scheme, the Parnell crisis, or Dr. Koch's cure. As regards the latter, the wonderful cures reported only irritated me. "He can make consumptives take up their bed and walk, and those afflicted with lupus merry and sound, but can he make the blind see? Therein," said I to myself "lies the test of a great man." Friends have said to me, "What opportunities you must have enjoyed for quiet thought, and for meditation over future work and opportunities for usefulness!" They little know me. They have not sounded the depths of the selfishness and egotism of which my character is composed. For what did I really do. I simply worried and fretted and pondered over what I feared was a threatened loss of sight. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," said the Psalmist, and in truth this complex bodily organism of ours, with its infinite possibilities of disease, failure, and accident, is one of the great mysteries of life. Things might have been arranged on a much simpler plan we irreverently think, if the vagaries of a single nerve are enough to alter for us the whole aspect of things. In my case the havoc a little eye affection made in all my cherished enthusiasms and ambitions was terrible to witness. A great Harley Street oculist occupied the place in my mind formerly occupied by Mr. Gladstone. What were politics and literature to me if I were going blind? And there were days when I would have parted with my whole library, and when I would have taken vows of perpetual abstinence from pen and ink, if by so doing I could for a few hours have sat in the sun, and have forgotten that I had eyes. I would have voted gladly for the Conservatives: I would have signed the Thirty-nine Articles: I would have sold my country: and I would have basely treated my mother, sooner than have lost my sight. Confessions are worthless unless true, and I only make these particular ones in order to show how a little inflammation will disarrange one's whole existence. I could write two long essays on "London as it appears from a cab on its way to Harley Street," and on "London as it appears on the return journey after you have been told

there is nothing organically wrong with your eyes." You would hardly recognise that the London of the one was the same city as the London of the other. How ungrateful man is! Before I reached home on that memorable journey, Mr. Gladstone was in my mind's eye again the greatest and noblest of living Englishmen; the Irish question was again the question of the hour; and the quondam great Harley Street oculist had dwindled down into a very eminent specialist in whom I had ceased to take any particular interest. On the whole, as the outcome of my eye troubles, I possess a smaller amount of self-respect than ever.

TO the officers of the Savings Bank Department the face and figure of their near neighbour, Dean Church, were well known. When in residence at the Deanery, he was a regular attendant at the Cathedral Services, and I have often met him in Doctors' Commons, going to or returning from St. Paul's. He made so little noise in the world, and he was of so quiet and retiring a disposition that we have hardly yet realised what a great man he really was. He was the one man of all living High Churchmen who bore the most marked traces of the personal influence of Newman. Somebody said of him, on hearing of his election to an Oriel Fellowship, "There was such a moral beauty about Church, that they could not help taking him." In this he resembled his old master and life-long friend, Cardinal Newman, as well as in the great literary reputation which will be his when the Farrars, Bickersteths, and Mrs. Humphry Wards of our era are forgotten. For me the quiet refined literary style of the Dean possesses a great charm. I can read his delightful and scholarly essays over and over again. His sentences linger in the memory, and his exquisite literary taste renders his judgments of peculiar value. Whatever he touched, he touched lightly and with true imaginative insight. The past lives again in his pages;

"for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world."

ONE of the forbidden pleasures of my youth was the reading of the novels of Miss Broughton. And, unlike many literary enthusiasms, my taste in this respect has continued into manhood. In her last novel, I think that my old favourite's hand is as cunning as ever. In some respects it is the best she has ever written. Always weak in her plots and in dramatic situations, she never fails in her power of delineating character. Herein lies the great charm of *Alas!* Jim Burgoyne, Amelia, and Cecilia are the creations of an author who not only understands thoroughly human nature, but possesses one of the rarest gifts of womanhood viz., a keen sense of the ridiculous. Miss Broughton's humour is of the best kind. It is that delicate form which in its effect sometimes hesitates between a smile and a tear. The portrait of Amelia

especially is as touching as it is amusing. Such a type of womanhood is so common that the attempt to reproduce it in a novel is to run the risk of being woefully commonplace. But this Miss Broughton never is. Then again, her men are never the namby-pamby creations of many female novelists. They are, like most men in real life, honest fellows who rarely do anything heroic, and who frequently make fools of themselves over some girl who is their superior in wit and repartee. They are neither saints nor sinners, but they win our sympathies, because they are men of like passions as ourselves. Jim Burgoyne is a healthy human creation, often selfish, as most men are, sometimes cruel in his thoughtlessness, but all his deficiencies in this respect are mastered and controlled by his overflowing good-nature and good-breeding. I recommend everybody to read *Alas!*

MR. J. ASHTON AINSCOUGH, of the Savings Bank Department, has recently published a little book bearing the title, "London of the Past, a Picture of the Olden City." "The book," the author says, "is not intended for those who are already learned in antiquarian lore, but rather for the less-favoured multitude who wish to be instructed in the leading facts of the City's history." And this intention I think Mr. Ainscough has very successfully carried out. It is not a pretensions work; indeed, it is almost wholly a careful compilation of interesting facts concerning the past history of London. Just enough is told the reader to whet his appetite for further information. But, even with his limited aims, Mr. Ainscough has hardly done justice to many portions of his subject. The City churches are dismissed in a paragraph, and one of the most popular of old London institutions, viz., Bartholomew Fair, scarcely receives mention. On the other hand, there is much curious information concerning other localities and institutions. Town and villages alter in character in the course of centuries, and it is interesting to know that, "in Henry VIII.'s time, Hampstead was a poor place chiefly inhabited by laundresses, who washed for the inhabitants of the metropolis." Stepney, a hundred years ago, was a holiday resort at Easter and Whitsuntide, while almost every family in Hackney kept its carriage. I recommend the book to the notice of "brother Officers." It is published by Mr. Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row, and the price is 1s. I may add that the work is very tastefully bound.

I DO not remember any books which fascinated me so much on a first perusal as *the Autocrat, the Poet, and the Professor at the Breakfast Table*. Few authors take such a healthy all-round view of life as the genial and thought-compelling doctor. His point of view is often commonplace, and his little sermons have frequently a suspicion of triviality, but for all that he charms us as few of his contemporaries can. Like Montaigne, he talks about himself, and with Montaigne he would say, "There is no description so

difficult, nor doubtless of so great utility, as that of one's self." In *Over the Teacups*, the doctor has abandoned the breakfast for the tea-table. He gives us his reasons for this change very humorously; conversation at tea is, he says, suggestive rather than exhaustive, and this book is avowedly of a more scrappy and *obiter dicta* nature than its predecessors. None the less I detect very little difference, and age has certainly not withered the venerable author. We should hardly know that it was an old man who was writing but for the frequency with which he indulges in reflections on that subject. Of love, of poetry, of youthful ambitions and ideals, he writes with all his old humour and enthusiasm. Somebody asked "Is not poetry the natural language of lovers." To which the counsellor replied, "I think I can tell you something about that. I suppose you will wonder how a man of my profession can know or interest himself about a question so remote from his arid pursuits. And yet there is hardly one man in a thousand who knows from actual experience a fraction of what I have learned of the lover's vocabulary in my professional experience. I have, I am sorry to say, had to take part in a great number of divorce cases. These have brought me scores and hundreds of letters, in which every shade of the great passion has been presented. What has struck me most in these amatory correspondences, has been their remarkable sameness. It seems as if writing love letters reduced all people to the same level. . . . It is always my darling! my darling! The words of endearment are the only ones the lover wants to employ. And he finds the vocabulary too limited for his vast desires. As to poetry, it is very common to find it in love letters, especially in those that have no love in them, The letters of bigamists and polygamists are rich in poetical extracts. Occasionally, an original spurt in rhyme adds variety to an otherwise monotonous performance. I don't think there is much passion in men's poetry addressed to women. I agree with the dictator that poetry is little more than the ashes of passion; still it may show that the flame has had its sweep where you find it, unless, indeed, it is shovelled in from another man's fireplace."

I HAVE before me a volume* which owes its existence to the industry, good taste, and poetical gifts of my friend, Mr. John T. Kelly, of the Savings Bank Department. Mr. Kelly is a poet of no mean order himself, and his poems are well known to all readers of the *Nation* and other Irish publications. But in this instance his efforts have been directed towards securing the wider popularity of a brother poet and contributor to the *Nation*, who died a few years ago, at the early age of 37. Mr. Kelly had abundance of material from which to compile his volume, for his hero was the most prolific of poets, and the difficulty of selection where a high level of merit was so constantly maintained must have been very great. Mr. Richard Dowling, the novelist, has written an

* Poems by J. F. O'Donnell.

introduction which places before us in a very pleasant way the facts of the poet's life. What he tells us explains at once the merits and the defects of O'Donnell's poetry. We are told that he could write verse quicker than prose. He used shorthand for poetical composition for this very reason. Column after column of verse was struck off in this way, and what it lost thereby in finish it gained in warmth and directness. He had to write for his daily bread, a condition of things which is fatal to the production of the highest poetry. Now and then Mr. O'Donnell reaches very high levels. "In the Twilight" is a very powerful poem, and the note of tragedy which is sounded in its lines is full of beauty and truth. It is the cry of remorse of the man who has been false to the lady to whom he was betrothed, and whom he has forsaken for another, who appeals to the bad, rather than to the good, elements in his character.

Help, Lord! I disowned, I betrayed you. Ay, changed to another from you:

O Winifred, Winifred, pity! Oh, broken heart, plead from the dust!

That you would have poured out your blood at my feet to redeem me I know,
But I smote you, dead, darling, I smote you—dashed down to the earth all
your trust;

And God drew his angel unto Him, and let the man live with his lust.

Several other of his General Poems evince a similar appreciation of the tragedy of life, while he keeps too close to the facts of human experience to forget the comedy. His poems relating to Ireland, which occupy by far the larger portion of the book, are the work of an ardent and relentless Nationalist. They were written at white-heat during the most critical and stormy periods of Irish history, and the point of view is the same in almost every one of them. Shelley has said that "our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." None the less it is a fact that suffering in a nation or in an individual has not been favourable to the production of great poetry. The song of the exile is beautiful in its way; but the exile has only a few strings to his lyre, and he lacks the variety and robustness which accompany a song of triumph. "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" sang the exiled Jew. And in a similar way we see in Ireland many poets, but very little great poetry. The conditions of her existence are against it; the note of gladness and triumph is absent from her poets; oppression, gloom, and suspicion surround them on every side. But these elements in national life they sing of with much beauty and tenderness of feeling. Mr. O'Donnell is a poet, many of whose poems deserve a more lasting existence than in the pages of Nationalist journals, and his countrymen owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Kelly for his labour of love. Englishmen, too, are grateful for the work he has done. Mr. Kelly is another old contributor to *Blackfriars*, and for this reason I am especially glad to notice his work. The book is published by Ward and Downey.

MY readers will be interested to know that Mr. Clement K. Shorter, the new editor of the *Illustrated London News*, was, up to the date of his appointment, a Second Division Clerk in

Somerset House. He is also an old contributor to *Blackfriars*, for the pages of which he wrote some time ago an article on Lord Tennyson. Mr. Shorter's knowledge of books, and the ability he displays in applying that knowledge to his many journalistic undertakings, have often excited my envy and admiration. It is a case of youth succeeding age, as his predecessor, Mr. Latey, retires at the advanced age of 82. As an old friend and a brother Civil Servant, I congratulate Mr. Shorter on his appointment.

THE EDITOR.

Notices of Books.

SIR GEORGE BURNS, BART., His Times and Friends. By Edwin Hodder.

Everybody in these times has his biographer, and it seems to be the fashion to bring out a man's life as soon as possible after he has died, lest he should be entirely forgotten before the book is published. Sir George Burns only died in June, and a few months later his biography was in the hands of the public. It must not, however, be supposed that this book was written and published in so short an interval. Its preparation was begun in 1888 at the suggestion of many friends, who thought the story of his life worth telling. Mr. Burns—his baronetcy was not conferred until the following year—hesitated at first, but at length consented, looked up old letters and papers, and invited Mr. Hodder to his pleasant house on the shores of Wemyss Bay to furnish him with materials for the book.

George Burns was born in 1795, the youngest son of John Burns, Minister of the Barony Church in Glasgow. At the age of seventeen he began his business life in his native city, and gradually accumulated a large fortune. He is best known as one of the founders of the famous Cunard Company, about which this volume gives us some interesting information, though the larger part of it is devoted to his personal history and to his position as a man of light and leading in matters ecclesiastical and religious. These are perhaps beyond the scope of this Magazine, but we have in our perusal of Mr. Hodder's book noted some points of interest to our readers, and to them we will briefly refer.

The foundation of the Cunard Company seems to have been brought about by the endeavour of the Admiralty (who at that time arranged the contracts for the conveyance of mails by sea) to establish a steam-packet service between this country and America. They issued advertisements and circulars, and one of these fell into the hands of Samuel Cunard, of Halifax. Nova Scotia, who had long been revolving in his mind the establishment of a regular line of steamers between the two countries. Mr.

Cunard came to England, saw Mr. Burns and Mr. MacIver, and the three succeeded in raising the necessary capital to start the famous Cunard Company. A contract was entered into for a fortnightly service between Liverpool, Halifax, and Boston, and four paddle wheel steamers, each of 1150 tons and a horse power of 740, were built for the service. The first of them, the "Britannia," left the Mersey on the 4th of July, 1840, and reached Boston in fourteen days eight hours, four hours earlier than the anticipated time. The Admiralty seem to have been liberal in their arrangements, for during the first seven years of the contract the Company received from the British Government on the average £3,295 a voyage.

Mr. Burns offered, in 1849, to carry the mails between Greenock and Belfast free of all charge. Lord Clanricarde, then Postmaster-General, had almost promised the contract to the Glasgow and South Western Railway, who proposed to carry them by way of Ardrossan, and Burns was anxious to prevent the establishment of a rival route. When he made the offer to Colonel Maberley, the worthy secretary exclaimed, "Burns, you are a fool" (has Mr. Hodder omitted an epithet?), but on sending for Mr. William Page, and talking the matter over, he altered his opinion, and said, "No, Burns is no fool, he knows what he is about." He obtained the contract, and for thirty-three years the mails were carried free of expense.

Mr. Hodder has produced an interesting book, which will, we think, add to his reputation as a successful biographer. We have referred to the large amount of space devoted to religious questions, but we do not wish to convey the idea that no lighter subjects are touched upon. On the contrary, there are several capital anecdotes and some good stories of Burns and his friends.

THE LIFE, LETTERS, AND FRIENDSHIPS OF RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES, First Lord Houghton. By T. Wemyss Reid. (Cassell and Co.)

To those who have read Mr. Wemyss Reid's *Life of W. E. Forster*, and thus learned to form great expectations with regard to his work, we can only say these expectations will be fully realised, probably surpassed, in reading Lord Houghton's *Life, Letters, and Friendships*.

This book is a pleasant social "History of our own Times," in which the speaker is also one of the chief actors; for although Monckton Milnes never attained to absolute greatness, either as author or politician, he was comparatively great in such various ways, played so many parts in the world, and each one with the same easy grace, and almost audacious charm, that the story of his life is a sort of panorama, in which we see nearly every eminent figure of the century revolving round the genial Yorkshireman. No man surely was ever before such a cosmopolitan in his friendships—kings and communists, cardinals and Quakers, Italians, Germans, Frenchmen, Americans, each and all, found him the

joyous companion, the sympathising friend, the unselfish, unwearied helper, as occasion served; and probably no man who was so widely and deeply loved was ever so little hated, and envied. His abounding outward gaiety was but a veil, thinly hiding, to those who knew him, the unquenchable tenderness of his nature: as his biographer says, the keynote of that richly gifted and many-sided personality may be found in a remark W. E. Forster made to Lord Dalhousie one evening at the Cosmopolitan Club, when Richard Monckton Milnes had left earlier than usual. "I have many friends who would be kind to me in distress, but only one who would be equally kind to me in disgrace, and he has just left the room."

A SOCIAL DEPARTURE. By Sara Jeannette Duncan.
(Chatto and Windus.)

If we did not feel sure that Orthodocia and her friends have only said smilingly to us, as they did to everybody in fascinating flower-loving Japan, "*Mata kimasu*," so that our reluctant "*sayouara*" is but for a time (we hope a very brief one), we should feel more regret than we actually do at reaching St. Eves-in-the-Garden, Wigginton, Devon, after surely the most charming journey round the world, in the pleasantest company, we have ever enjoyed. The *Social Departure* is one that will be largely followed by other Orthodocias and their friends we imagine, and if any reader desires to know the meaning of "*mata kimasu*" and "*sayouara*, and can enjoy sparkling descriptions of places and people, now sinking into mere comedy, now rising into real poetry, as well as a delightfully told dream ghost story, we advise him or her by all means to read the record of "*How Orthodocia and I went round the World by Ourselves*." The illustrations by F. H. Townsend are by no means the least charming feature of the book, and admirably reflect the always pleasantly written text.

WHISPER! By Frances Wynne (Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co.).

A dainty little volume of verse comes to us with this provocative title, and we think every poet who reads, would wish to have written, the triolet called *Sealed Orders*, which we cannot forbear from quoting—

My little violets, sweet and blue,
When you have reached the world's far end,
Go straight to—*some one* (you know *who*,
My little violets, sweets and blue!)
And tell him that I send by you—
Ah! well, *he'll* find out what I send,
My little violets, sweets and blue,
When you have reached the world's far end.

Many of these bright and breezy little poems remind us of Thos. Bailey Aldrich, in their delicate music and freshness of thought and expression. We hope this preliminary "*Whisper!*" from a poet who is as bright and fresh as her work, may be the fortunate herald of many clear-sounding songs her true and sweet voice will sing for us in the future.

RICHARD WAGNER'S LETTERS TO HIS DRESDEN FRIENDS. Translated by J. Shedlock (H. Grevel and Co.).

After reading Mr. Shedlock's preface to this translation, we cannot help wondering how much "valuable aid" and what kind of useful suggestions he has received from Mr. W. Ashton Ellis, beyond the acknowledged preparation of a most complete and valuable index. We read the letters up to No. 55 to Uhlig without finding a trace of that style which *The Meister* has made familiar to us; then suddenly we found ourselves at home, and remembered reading this letter in the May number of *The Meister*, the Wagnerian quarterly which Mr. Ellis edits. Here and there afterwards we also seemed to recognise touches put in by a stronger hand—are these the "aids and suggestions." We are very anxious to know!

The letter themselves, though not so valuable from a literary point of view, as those to Liszt, with the exception of Letter 55 to Uhlig, and one or two others, are even more so to every one interested in the personality of Wagner, showing him as they do, in the perfect ease and trust of intimate friendship, pouring out his hope, his joy, his despair, to those faithful old friends left behind in Dresden. Very touching is the love of the childless man for his dog and his parrot, the yearning of the exile for a little house and garden belonging to himself, wherein he could make a real *home* and settle down to his great work in peace. We watch the growth of this great work in his mind from the first germ to the final strength and beauty of "*Der Ring des Nibelungen*," and sympathise with the master's *naïve* joy as it was gradually revealed to him; and we see clearly in these letters how lovable the *man* was apart from the greatness of the *artist*—how grateful for friendship and service, how ready to beg forgiveness for hasty words, how determined to be faithful to what seemed to him the truth whether in art or life. "Be true," he says, "mercilessly true; rejoice in truth for its own sake; thus will you have enough for the present." There are many things we should like to quote, did space allow; but it is, after all, far better for every reader to choose his own quotations, and he will find abundance of suggestive thoughts in these Letters expressed in quotable form.

St. Martin's Letter-Bag.

A Savings Bank Dinner.

FOR some years past it has been an annual practice on the part of a number of gentlemen who work in the Correspondence Branch of the Savings Bank Department to dine together at a celebrated Oxford Street hostelry. The dinner took place this year on Tuesday, December 9th, and the Acting Chief Clerk of the Branch, Mr. I. J. Sealy, presided. The toast of the evening, "The Correspondence Branch," was proposed by the chairman, and responded to by Mr. C. C. Sutch. Mr. E. Bennett proposed the next toast, "Agriculture, Commerce, Sports, and the Fine Arts," to which Messrs. H. Colgate, A. Belcher, H. S. Thompson, and C. W. Hartung responded. Instead of the usual toast of "The Ladies," a change was made, and that of "The Bachelors" substituted. It was proposed by Mr. Howard, and responded to by Mr. T. R. Ling. Songs and recitations were sandwiched between the various toasts, and at the close of the proceedings a telegram was sent to Mr. J. E. Kearney, the Chief Correspondent, conveying the good wishes of the men present. Mr. Kearney was absent from the dinner in consequence of indisposition. The proceedings at the dinner abundantly testified to the union and good fellowship, which exist among all classes in the Savings Bank Department. In fact, we believe there are few Departments in the State where so much *bonhomie* and friendship between man and man exist as in this somewhat disaffected portion of the Postmaster-General's dominions.

Warrington.

A SHORT time ago a Postmaster was simply what the name implies—a master of posts. As long as he had a hand for sorting and a tongue for licking a stamp or an unruly assistant, nothing more was required of him except to pay up regularly. But we have changed all that. A Postmaster of the present day has not only a large amount of postal business of all kinds to do, but he is expected to know something of scientific telegraphy also. This is an age of publicity, and people who know anything worth knowing are expected to impart their "knowth" to others. When Postmasters who have anything to say are willing to say it, no doubt it tends to smooth matters and increase their influence in the towns over whose correspondence they preside. And so we are glad to observe that Mr. C. H. Kerry, the newly appointed Postmaster of Warrington, recently opened the session of the Literary and Philosophical

Society of the town by a lecture on Telegraphy and Electricity. Mr. Kerry illustrated his lecture by numerous experiments and greatly interested a large audience.

The General Post Office North.

THE foundation stone of this building was laid on the 20th November by the Postmaster-General, who, in the course of his speech, reminded his hearers that twenty years before Mr. Ayrton had laid the foundation stone of the G.P.O. West. In that short period the building, which it was supposed would suffice to house their growing services for, perhaps, a century, had become almost obsolete in its entire insufficiency to cope with the business which they had to transact. When the Post Office West was designed and built it was intended to accommodate the Postmaster-General's Office, the Secretary's Office, the Solicitor's Office, Receiver and Accountant-General's Office, and the Central Savings Bank. The number of persons originally intended to be accommodated was about 700. What was the staff to-day? The transfer of the telegraphs to the Government in 1870 altered the arrangement altogether. The upper part of the building, which had been intended for the Savings Bank, was appropriated to the Central Telegraph Office, and an entirely new building for the Savings Bank had to be erected in Queen Victoria Street, and that accommodated a staff of no fewer than 1,250 persons. An additional story had had to be added to the General Post Office West in 1884, and further accommodation had been found at Mount Pleasant dépôt. After all these removals and transfers of staff from the principal building, they had still no fewer than 1,070 connected with the branches still housed there who could not find accommodation within the walls of the General Post Office West. Regarding the building now about to be erected, Mr. Raikes went on to say that, when it raised its head in the City of London, it would, he thought, be considered worthy of its position even in a city which, perhaps, contained within its limits a greater number of really beautiful buildings than any city in Europe. The new building was intended to provide accommodation for the Postmaster-General's Office the Secretary's Office, the Solicitor's Office, and a great part of the Receiver and Accountant-General's Office, or 1,500 persons in all; and the site, exclusive of that of the old Money Order Office, cost no less than £326,000. Having expressed regret that there were present that day only a few who witnessed the ceremony of twenty years ago, the Postmaster-General expressed the hope that many assembled now would be spared to see the day when his successor came to lay the memorial stone of the General Post Office South—a ceremony which he had not the smallest doubt would be called for by the increasing exigencies of the service in the very early period of the twentieth century.

Sir S. A. Blackwood, in calling for three cheers for the Post-

master-General, remarked that he felt sure all hoped that when the structure was completed Mr. Raikes might be still presiding over the Department, and might be one of the first to inhabit its walls.

Mr. Raikes on the Poets.

ON the 6th November, Mr. Raikes delivered an address at the Mechanics' Institute at Hyde, Cheshire.

After referring to the fact that he had the very great, he might say the undeserved, honour of being one of the representatives of the greatest University in the world, he stated that he came before them as a learner, not as a teacher. In the latter part of his speech occurs a novel and remarkable comparison of Scott with Macaulay.

Mr. Raikes ended up with some useful remarks on poets: "I think it very certain that there are few young fellows who may not derive the greatest possible advantage and pleasure by cultivating a taste for poetry. And, if you wish to do that, there is one thing that you must specially avoid, and that is the composition of poetry. It will not do for any young fellow who has taken up a volume to which he takes a fancy immediately to sit down and get a dictionary, find out half-a-dozen rhymes and suppose because he can string them together that he is going to be another Byron. Byrons are not so common as all that. But at the same time, while I venture as a friend, and as one who has *perhaps sometimes sinned against the rule which I am now laying down*, to warn you against that which is the besetting vice of some young men of poetic taste, even that is a sort of humble homage to men of former days, and I would say this: If any of you have a taste for poetry, don't be ashamed of it. There is nothing from which you can derive more pleasure; there is nothing which will do more to raise your mind, to refine your taste, and to add to your pleasure in life than a love of poetry,—and, in the commonplace life which we lead, the man who has to spend his life in the counting house or the manufactory, if he has a taste for some of the poetical works of our ancestors, may carry with him into his ordinary daily work something which will enlighten and ennoble it, if from time to time he brings back to his mind a glimpse of that higher atmosphere and a breath of that purer and sweeter air."

A fortnight later, Mr. Raikes was a guest at the dinner of the Electrical Engineers, and he concluded his speech with the following free rendering of a well-known Latin couplet.

Our threefold goddess, with her magic spells,
By turns alarms, enlightens, and impels.
While hangs the pale Exchange upon her strings,
Her lamp cheers cities, and her touch gives wings.

The Rowland Hill Fund.

THE Jubilee will leave behind it one clear foot-print at any rate. The Rowland Hill Benevolent Fund had, at the beginning of

the year, a capital sum of £17,760 invested: now the amount is at least £35,000. Of this splendid increase, £10,000 is due to the profit from the sale of the jubilee envelopes, while the remainder is the outcome of a special appeal which has been made on behalf of the fund. Mr. Baines, the chairman of the Jubilee Committee, has thrown himself energetically into the task of obtaining as much grist as possible for the "sorrow-staying mill," and great success has rewarded his efforts. Many postmasters have exerted their influence in the same direction, especially the postmasters of Liverpool, Glasgow, and Leeds. At the annual meeting of the Fund, held at the Mansion House on the 11th November, Mr. Baines referred, in terms of well-deserved praise, to the services rendered by Mr. W. G. Gates, on whom almost the whole of the correspondence in connection with the Jubilee has fallen, and to whose ability and energy its success is in great part due.

The income of the Fund last year from investments was £668, while the annual subscriptions amounted to £1,106, or a total income of £1,774 a year. With such an income it is rather surprising to find that the amount of the grants actually made amounted only to £1,051. This startling discrepancy is caused by the fact that the policy of the trustees has been to increase their investments year by year, so as to place the Fund on a permanent footing. But, now that the investments of the Fund have been doubled, we cannot but hope that a different policy will be adopted. The trustees will have at their command an income of some £2,400 a year, every penny of which is needed to carry out efficiently the objects of the Fund. We are glad to observe that the annual subscriptions last year show a slight increase on those of the preceding year, and we hope this improvement will continue. If the trustees feel quite certain of continued support, they will have no need for further increasing their investments.

An old Gretna Marriage Certificate.

A CORRESPONDENT sends us the following copy of one of these famous marriage certificates which has passed through his hands. We have altered the names of the Bride and Bridegroom.

KINGDOM OF SCOTLAND.

COUNTY OF DUMFRIES.

PARISH OF GRETN.

These are to certify to all whom these presents shall come that "James King" from the Parish of Haltwhistle in the County of Northumberland and "Lucy Nairn" of the Parish of Haltwhistle in the County of Northumberland, being now here present, and having declared themselves single persons were this day married after the manner of the Laws of the Church of England and

agreeably to the Laws of Scotland; as witness our hands Allison's Bank, Toll House this 19th day of January 1856.

Before John Murray { JAMES KING.
 { LUCY NAIRN.
Witnesses. { JOHN SMITH, CARLISLE.
 { HENRY JONES, GISTNA.

Mr. Godby again.

Mr. Godby has lately received many proofs of the esteem in which he is held by all who have been brought into contact with him. In July last Mr. A. M. Shaw presented him with a handsome clock, which was subscribed for by many of the principal London officers. Unfortunately the state of Mr. Godby's health did not admit of his coming up to London to receive the presentation, but, in a feelingly worded letter which was printed and circulated among the subscribers, he expressed his deep gratification at this proof of esteem and regard.

Soon afterwards the Clerks in the Stationery Office at Shrewsbury presented him with a handsome ivory paper cutter. On the 7th August Mr. Godby was entertained at dinner at the Shrewsbury Club by his travelling officers, and presented with a silver mounted claret jug. Mr. J. P. Lambert, Surveyor of the South Wales District, who served under Mr. Godby for 25 years, was unavoidably absent, and the presentation was therefore made by Mr. F. Salisbury, the Assistant Surveyor, who in his speech referred to the personal affection and regard in which Mr. Godby was held by his staff, and to the regret which they all felt in losing one who was not only an honoured chief but a dear friend.

Finally, on the 5th November, the Postmasters of the North Wales district, presented Mr. Godby with a silver tea and coffee service. The deputation by whom the presentation was made, consisted of the Postmasters of Stoke-on-Trent, Shrewsbury, Stafford, Knighton, Ludlow, Machynlleth, Newtown, Northwich, Sandbach, Shifnal, Tarporley, and Wellington.

Mr. Broughton (Stafford), in making the presentation, bore testimony to the sincere regard in which Mr. Godby is held for his high personal character and strict integrity, as well as for his courtesy and urbanity, and in conclusion expressed a hope that the remainder of his life might be crowned with every blessing. Mr. Godby, in reply, said that none of the evidences of good will which he had receive on his retirement had gratified him more than this one, because it was a proof that he had gained the esteem of those over whom he had presided for 32 years; any success which he might have obtained in his life's work was due chiefly to the friendly feeling which had always existed between them.

Mr. E. C. Burckhardt.

ON the 4th November last, this gentleman, who has just retired from the Service, was agreeably surprised by being presented with a handsome clock and vases which were subscribed for by many of the Postmasters of the South Midland District, headed by Mr. Arnall, of Oxford, and Mr. Adams, of Leamington. We understand, too, that Mr. Phillipson, of Shrewsbury, and a few of the ex-Postmasters of the district have presented him with a silver-mounted photograph album.

On the recommendation of H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex, Mr. E. C. Burckhardt was appointed a Clerk in the Foreign Office, G.P.O., on the 15th August, 1837, by the Earl of Lichfield then Postmaster-General. After having made several unsuccessful applications for appointments to the Secretary's Office, he resigned his position in February, 1841, in order to accept the post of Chief Clerk under the Deputy Postmaster-General of Jamaica. While there, he frequently took charge of the Postal Service of the island during the absence of the Deputy, and became thoroughly conversant with all branches of the work. In 1857, he visited England for the benefit of his health, and while staying at Leamington he applied for a Surveyor's Clerkship which happened to be vacant, and to which he was appointed by the Duke of Argyll. He worked for a time under Mr. Godby, and was then transferred to the southern district of Scotland, of which district he was appointed Surveyor in 1860. In recommending him for the appointment, Mr. Abbott, the Secretary for Scotland, described him as an efficient officer, zealous and diligent, and perfectly conversant with all the details of the Service. Finally, in June, 1866, he was transferred to the South Midland District, over which he has since presided.

The 24th Middlesex.

THE establishment of the 24th Middlesex (Post Office) Rifles has just been increased by the addition of another of those Reserve organisations for which the Corps has become famous, viz., The Army Signalling Corps, now in process of formation. It will consist of four Officers and 120 men in four Companies, and will be used to supplement the Army Signallers in case of hostilities. The other Reserve Companies attached to the 24th are the Army Post Office Corps and the Field Telegraph Corps. The former consists of 5 Officers and 110 men and is formed for the purpose of conducting the Post Office business of an army in the field. Unfortunately only two Officers are at present available for this service. The latter Corps consists of 110 men drawn from the Telegraph Service, and would be used to supplement the Telegraph Battalion of the Royal Engineers.

Each of these organisations is formed into a company of the 24th Middlesex. A Volunteer who proposes to enter the Reserve is

enlisted for service in the Army Post Office Corps, the Army Signalling Corps, or, in the case of Telegraphists, the Royal Engineers, and then immediately transferred to the 1st class Army Reserve, drawing pay in the same manner as ordinary Reservists. He is struck off the strength of the 24th Middlesex, and then attached thereto for the purposes of drill and discipline.

The command of the Army Post Office Corps, vacant by the death of Major Viall, has devolved upon Captain G. W. Treble, a young and energetic Officer, who may be relied upon to keep the Corps in a high state of efficiency.

Two of the Non-commissioned Officers, Col-Sgt. Kemp and Sergeant Tee, obtained the highest number of points recorded in the last signalling class held at Wellington Barracks.

Still Jubilating.

MESSRS. Sampson Low and Marston have produced for the Philatelic Society a "Descriptive Catalogue of all the Postage Stamps of the United Kingdom, issued during the past fifty years" by W. A. S. Westoby, M.A. The work is illustrated by a large number of engravings, which, however, are not coloured, and so give little idea of the effect of the originals. The work is fully up to date, including as it does the Jubilee envelope, in which Mr. Westoby sees something wanting artistically, when he compares it with the Mulready design. We are glad to learn, however, that the paper used is in his opinion good.

Another jubilaical item is a Christmas card containing in addition to the usual engine and steam ship a number of reminders of the recent celebrations in the shape of representations of the Queen, Sir Rowland Hill, and the special post-card. The artist evidently is not satisfied with the front of the Guildhall as it stands, so he represents it as it was twenty years ago when Dance's ugly façade was still perfect. The dated stamp in the right-hand corner is that of the proleptic post-office mentioned in our account of the Jubilee, and those who are fond of little barn-door fowl flights of learning may as well husband their resources and not write to draw attention to what they imagine is an error in the date given thereon.

Those who want some tangible memorial of the celebrations will be interested to know that Messrs. Spink and Son, of Gracechurch Street, have issued a commemoration medal. On one side is a bust of Sir Rowland Hill surmounting a Mulready envelope, while on the other side is a Jubilee envelope and a bust of the Queen.

Finally we desire to congratulate Mr. H. Joyce C.B., Mr. E. H. Rea, C.M.G., and Mr. J. C. Lamb, C.M.G., on the honours which have been conferred on them.

Postal Polemics.

AN interesting pamphlet has recently been issued by Mr. W. E. Clery, of the London Postal Service, under the title of "Civil Service Combination, a chapter of recent Postal History"

(Roberts and Co., 288, Goswell Road, E.C., price 3d.), which exposes with singular frankness the mistakes made by the Postmen's Union in the recent strike, and claims for Civil Servants a right of combination. The pamphlet is well written, and is moderate in tone. Mr. Clery holds that, although Civil Servants should combine, their remedy is not by striking, but by using every means of influencing public opinion in their favour.

We have also received a pamphlet from the *Arbroath Herald* office containing a short account of the life of James Chalmers, and of his claim to be the inventor of the adhesive postage stamp. We have read that, when Sir Ralph the Rover got into trouble somewhere near Aberbrothock, he tore his hair and cursed himself in his despair. We should have cause to do the same if we were to allow our frail bark to touch the postage stamp rock with the waves of Chalmers buffeting our frail timbers while the winds from the Hills tore our sails to ribbons. No, we will leave the bell alone.

Three Brave Men.

THE bronze medal and certificate of the Royal Humane Society were presented to John Allistone, junior, a postman, for saving the life of a lad who was drowning in the Thames, on September 7th, off Twickenham Embankment. The presentation was made at the Twickenham Post Office by the Controller of the London Postal Service, Mr. R. C. Tombs, who was received at the office by the acting surveyor of the district, Mr. W. S. Rushton, and the postmaster, Mr. Wallis. Mr. Tombs highly eulogised Allistone's brave conduct, and attached the medal to his breast amid vociferous cheering. Allistone was also congratulated by the surveyor and postmaster, and was again heartily cheered by the staff. The Postmaster-General would have made the presentation himself had he not been prevented by numerous pressing engagements.

On the 20th August, a boy who had tumbled into the river at the Temple Stairs, was pluckily rescued from drowning by William Mills, a mail porter, who happened to be riding by on a van. In this case, also, the Royal Humane Society awarded a medal, which was presented to Mills (who is a corporal in the 24th Middlesex) by Colonel Du Plat Taylor.

Patrick Tully, a telegraph messenger at Belfast, who on the 9th July saved a woman from drowning in the River Laggan, has been presented by the same useful society with a testimonial on vellum.

Mr. Frederic Harrison on the Post Office.

IN *The Speaker* for December 20th there appears a vigorous attack on the Post Office from the pen of Mr. Frederic Harrison.

"It cannot be denied" he says, "that the Post Office makes a

profit on its business more gigantic than that of any trading body of which the accounts are known; while it is amongst those which get most work for low pay, and is a 'hard master' all round. We have of late had long and irritating disputes, and there still exist all the elements of profound agitation amongst those it employs. . . . Its answer to all complaints of hard treatment and scanty pay is always the same:—'We bargain for such service in open market, and we pay the lowest possible price.' But is it wise, in these days of Socialist agitation, for a public department to flaunt the most extreme doctrine of competition? And is it true policy for a very strict monopoly to take such pride in its enormous, disproportionate, and peculiar rate of profits?"

Mr. Harrison goes on to say that the Department "rolls in profits at the rate of £46 yearly for every £56 spent," and that to produce this result "all the resources of industrial oppression now current in the great Sweating Market," are brought into requisition. Further, he accuses the Department of neglecting its duties in the country districts. He has for some months past kept note of the blunders and delays in one district, and he finds that the defaults average at a single house two to three every week. "That is to say, the Post Office being paid to perform a certain service, which by law no one else is allowed to perform, fails to keep its engagements every third or fourth day, and the injured party has to put up with the Post Office form, No. 55 or No. 169, with which Sir Arthur Blackwood is wont to smile away all remonstrances. What is the origin of this constant, habitual, systematic breach of contract by a State monopoly? It is always the same—an insufficient staff, incompetent sorters, huffer-mugger offices, and raw or decrepit and dotard carriers. To run the service on the cheap, to hand over to the Chancellor of the Exchequer its four millions and a half of profit, to worry the public, fob them off with form No. 55, and to screen the lower servants of the Office is the dominant idea of the Department." Mr. Harrison's charge is that the more showy portions of the Service such as the Atlantic and Indian Mails, the Metropolitan, Urban, and Trunk Services are well done, but the success is achieved at the expense of the rural service, and of those portions of its work which do not come so prominently before the public.

Once more—"The Department practically makes the country and the Treasury a present of the Parcel Post out of the sweat of the carriers and others, on whom it has thrown a painful new burden. The answer is:—"If they don't like it, they can leave it." That is simply the answer of the sweating employer everywhere; and it is not a good answer. At any rate, if it is good enough for an East End tailor's slop-shop, it is not good enough to put into the mouth of the Queen and on the responsibility of the nation." Altogether the article is a strong indictment of ourselves as a Department, and coming as it does from a public man like Mr. Frederic Harrison it deserves our attention. His charges

will doubtless be replied to in the columns of the public press ; but meanwhile we may point out that his estimate of the net revenue of the Department in 1889 as £4,672,430 is obtained as he himself admits by putting the cost of the telegraph service on one side. Had he added the cost of this service (£2,085,616) to the cost of the postal service (£5,667,848) he would have found that the total cost was £7,753,464, while the total revenue was £10,641,613. Thus the net revenue was £2,888,149, or not much more than half the figure at which Mr. Harrison places it.

Sir C. Dilke on the Treasury.

SPEAKING recently at Glasgow on the subject of the Labour Bureau, Sir Charles Dilke attributed its shortcomings to the refusal of the Treasury to grant an adequate sum of money for the purpose. He added :—

“A strong Minister once told the highest officer of the Treasury that that Department was so managed that if he knew of a plot by which London would be destroyed on a given day, and could prevent it by an expenditure of £50, and applied to the Treasury for the money, undertaking the whole responsibility, a fortnight after London had been destroyed he would receive from the Treasury an answer saying that there was no precedent for the application.”

Mr. C. Hawkes.

WE are sorry to learn that Mr. Charles Hawkes, controller of the Money Order Office, who has been on sick-leave for some months, has felt obliged to resign. Mr. Hawkes was selected in 1861 to assist in organising and carrying out the system of Post Office Savings Banks, and in the course of a few years he became chief clerk for correspondence in the Savings Bank Department. He was appointed controller of the Money Order Office in 1876 at a time when a firm hand was much needed there, and we believe he was successful in reducing to order much of the confusion existing before his appointment. Mr. Hawkes has always taken a keen interest in athletics, and was one of the original promoters of the Savings Bank sports. In those days, however, the annual gathering was a very small affair, forty or fifty was considered a large attendance, and prizes were unknown ; Mr. Hawkes was always present, and often stood as judge of the races. We do not ever remember seeing him handling the bat, though he was a constant attendant at the matches played by the old Post Office Cricket Club, of which Mr. Edward Page was the guardian angel.

Mr. Hawkes has not quite completed forty years' service. He carries with him into his retirement the warm wishes of many friends for his complete recovery and their hope that he may enjoy many years of freedom from official cares.

The Post-Office Musical Society.

ON the 11th November a largely attended meeting was held in the Deputation Room for the purpose of placing this Society on a permanent footing. Sir Arthur Blackwood took the chair, and introduced Mr. Sydney Beckley, who explained in detail the objects of the proposed Society. Concerts would be given of vocal and instrumental music in aid of Post-Office and other charities. The officers of the Society were next elected as follows :—

Hon. Treasurer.—Mr. J. Ardron (S.O.)

Hon. Secs.—Leonard Barnes (R. and A.G.O.), E. Wedlake (Intelligence Branch, Secretary's Office).

Committee.—Messrs. Hall, Twiss, Gates, Gill, and Wilson (Secretary's Office); E. Winter (Solicitor's Office); E. G. Richardson (R.A.G.O.); Messrs. I. J. Sealy and E. Nops and Miss Smith (Savings Bank); Mrs. Arundel-Colliver and Miss McBeath (R.A.G.O.); and Miss C. Bambridge (L.P.S.)

Conductor.—Mr. S. H. Beckley (R. and A.G.O.)

The first meeting of the Society will be held at 147, Queen Victoria Street, on the 20th January, at 5.30 p.m., when Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise" will be practised. The subscription is 2s. 6d. a year.

Mr. Charles Marvin.

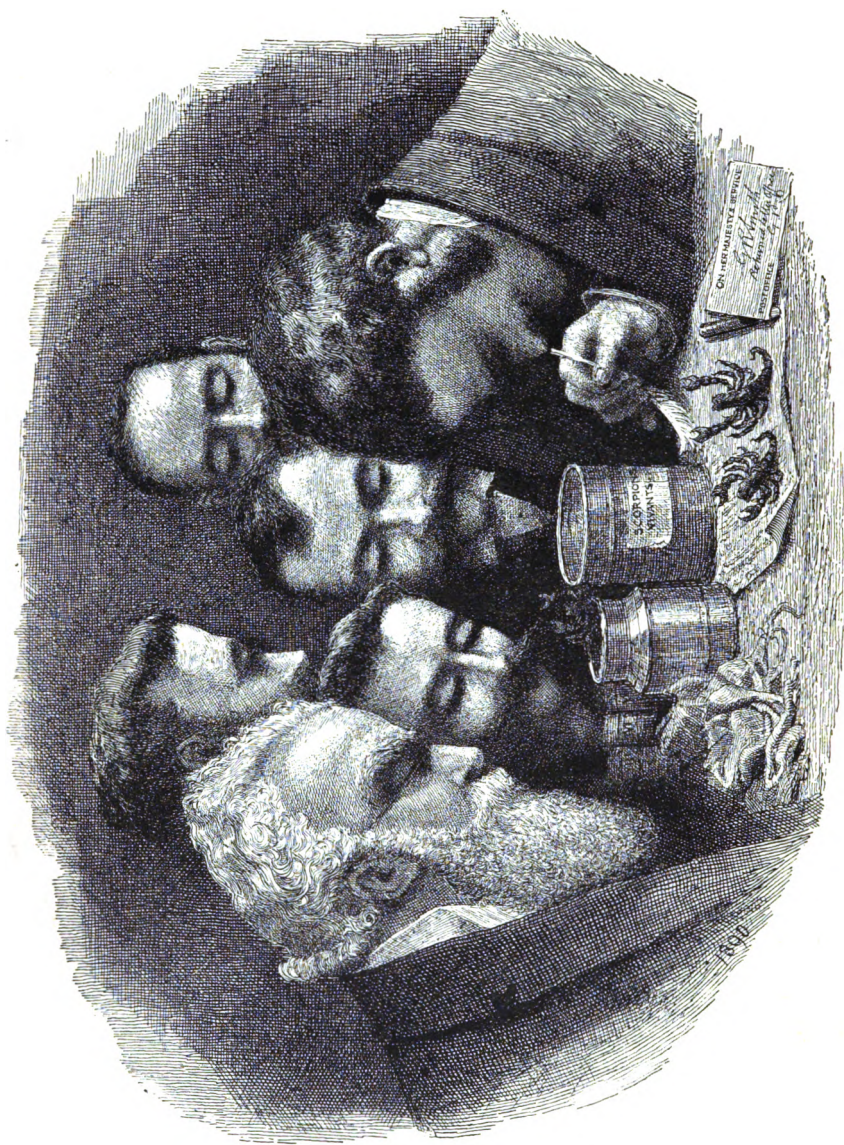
THE death of this gentleman recalls many old memories to those who remember his brief career in the Civil Service. Mr. Marvin came from Russia as a very young man, and, having to push his own way in the world, he enrolled himself in the body of Civil Service writers, while he gave his spare time to the literary pursuits to which eventually he bent all his energies. He was first drafted to Somerset House, thence to the Post-Office, thence to the Custom House, and afterwards to the Foreign Office. During his sojourn in the last-named Department occurred the memorable episode of the Secret Treaty, disclosed by him to the *Globe* newspaper forming the *cause célèbre*, which first brought his name before the public. This is neither the time nor the place to dwell upon the details of the case, which were fully reported in the newspapers of the period. Suffice it to say, that it effectually closed his career as a Writer, while it certainly thrust him into a prominent position in the political and literary world, which otherwise he might have been long in obtaining. From that date to the time of his death, Mr. Marvin's energies were chiefly spent in writing on the Russo-Indian question, on which he has long since been considered as an authority. He had little charm of style, but a great power of amassing facts and detailing them clearly; and the dogged perseverance which he employed in bringing his literary efforts into shape deserved their reward. "Our Public Offices"

may fairly be called an amusing book. It contains a brief record of the author's experience in the Civil Service, with many life-like portraits of officials in the offices in which he served.

Mr. W. B. Grey.

ANOTHER retirement to be chronicled is that of the Sub-Controller of the Foreign Branch of the London Postal Service. Mr. Grey entered the Slave Trade Department in 1840, and was transferred to the Post Office in 1843, where he took an active part in the work of subdividing London into postal districts. In 1864 he became Sub-Controller of the Circulation Department, where he was removed successively to similar positions in the Registered Letter Branch and the Foreign Branch.

Under a reserved manner and a somewhat cold exterior, Mr. Grey conceals a warm heart and enlarged sympathies. He has always taken a special interest in youth, and many a lad owes his position in life to Mr. Grey's influence and assistance. His literary tastes and talents he began somewhat late in life to devote to the service of the young, whom he was desirous of stimulating to the study of the best authors. As a means to this end he compiled a series of works of the "Useful Information" and "Compendium" order, all of a size suited to the pocket. Mr. Grey's *magnum opus*, which reached a sale of 12,000, bore the title of "The Classics for the Million, being an Epitome in English of the Works of the Principal Greek and Latin Authors." This seemingly ambitious design was completed in the compass of 350 duodecimo pages, published at one shilling. Such faith had he in the nutritive and appetising qualities of this sort of literary pemmican, that he also served up "The Plots of Old English Plays," dissociated from their setting, and under the name of "An Epitome of the Holy Bible," printed the headings or arguments of the chapters of the Authorised Version, an idea which certainly entitles him to all the credit of originality which he claims in his preface. A history of painting, sculpture, and architecture, in ancient, mediæval, and modern times, amply filled another little volume, and others of his works are entitled "A Key to the Waverley Works," "A Pocket Encyclopædia," "And a Bird's Eye View of English Literature." Probably no man in the office has travelled so much as Mr. Grey. Every summer has seen him in some great European city, and there is hardly one of any importance which he has not visited. *Nulla dies sine linea*: each holiday has produced its pamphlet, faithfully setting forth the writer's personal adventures, experiences, and reflections—what he did, what he saw, what he ate and what he drank, and how he felt during, "Three Weeks at Bath," or "Ten Days in St. Petersburg." Marie Bashkirtseff thought that her journal could not fail to be interesting as a document of human nature. Perhaps Mr. Grey thinks the same of his journals.



EXAMINING A DANGEROUS PARCEL IN THE RETURNED LETTER OFFICE.

ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND:

The Post Office Magazine.

APRIL, 1891.

A Trip to China Twenty Years Ago.



FEW years ago a voyage to China would have been looked upon as a serious undertaking. It would have been considered necessary to have set one's house in order, to have made one's will, and to have taken solemn leave of one's relations and friends, with the feeling that one's return home was a doubtful event.

Things are different now: it is true that China still remains more than 8,000 miles away, but the sea has been bridged over, as it were, by the magnificent line of the P. and O. steamers performing the journey within five weeks; and hence it is no longer a perilous voyage, but, as I have stated in the heading of this chapter, a "Trip to China."

I confess that on the proposal being suddenly made to me by the head of my office to go to China on some special business, I was somewhat staggered, for I held the idea, like most other men, that China was a land of barbarians, and that I should have many privations and difficulties to undergo. The vulgar, but popular song, "You may go to Hong Kong for me," rushed into my mind, and I thought that a place alluded to with such scorn must be a fearful hole to go to. Still, the charm of such a voyage and the interest of seeing such a remarkable country overcame all my hesitation, and I made up my mind to go. A very short time sufficed to make my preparations. A few good letters of introduction, a modest outfit, and a circular credit on the Oriental Bank were all the necessities I required; and furnished with these I left London on a cold November evening, destined for Hong Kong.

Notwithstanding my stoical indifference in leaving home, when the cab was announced as ready at the door, to convey me and my luggage to the railway station, I confess that I felt a choking sensation at the throat, and hurried through my last adieux to avoid any appearance of emotion, and I think that the longest and dreariest part of my journey was that wretched cab ride from my home to the station—my spirits heavy and sad with the late parting. On arriving at the station, the porter who came to remove the luggage asked as usual, "Where for?" and was evidently astonished by the answer, "Hong Kong;" but with an assumption of indifference, which I am sure he did not feel, for he glanced furtively at me several times as a curiosity, he led the way to a first-class carriage and packed me and my baggage carefully therein, taking a last glance as he touched his hat and left me to my fate. One more hearty shake of the hand from the friend who had accompanied me thus far, and the whistle sounded and we were off. I need not dwell upon the run to Dover through the dark night, the cold and comfortless trip across the Channel, or the journey from Paris to Marseilles; there is no novelty in these, for thousands of travellers are daily passing to and fro. In due time I found myself passing through the magnificent new streets of Marseilles down to the harbour, where dozens of other passengers, bound like myself for the East, were flocking on board, followed by porters carrying innumerable over-land trunks and other articles of baggage. The large P. and O. steamers lie right alongside the quay, so that you walk quietly on board without the risks and annoyances which were formerly encountered in embarking in an open boat before the new quay was constructed. The deck was crowded with mails, baggage, and merchandise in a seemingly hopeless state of confusion, but all was placed below before we were out of the port. My first business was to seek out the Purser and find what berth had been allotted to me; this was soon done, and I found myself no longer Mr. ———, but No. "16." My next task was to take a survey of my fellow passengers to see what they were like, and to judge as far as might be from outward appearances which of them seemed likely to become sociable fellow travellers.

This is hardly a time for favourable impressions, as every person on first coming on board displays a degree of selfishness in endeavouring to do the best for himself. Still, I noted two or three who seemed likely kind of people, and on further acquaint-

ance I was not disappointed. Towards eleven o'clock, the mails being all on board and the passengers embarked, preparations were made for departure, and we passengers began to speculate amongst ourselves on the kind of weather we should meet with in the Gulf of Lyons. In harbour the sea was smooth and the sky bright, but it by no means followed that this pleasant state of things existed outside. During the first few hours we amused ourselves with watching the bold scenery as we passed out of Marseilles and along the coast into the Gulf of Lyons; by degrees, the land faded from our sight, and we were fairly out in the Mediterranean. The first dinner gave us all an opportunity of seeing each other, and of determining who should be our friends. All the knowing ones had previously selected their seats at table, and placed cards in their plates to mark their claim to possession; but I, green as I then was, had not taken this precaution, and had to seek for a vacant seat where it could be found. Happily, one was vacant next to a gentleman whom I had marked as a good humoured, sociable looking fellow, and I at once took possession of it; and in that act commenced an acquaintance which resulted in many hours of agreeable society until we parted at Galle—he for Australia, I for China. There is always an awkwardness in shaking down when you first go on board with a large number of passengers. We were nearly a hundred first-class passengers, and every cabin was full. I occupied a cabin with three fellow passengers, and, as the washing accommodation was only adapted for two, we had to arrange among ourselves who should get up first and who should remain in bed; then there was the difficulty of selecting your own clothes and boots, for in a cabin of such limited dimensions it was impossible that each should have his own particular hook; the business of dressing, therefore, often gave rise to many a joke which helped to beguile the time between daylight and breakfast. The attendance at table was not so universal on the second day at sea as it had been on our departure from Marseilles, for many had succumbed to the miseries of sea sickness. Still, for the winter season, we had a fair passage, and before we passed Sicily we got into smooth water and sunny skies. We passed a homeward-bound steamer just at this point, and there were few of us, I imagine, who would not willingly have transferred ourselves to it and returned to old England.

We soon reached Malta, and were glad to get an hour or two on shore, after having been three days at sea. A walk in the fresh early

morning air was delightful, and we returned on board with a keen appetite for breakfast. While lying in Malta Harbour a favourite pastime is to get the natives to dive for sixpences. They are very expert divers, and catch the sparkling coin long before it reaches the bottom; then, reappearing, invite you, in broken English, to renew the game. After a brief stay at Malta, we continued our course eastward, and, by degrees, got into beautiful weather—warm and sunny, like England in July. The deck was now covered over with an awning to protect us from the sun; the overcoats and wrappers which we had worn on leaving England were thrown aside, and we were glad to get at our baggage for lighter clothing.

I have not yet related the order of the day on board our ship, and I think that my reader should know it, in order that he or she may picture our life at sea. First, I should mention that as we proceeded day by day further and further east, a considerable difference in time occurred—the time at Alexandria being exactly two hours in advance of London time. At six o'clock in the morning comes round the steward bringing cups of tea and coffee, both equally nasty, but still necessary to keep out the chill morning air. Then comes a scramble for a bath, there being only two baths for about forty gentlemen; so the early risers get the first chance while the lazy people have to wait. A very slight allowance of clothing suffices to go on deck; and, with bare feet and trowsers tucked up, we splash along the wet deck, which is being "swabbed," and make for the bath. If it is engaged you must wait your turn, and a sharp lad, who acts as bath attendant, keeps count, and gives you notice when your turn comes. Capital large baths, in which you can lie at your full length, with any quantity of fresh sea water you may wish for; but ten minutes is the limit of time allowed for each person, and there is no opportunity, consequently, for anything more than a hasty sponging, and out you come. I always retired again to my berth, and reposed for half an hour or so, and then got up and made my toilet for the morning. This finished, it is nearly eight, and I go on deck for my morning's walk. At half-past eight the first bugle sounds, and the whole company gradually assemble on deck, and, sitting about in knots of two or three, beguile the time with chat until nine, when the bugle again sounds for breakfast. We all hurry down and take our seats—the same that we had at the commencement of the voyage—and the labours of the day begin.

There is a great profusion of eatables—cutlets, steaks, ham and eggs, curry, cold meat, &c., followed by a dessert of melons, oranges, and apples, with tea, coffee, and claret as beverages. After breakfast, we all take to our lounge chairs on deck, and seek an hour or two's enjoyment in the charms of literature. Every passenger comes provided with a supply of magazines and novels, and an interchange of volumes commonly takes place at different periods of the voyage. At eleven, four of our waiters form themselves into a band, and amuse the assembled company until noon with popular airs. I will not call it music, but it serves to amuse the nursemaids and children, though, individually, I should have preferred that the musical waiters had confined themselves to their proper vocation—that of attending to the personal comforts of the passengers. At noon the bugle again sounds for luncheon, and as a proof of the appetising influence of sea air, I have seen people who, three hours before, had eaten a meat breakfast sufficient to last the whole day, recommence upon cold meat, salads, sardines, and other delicacies, and by no means find themselves at a loss for room when dinner came. After luncheon an attempt at reading is again made, but, one after another, we all drop off into a doze, and so get through an hour or two of the interval before dinner. At half-past three I had a standing engagement to sherry and bitters, and I never failed to keep the appointment. Two or three good fellows met at this ceremony, which made a pleasant episode in the events of the day. At four, once more that bugle, this time for dinner, a very substantial affair, which, with the dessert which follows, we manage to spin out till nearly six o'clock. The gentlemen then go forward to enjoy their tobacco and coffee, while the ladies amuse themselves by posting up their diaries or by writing home to friends.

The eating and drinking are not yet finished, for tea is served at seven, and grog at nine; the evening is passed in a variety of amusements, such as backgammon, whist, &c., &c. At half-past ten all the cabin lights are put out, and every one who has been tempted by the beauty of the night to extend his promenade on deck beyond that hour must find his way to bed in the dark.

Such is the everyday life on board, with but little variation, except on Sundays, when at half-past ten in the morning, before Church service, the whole ship's crew is mustered on deck, every man appearing in his best clothes, the officers in full uniform. The captain, accompanied by the chief officer, walks down the line

and inspects every man who answers to his name as it is called over from the muster rolls.

This ceremony finished, the men are dismissed, and all who are off duty assemble in the main saloon for prayers, where also most of the passengers attend. In the centre of the table a sort of reading-desk is arranged, covered with the ship's flags, and here our smart little captain reads the morning prayers in a manner that would be creditable to many of our clergymen.

To me it was very impressive to be present, for the first time, at prayers at sea. On the solitude of the broad waters there was a reality and solemnity about the whole thing which one fails to realise in a church, and there were few of us, I think, who were not touched with the prayer to "Him who alone spreadest out the heavens and rulest the raging of the sea."

On the seventh day after leaving Marseilles we arrived at Alexandria shortly after midnight, and, as ships cannot enter the port after sunset, we were obliged to lie-to all night, knocking about in the roads and waiting for daylight. Curiosity to see so famous a place induced me to turn out at half-past five. I went on deck, and in the distance I could just discern the low land and the light burning brightly at the lighthouse. This soon gave place to the rising sun, and then I saw stretching out along the coast the ancient city of Alexandria, with its white palaces and its domes and minarets. The view from the sea is decidedly more interesting than the sight on shore, for the streets are narrow and dirty, and infested with a numerous and apparently half-idle population. Before starting for Suez, I found time to pay a visit to Pompey's Pillar and Cleopatra's Needle, and afterwards to breakfast at the Italian Club, where, for the first time since leaving England, I thoroughly enjoyed a meal, for no qualms of sea-sickness now haunted me. The hour of departure at length approached, and I drove to the Railway Station, when picture my horror to find that my fellow passengers had all started two hours before, and were already half-way to Cairo. This was very vexatious, particularly as I had made up a party to occupy a carriage and play a rubber of whist on the journey. In this dilemma I went to the director of the railway and explained my little difficulty, when he at once very courteously arranged that I should go on with the mails straight to Suez, by which I should get ahead of the passengers, who were to stop the night at Cairo; and, while a first-class carriage was being attached to the train

for my accommodation, the director entertained me with coffee and cigarettes. He did more: knowing that I should arrive at Suez during the small hours of morning, he very kindly telegraphed on to announce that I was coming, and to order supper and a bed for me. I had further the advantage of being placed, like the mails, in charge of a Turkish official, called a "janissary," who attended to my comforts on the road, and delivered me up safely at the Suez Hotel. These janissaries are most faithful in the discharge of their duties, and are proud of their service under the British Government as mail conductors.

I did not reach Suez until two o'clock in the morning; but thanks to the telegraph, found everything ready as ordered, and, on leaving the railway, was conducted through several dark passages leading to the hotel, followed by my janissary and two porters carrying my baggage. It seemed to me like a passage in the "Arabian Nights," and I almost fancied myself in a dream passing through the long, dimly lighted, silent corridors, and followed by my Nubian attendants. At length we came to a room, into which I was ushered, and found supper laid and a bed prepared on one of the couches. This was the ladies' saloon, the only room available, as all the other apartments were occupied when my message arrived. After lighting a lamp, the attendants retired, and I was left in solitude. Until now I had been too weary and hungry to reflect on my situation, but now a new feeling possessed me, a mingled feeling of awe and curiosity to find myself alone in a large, gorgeous-looking room, dimly lighted, in the mysterious land of Egypt; and, even when I retired to my couch, I could not bring myself to extinguish the lamp, not knowing what strange visions I might see if wholly left to the darkness. The night passed, and at daybreak one of the dusky attendants of the hotel appeared to conduct me to the bath; and after performing my ablutions and taking a cup of coffee, I wandered forth in the freshness of the December morning to see what was to be seen at Suez. On emerging from the hotel door I found myself on the margin of the Red Sea. One cannot for the first time look on this sea, so familiar to the mind from infancy, without feelings of intense interest, almost of awe—such, at least, were my feelings as I gazed on the quiet, clear sea, and reflected on all its wondrous history. I soon made the acquaintance of the hotel manager, who politely fetched a field glass, and conducted me up to the roof of the building, whence we had a glorious panorama

of the surrounding country. At nine a *table d'hôte* breakfast was served in truly Eastern style, in a kind of open-air courtyard, planted with trees and shrubs, and afterwards I made a promenade of the native town and bazaar, very interesting to see, but decidedly trying to the olfactory senses. In the afternoon the train from Cairo arrived, bringing the passengers whom I had deserted on the previous day. We had many friendly greetings, and on comparing adventures with them I found that I had missed nothing through not having stopped at Cairo, for they had arrived there too late and started again too early to admit of their seeing anything; besides which they had been tormented all night by mosquitos, pests for which Cairo is famous.

The passengers, nearly a hundred, with all our portable baggage, were huddled like a flock of sheep on board a small steamer for conveyance to our ship lying in the Roads, about four miles distant. As our little vessel approached, the large P. and O. steamer looked a splendid ship—long and handsome, but, like most P. and O. steamers, carrying her ports rather low in the water. On boarding her she appeared immense after our comparatively small ship on the Mediterranean side, but then we had a double number of passengers to accommodate, for here were both the Southampton and the Marseilles passengers, two living streams, which, up to this point had flowed in separate channels, but now have to mingle in one broad current of life. Like the waters at the confluence of the Rhone and the Arve, it is long before they mingle, and for many days after leaving Suez the Southampton passengers and the Marseilles passengers each form in a clique of their own and scarcely deign to notice a member of the opposite section. When mustered together, we were about 150 first and 50 second class passengers, and these, added to a crew of upwards of 250, including stewards and attendants, made quite a moderate sized town on board. It was quite a new world to me, for the crew consisted almost entirely of Lascars or Kroomen and Chinamen, and many of the stewards were also black men. There is a great deal of state on board these P. and O. steamers, and, in imitation of the sentry on the quarter deck of a man of war, a Sepoy, in uniform of blue cotton stuff with white facings, marches backwards and forwards day and night in front of the captain's deck cabin, in readiness to convey orders from the commander to any of his officers, or to clear the deck of any chair which may have been left by a thoughtless passenger in the

middle of the gangway. Some of the officers' servants were fine specimens of Madrassees ; one in particular was a very handsome fellow, and most picturesque in his attire—a frock of clean white cotton, with a broad sash of blue and white in alternate folds round his waist, and a turban of blue and white to match, ornamented in front with a star and crescent in silver. While passing down the Red Sea, we on board who were “griffins,” of course looked anxiously for the place where the Children of Israel are supposed to have passed over, and were told the usual stories about Pharaoh's chariot wheels being sometimes seen on the shore at low tide. Perhaps a more dreary and desolate place is not to be seen in the world than the shores of the Red Sea a day's journey out of Suez, a long waste of white hot looking sand, backed by ranges of barren mountains, like billows, rising far into the distance, without sign of living thing, even of a blade of grass. Our meal times and diversions were much the same as on board the Mediterranean steamer, excepting that the greater number of passengers rendered it necessary to have a double set of breakfasts and dinners, and that the warmer temperature of the Red Sea encouraged us to remain more on deck than formerly, particularly in the long delightful evenings, when there was usually a promenade, lasting from dinner till tea time, followed by a musical evening on the deck. This was sometimes varied by a dance, when here again the antagonism between the Southampton and Marseilles passengers interfered with the amusement, for the two streams still declined to mingle.

E. H. REA.

(To be continued.)

The Returned Letter Office and the Curious Objects dealt with in it.



THE undeliverable letters, packets, and parcels, which are consigned to the Returned Letter Office, contain objects of every conceivable variety. The following, taken at random, are some of them:—Bank notes, cash, jewellery, books, music, gloves, cheques, postal orders, legal documents, photographs, stockings, false teeth, dress improvers, puddings, pomade, scents, hats, bonnets, umbrellas, fishing tackle, boots, fiddles, skulls (human and brute), &c., &c.

Formerly, letters, &c., which could not be delivered were called "*Dead*," and the Returned Letter Office was called the "*Dead Letter Office*;" but, from time to time, the objects with which it has had to deal have been very far from dead. Somehow, in utter disregard of a published prohibitory regulation, people contrive to post packets and parcels containing living creatures, which, in many cases, are not detected until they have passed a stage or two on their forbidden journey. When, however, they *are* detected, they are packed off without ceremony to the Returned Letter Office. The following have been objects of hesitating attention—some of them of horror—to the Returned Letter Office staff:—Leeches, snakes, lizards, salamanders, rats, tarantula spiders, young alligators, weasels, cats, pet dogs, dormice, pigeons, tortoises, horned frogs, bees, scorpions, &c., &c.

The only hint that is commonly given of living enclosures in *Inland* packets or parcels is the perforation of the covers or sides with holes for breathing; and it may be easily imagined that the opening of a suspicious-looking box of this kind is conducted with much caution, for the darting up of a forked tongue (not an unknown experience) is not a pleasant invitation to closer acquaintance. Parcels originating abroad are, however, required by the regulations to bear outside Customs' Declaration Forms on which the contents have to be accurately described. Such was the case with regard to the parcel the opening of which is represented in the illustration which accompanies this paper. It was

distinctly marked *Scorpions Vivants*, and, such being the case, it should not have been accepted for transmission at the Post Office, Gibraltar.* Its destination was some place in France, but the keen eyes of an officer in the Foreign Branch of the General Post Office detected its character, and brought its wanderings to an end by transferring it to the Returned Letter Office. The manner in which it was eyed and handled in its final resting place was ludicrous enough. Like all other parcels, it had to be recorded, with full particulars, in a ledger, and, to this end, it must necessarily be opened and carefully examined. But who was to open it? It was an ugly duty, and, for a time, no one seemed at all eager to undertake it. It had, however, to be done, and, at last, six brave men brought themselves into a suitable frame of mind to commence proceedings. The outer cover was lifted, and disclosed a large kind of pickle-bottle, but, as yet, no scorpions. This bottle had now to be attacked, and to this duty one of the officials, of somewhat reckless character, bent his energies. He raised the cover, and first came upon a layer of purple wadding, then another layer, and under this was something that looked like a flabby little lobster, with greenish legs and claws, or pincers, *perfectly lifeless!* This was hooked out with a quill pen and put aside. Then came another dead thing, and then another; and all the officials were then getting very brave. But be careful! More legs and pincers. This time, however, they are vigorously working about, and a vicious tail is jerking itself over the back intent on damaging somebody. The pincers of that little demon having tightly gripped the quill, he was easily extracted and laid on a tray. Then comes out another, a little less lively but also wickedly inclined. One more dead thing is hooked out of the bottle, and the inspection is finished. The corpses are cast into the fire; the "Vivants" are put back into the bottle awaiting application, which never came. Preserved in spirits of wine, one of them may now be seen among the curiosities of the Returned Letter Office.

Reference has been made above to dormice received in the Returned Letter Office. An interesting history attaches to one of these:—A box in which this little creature was discovered was put away in a cupboard to await a call from the owner, who had been advised of its detention. Two days after, when applied for, it was found to have escaped from the box, and, although the

* The Scorpions were probably caught on the rock of Gibraltar.

strictest search was made among all the packets in the press and all about the immediate neighbourhood, no trace of it could be detected, and it was given up for lost. About three months afterwards, an officer, who occupied a desk in a distant room, took a ball of string out of his drawer for use, and, feeling in the centre for the end of it, found that he was touching something very soft and warm. Taking it to a strong light, he discovered in it a dormouse, torpid in its winter sleep. There could be no doubt that this was the little fellow that had escaped so long before, and that it had strayed, probably by night, to this singular nest, so far from where it had been placed. It was left undisturbed in the ball of string, but this was put into the dormitory of one of the revolving cages specially made for dormice, and was anxiously watched by a young member of the family of one of the officers interested in it. In about a month after its discovery it ended its long sleep, and, emerging from the ball, gave the first signs of its awakening by making a few turns of the revolving cage. It became a great pet, but unfortunately lived only a few months.

G. R. SMITH.

NOTE.—The illustration which accompanies this article is reduced from a drawing made by Mr. Smith from an etching also by him.

The Old Home of the Post Office.

(Continued.)



IN reading accounts of Post Office work in the last century and in the early years of this, one is struck by the similarity between the methods and system of those times and of the present. Allowance must, of course, be made for the cheapening of postage, for the custom of prepayment, and the enormous increase in the volume of the business necessitating certain mechanical improvements; but otherwise a visitor to the old Inland Office, shown in one of the illustrations of our last number, would hardly have noticed much change could he have been transported across the intervening years to the Circulation Department of the present day. Especially he would have observed the similarity in the construction of the sorting tables, which our readers may have noticed. I think indeed it is not impossible that some of the old tables, transported from Lombard Street in 1828, may still be in use at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

The following account of the work of the Office I have chiefly taken from a work called "The Microcosm of London," published in 1808, in which was also published the original plate from which our illustration was taken. That illustration, by a printer's error, was stated to represent the Inland Office as rebuilt in 1702. The date should have been given as 1782.

The duty at the Inland Office was under the management of a Superintending President, assisted by three Presidents and three Vice-Presidents. It commenced at six in the morning, and was usually finished between ten and eleven o'clock. The mail bags received from the inward mails were first emptied, and then their contents were carefully counted and the amount of postage reckoned, to check the accounts furnished by the country Postmasters, or rather Deputy-Postmasters, there being properly only one Postmaster, the Postmaster-General. As letters were not then prepaid, it is to be presumed that this check must have had reference to some payment by commission on the number and value of letters, and not to the collection of Revenue. The letters then passed through another set of hands, and the

charges marked on them were again checked. They were afterwards stamped and sorted out for the different districts, to each of which one or more letter carriers were assigned. Before the letters were handed to the carriers they were tied up in bundles, an account being made of the postage due on each bundle; and the letter carrier to whom it was given thereupon became responsible for the amount. The postage collected on delivery was paid into the office of the Receiver-General three times a week, and receipts given to the letter carriers for the amounts charged against them. This system, as we may imagine, was troublesome and somewhat complicated. In many cases questions arose about postage which could not be collected, or about charges of which the correctness was challenged; the letter carriers were not always able to make up the amounts due, and there was often a great deal of difficulty in squaring the accounts. Besides the Receiver-General's Office there was also an Accountant-General's Office, which presumably had at one time an independent system of accounting, as a complete check on the Receiver-General. But, when the dual systems were examined about thirty years ago by a Parliamentary Committee, it was found that the books in one office were always copied from the books in the other, and that, therefore, the supposed check was no check at all. The Receiver-General was thereupon abolished, and the present office of Receiver and Accountant-General established. In the account to which I have referred, the writer, whom, from internal evidence, I believe to have been a Post Office Official, did not hint at the condition of affairs above described, but said "the utmost care and diligence is exerted in order to prevent the public and the Revenue from suffering from the numerous hands through which the letters must pass before they reach the owners. The apparently precarious mode of collecting these levies is regulated by plans that ensure the Revenue from frauds that might otherwise so easily exist." Whether many frauds did occur, I do not know; but it is on record in the evidence given in 1788 before a committee on the Post Office, that, while some of the letter carriers made as much as £100 a year from salary, the pence given for letters collected by "bellmen" and Christmas boxes, they often paid substitutes only eight or ten shillings a week to do their work. To some extent, possibly, the system of "substitutes" was then officially recognised in the lower ranks of the Service, as it most certainly then was in many highly paid departments of the

Civil Service, and it is probable that the present system of substitutes, and the rules which until quite recently were in force in the Circulation Department were quite naturally developed from the old practice. Here is a subject of study for any Officer interested in Post Office evolution. The general morning delivery of letters is said to have been accomplished before the business of the day began, an advantage to be enjoyed in London only. If so, either our grandfathers must have begun business later than we do, or the early delivery could have been extended only to the neighbourhood of the General Post Office. When the work did not begin till 6 a.m., the outlying parts of London, such as Bloomsbury and Islington, could not have received their letters until four or five hours afterwards. The writer I have quoted says that the delivery was rendered possible by "the circumstance of this great engine to the commercial world commencing its operations at so early an hour."

In the evening another staff of clerks came on duty. Their hours were from half-past four o'clock till eight o'clock. The letters posted at the Chief Office during the day and those brought in from the receiving houses were stamped and sorted for the different divisions of the office, each division being named, it is said, "from the mail despatched thither." This statement strikes one as being rather Hibernian. Presumably the division and the mail were named, as now, from the line of country followed by the mail. This process of primary sorting was entrusted to the junior clerks. After being so sorted each letter was marked with the proper rate of postage, each individual letter being examined by being held up to a strong light to detect double and treble letters. Care was taken also to avoid charging letters to and from Members of Parliament. This part of the duty was entrusted to the senior clerks, and it is said that on an average they could charge in this manner from sixty to seventy letters in a minute. The letters were then placed in boxes labelled with the names of the post towns. The clerks who did this required to know very completely the names of all the hamlets and villages in the locality of post towns, and also the names of noblemen and Members of Parliament who lived near each. After seven o'clock the number of letters and the postage were reckoned for each town and an account sent in the bag with the letters. The bags were then gathered in groups for the various mails and taken in charge by the guards. This stage is said always to have been

reached by eight o'clock in summer and winter alike. The system, it will be seen, differed only slightly from the present one, and very considerable skill and energy must have been required to despatch all the mails in time. The General Post Office took letters till six o'clock, as at present, and the receiving houses until five o'clock. Between five and six o'clock the letter carriers and their assistants, with bells, perambulated the streets beyond the neighbourhood of the Chief Office, and received letters for despatch on payment of a fee of one penny for each letter. These pennies were kept by the "bellmen," and formed a considerable part of their income. In the days before mail coaches were started, *i.e.*, before 1784, the bags were conveyed on horseback, and could be despatched at once from the General Post Office, but when coaches were used for conveyance the narrow lanes and streets round the office prevented the despatch of any large number of coaches from that vicinity; many of the mails, therefore, started from the various inns and coffee houses in Oxford Street and Piccadilly. A subsidiary system of mail carts—which the use of railways has immensely increased—was therefore required, and these light, swift carts soon became a marked feature of Post Office work.

At the beginning of this century, from 170,000 to 200,000 letters a week passed through the Chief Office. On one occasion, it is stated, the postage on the Manchester mail amounted to £300. A contemporary writer said that "the immense number of letters that are nightly despatched from hence excite sensations of astonishment in the mind of a bystander that can only be exceeded by the rapidity and accuracy with which every part of the duty is managed." The statement is a little mixed in its mode of expression, but it is clear that on the mind of orthodox spectators very much the same impression was made as at the present day. About 1800, the speed of mail coaches was reckoned at eight miles an hour, including stoppages, five minutes being allowed for each change. This was said to be a speed unequalled in any other country, and was viewed with considerable apprehension by the more sober-minded part of the community.

Coaches left London every night for the following places:—Dover, Exeter, Shrewsbury, Manchester, Norwich, Cambridge, Poole, Taunton, Worcester, Leeds, Ipswich, Rye, Brighton, Portsmouth, Gloucester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Chichester, Bristol, Chester, and York.

The charges for Inland letters in 1808 were at the following rates :—A single letter going 15 miles, 4d.; 30 miles, 5d.; 50 miles, 6d.; 80 miles, 7d.; 120 miles, 8d.; 170 miles, 9d.; 230 miles, 10d.; 300 miles, 11d.; 400 miles, 1s.; 500 miles, 1s. 1d.; and so on in proportion, one penny for each hundred miles. In 1808 the expenditure of the Post Office was stated to be about £200,000, but the net revenue, clear of all deductions, paid into the exchequer to the credit of the Sinking Fund, amounted in that year to no less than £1,200,000. When it is remembered that newspapers, of which very large numbers were sent by post, although subject to a stamp duty, did not pay postage, and that the number of franked letters was also very great, it will be seen how very profitable was the ordinary conveyance of letters in the old coaching days. It is, I believe, an undoubted fact that the cost of carriage of a letter by coach was considerably less than the cost of conveyance by railway in the present day of a letter on which a postage of one penny only has been paid. Had the ordinary modes of expenditure been subject formerly to the same checks as in the present day, the disproportion between revenue and expenditure would have been even greater.

Early in the eighteenth century the office of Secretary to the Postmaster-General increased very greatly in importance. Between 1730 and 1740 Mr. Anthony Todd was appointed Secretary, and he is remarkable as having filled that office for the longest period on record. He was sixty-one years Secretary, and is said by a contemporary to have been a man of singular abilities, and to have been greatly beloved. The introduction of the mail coach system between 1784 and 1790 we may imagine to have been a great shock to his system, and to have led to his retirement a few years later. He died in 1796. We hope some day to give an adequate account of the life and actions of so distinguished a Post Office worthy. He was succeeded by Mr., afterwards Sir, Francis Freeling, who also held office for a long period of considerably over forty years. It is probably impossible to find another instance of an important public office being filled by two persons in succession for more than a century. Those, indeed, were the palmy days of the Office. In the General Post Office, Lombard Street, a handsome residence was provided for the Secretary, and his salary and fees in the early years of this century are said to have amounted to over £4,000 a year.

It is no wonder that Sir Francis Freeling was able to become a director of the South Sea Company and of numerous other companies, and to have been a person of much importance in commercial and official circles.

In 1808, the other principal officers were the Superintending President of the Inland Office, Daniel Stow, Esq., whose name was represented until comparatively recently in the Service; the Comptroller of the Foreign Office, Arthur Stanhope, Esq.; the Receiver-General, T. Mortlock, Esq.; the Accomptant General, the Hon. John Spencer; the Superintendent of Mail Coaches, T. Hasker, Esq.; the Solicitor, A. Parkin, Esq.; and the Architect, J. Groves, Esq. The District Surveyors, not styled esquires, were G. Hodgson, S. Woodcock, Christopher Saverland, George Western, J. B. Bartlett, Leonard Aust, and A. Scott. The Inspector of Dead and Mis-sent Letters was R. P. Barlow, Esq. J. Wyldbore, Esq., was Accomptant of the By- and Cross Road Letter Office, a survival of the early days of Ralph Allen, when the by posts were his private enterprise, and Mr. Buller was Superintendent of the Ship Letter Office. The number of clerks in the Chief Office was 62, with 25 messengers. There were 130 letter carriers, with 30 supernumeraries and 28 foreign letter carriers.

Some of the Chief Officers were men of great energy and capacity, but these qualities were certainly not always considered necessary. Mr. Hyde in his latest work quotes a document, apparently addressed to the Treasury, in which, towards the close of the last century, Mr. Bush, son of Mr. Gervas Parker Bush, complained that the Patent of Resident Surveyor of the Post Office, given him as a reward for his father's services, made the office tenable during good behaviour only, and not for life, as he had expected. He added that it was given him as a complete sinecure, and, indeed, at such an early age that it would have been impossible for him to have done the duty. Even in the humbler ranks something of the same sort occurred, as we have already seen as regards the letter carriers. Besides their salaries the Clerks had other emoluments, such as feast money and beer money paid to the Clerks of the Inland Office; allowances for lodgings, which were not occupied, in the neighbourhood of the General Post Office, and allowances for coals and candles. It appeared before the Committee of Enquiry on the Post Office in 1788, that these latter amounted in the year to above three hundred

chaldrons of coals and twenty thousand pounds of candles, costing for the year 1784 no less a sum than £4,418 4s. 1d.

A. M. OGILVIE.

(To be continued.)

NOTE.—In our last issue I made some remarks as to the functions of the “Alphabet Keepers,” which have been the cause of some remonstrances. There seems indeed no doubt that in the case of the Officers who were also “window men,” the “Alphabet” was the lettered set of pigeon holes in which callers’ letters were arranged. The term in this sense is known to have been familiarly used by some Senior Officers within the last ten years. But I still think that the term “Alphabet” was also used sometimes to mean an index.


Sonnet.

EARTH hath her visions, her transfigurings,
Her rapturous moments when life seems to be
A precious open scroll, wrought gloriously
With wondrous pictures of heroic things!
When every flower lifts her sweet head and sings,
And like a pillar of fire stands every tree,
Leading to God and heaven, when soul breaks free
From prison and bond with irresistible wings!
The visions pass, else were man God, and heaven
No distant home, but each one’s dwelling place.
Fast bound lies soul once more, and yet I know
A light gleams on where darkness hath been riven,
Clear as a star to show life’s possible grace
And that high goal to which our spirits go.

EVELYN PYNE.

Cornwall and the Cornish.

(Continued.)

ITUATED some two miles off the coast—though from the cliffs you might think you could pitch a biscuit on to the lantern—is the Longships Lighthouse, guarding a reef which otherwise would render the navigation of the Channel with safety almost impossible. The tide twists and twirls around these sunken rocks like a maelstrom, and woe to the unlucky ship which does not give them a wide berth. Under certain favourable conditions, steamers avoid the necessity of going “round land” by passing between the Longships and the main; but cutting off corners in this way is always more or less risky, as the battered carcasses of many good vessels testify. The duty of relieving the Longships is performed by the Nicholases from Sennen Cove, and a very difficult and dangerous one it is. You pull out in a long six-oared gig, and, watching a favourable opportunity, mount on the crest of a gigantic wave, which will presently break against the tower. As you stand in the nose of the boat, balancing yourself like a gymnast, just as she appears to be rushing to certain destruction, the steersman cries “Jump!” and you take a flying leap on to the slippery, half-tide rock, the boat being swept back by the reflux of the wave. If you jump aright, why, there you are; but if you jump short, where are you? The tide runs like a mill-race, and no insurance office would insure your life for 95 per cent. if you missed your footing. Getting off is more difficult than getting on. In the latter case you have, at least, a small patch of *terra firma* to make for, and may escape with nothing worse than broken shins and a ducking; in the former, it is the boat, bobbing up and down in the tide-way, you have to hit, or be lost irrecoverably. Even for those who are used to it, and know how to jump and when to jump, it is dangerous; but, for greenhorns—well, my advice is to any of my brother officers who may be going in for aquatics—draw the line at relieving lighthouses, unless you are anxious to create a vacancy in your class.

The lightkeepers themselves have a very bad time of it. Their

usual turn is two months afloat and one month on shore, but, as it often happens that no boat can get near them for weeks on a stretch, this actual period of relief is, necessarily, uncertain. Formerly, the crew consisted of two hands, who kept watch and watch, but since an occurrence at the Eddystone some years ago, where one of the men died, and the survivor was shut up with a corpse, which he dared not dispose of, for some considerable time, the number has been increased to three. Strange to say—and it illustrates the tendency to put the square peg into the round hole—lightkeepers are mostly recruited from landmen,—farmers, gentlemen's servants, and others who have never smelt the sea, and who hardly know a handspike from a martingale. They are trained on shore towers like the Lizard and the Foreland, and, when full-fledged lamp-trimmers, are drafted off to places like the Wolf and the Bishop. Instances have been known where these men have gone mad and had their hair turn grey in a single night from sheer terror. Some one has defined a ship as a prison with the prospect of being drowned. But give me the veriest old tub that ever brought down the ire of Mr. Plimsoll, the craziest "coffin" that ever was over-insured and sent to sea to be lost, rather than a cage of masonry glued to a rock in the middle of the Atlantic. In the one case, one might at least wrestle with fate, and never say die while a chance remained. In the other, a gnat in the track of a tornado is not more utterly powerless and helpless than the human waif shut up in his sea-begirt tower, if anything goes wrong. It is true, science has exhausted every means to minimise the risk. Everything that granite, and copper, and oak can do is done to weld the tower to the rock, and to give it the form best calculated to resist the impact of wind and wave; but, after all, force is force, and matter is matter, and no one can say where the point is reached at which the one overcomes the resistance of the other. The Bishop has only recently been recased to give it additional stability, and it is not so long ago that the old Longships rocked perceptibly in a heavy gale.

One of the keepers at the last-named tower, who had not been properly seasoned, went stark mad with fright, and stabbed himself in the region of the heart, falling dead, or apparently dead, on the floor. His companions hoisted signals of distress, and as soon as the weather moderated a boat put off from Sennen Cove to see what was the matter. On learning the nature of the case, as it was very desirable that the body should be brought

on shore, the derrick, used to transfer oil and other stores, was rigged out, and the corpse gradually lowered into the boat. A heavy sea was still running, and as the operation was a delicate one the boy Mathey stood up on the thwarts to unhook the tackle, and guy the "stiff" along. In doing so, he caught hold of him around the waist, and, inadvertently, placed his fingers in the wound, when, horror of horrors! the dead man gave a start, opened his eyes and mouth, and, grasping the boy Mathey round the neck with a grip of iron, fell with him to the bottom of the boat. If Lazarus himself had dropped down in their midst, he could not have created greater consternation. To these brave boatmen, who had faced death in a hundred different forms, it seemed a most strange and mysterious resurrection, and as the boy Mathey said, when he told me the tale, "Tellee, sur, we'd rather ha' been to say in the biggest gaal as ever blawed than faace that there keeper." However, there were the two men—the resuscitated corpse and the terrified boatman—still locked together, and there was nothing for it but to row back to the Cove as fast as possible, and consult the "passon" and the squire as to what should be done. A serious consultation was accordingly held, and as there was reason to fear that the boy Mathey would die of the fright, whatever might happen to the keeper, a mounted messenger was despatched to St. Just, the nearest town, for a doctor. On his arrival he, of course, looked as wise as doctors do generally, felt the patients' pulses, placed his hand on their hearts, and turned up the whites of their eyes in the most approved and orthodox fashion, the result being that Mathey was declared to be more frightened than hurt, and the keeper—the cause of all this pother—was not only found to be not dead, but ultimately recovered, and, I believe I am correct in saying, is alive to this day.

While dealing with lighthouses, I might mention a marvellous escape from death which occurred during the rebuilding of the Eddystone. It will be remembered that the old tower, erected by Smeaton, now standing on Plymouth Hoe, which had stood the buffeting of wind and wave for so many years, was condemned, and it was decided to erect in its place a tower of much greater height and capacity, combining all the recent improvements in lighthouse construction. The work was entrusted to Mr. (now Sir James) Douglass, Engineer to the Trinity House Corporation, and his son, Mr. William Douglass, was the resident engineer in

charge. The latter carries the courage hereditary in the family almost to foolhardiness. His grandfather built the Bishop, and his uncle the Wolf, under difficulties which would have baffled anyone but a Douglass, and Sir James, his father, is the recognised head of his profession. The new Eddystone had almost been completed, and Mr. W. Douglass was one day superintending the putting on of the capstone to crown the edifice, and was leaning against one of the "jib" chains, when the chain snapped, and the whole "caboose," chains, jib, and the heavy gear, went over, carrying Mr. Douglass with it. The tower is over 100 feet above the sea-level, and those who witnessed the accident expected that he would be smashed into a shapeless mass—it was then half-tide—on the rocks below. But, by one of those chances which only occurs once in a million times, and then only to men who have charmed lives, it so happened that at the very moment when, according to the laws of gravity, he should have struck the rock, a huge wave, of much greater volume than any that had gone before, rolled in and covered the rocks, and on this watery cushion Mr. Douglass was carried out into deep water, none the worse, save a severe shaking, for his tremendous fall.

A little to the eastward of the Land's End Point, between Tol Pedyn and the Logan Rock, is Porthcurnow Cove, said at one time to have been a prosperous port, now the home of the Eastern Telegraph Company. Until requisitioned for this highly utilitarian purpose, it was a sleepy hollow, given over to donkeys and sand women, with, perhaps, an occasional tourist who happened to drop down upon it in the course of his rambles round the coast. It is now a thriving colony of close upon 200 souls, having a theatre, cricket and lawn tennis clubs, and a gymnasium, and lit up by the electric light. The genius who has worked this transformation is electricity, and the Aladdin who has exchanged old lamps for new is Sir James Anderson, the Managing Director of the Eastern Telegraph Company. It will doubtless be remembered that he was knighted for successfully laying the first Atlantic cable, but has now forsaken the broad Atlantic for Old Broad Street—let us hope with benefit to himself, as it certainly has been to the advantage of the mercantile community. Looking about for a local habitation for a giant then in his cradle—the undeveloped system of the Eastern Company—he hit upon Porthcurnow, a spot designed by Nature herself for a cable station. The beach, composed of countless

millions of shells in all stages of decomposition, invites any number of shore ends to bury themselves, free from injury or molestation, while the ground beyond, smooth as a billiard table, and with none of those rocky patches so fatal to cables in shallow water, shelves away to the edge of soundings at an almost uniform depth of from forty to fifty fathoms. Here, in 1869, the old Falmouth and Gibraltar Company—a name which has long since ceased to exist in the hierarchy of cables—first saw the light. It was the first link in a chain which, in course of time, has spread out like an enormous centipede all over the Mediterranean and the Levant, crossed the isthmus of Suez, and wormed its way up the Red Sea to Aden, till, reaching Bombay, and throwing its feelers out over India, the Straits Settlements, China, Japan, and Australia, and embracing at various points the Cape of Good Hope, the Brazilian, and other systems, it has become the largest and best-equipped telegraph organisation in the world. Porthcurnow is the foster-mother and nursery for all the brood of sucking telegraphists who during the past twenty years have been hatched and sent forth to man the Company's stations. There is a school at Porthcurnow, where under the able tuition of my friend Mr. Ash and his lieutenants the raw material is steadily being converted into the finished article; and it speaks well for the service that there is always an ample supply of well-educated youths waiting and anxious to enter as probationers, and to qualify themselves for the Company's work. Whether they ever become anything more than mere key-tappers and lightning grinders, depends on the men themselves. Every facility is afforded them for learning the higher branches of the profession, from a bridge test to the newest formula for working out a fault; and if, with far greater advantages, they do not turn out Preeces, Varleys, and Latimer Clarkes, they cannot complain of the lack of opportunity. This is not the place for technicalities; but, for those who are interested, it may be mentioned that the line is worked with two of Sir William Thompson's recorders duplexed—one to Lisbon and the other to Malta, with a human relay at Gibraltar. The traffic—except a certain proportion circulating through France—all converges on Porthcurnow, and has now reached a volume of over 2,000 messages a day, or an increase of 300 per cent. over what the returns were for some time after the station was opened.

Still following the shore of Mount's Bay, and passing Penberth, Lamorna, and Mousehole—the home of Dolly Pentreath, the old

dame who last spoke the now lost Cornish tongue—we come to Newlyn, the centre of the fishing industry. Here the mackerel is king. Boats come from Lowestoft, Yarmouth, Hastings, and as far north as the Isle of Man, to share in the spoil. The mackerel is a deep sea fish, and makes its appearance in the English Channel early in the spring, and in increasing quantities all through the summer months. They are caught in drift nets, that is, nets are thrown out over the bow of the boat, with floats and foot-lines, and the boat rides to the “fleet” of nets, drifting with the tide, the fish being enmeshed as they press on against the barrier. The catch varies from a few hundred up to eight, ten, or twelve thousand, and the price ranges from 50s. to 5s. for the long hundred of 120 fish.

There are few more picturesque sights than the beach of Newlyn during the height of the mackerel season. The boats drop in one by one, having fished, probably, ten or fifteen leagues to the westward of Scilly. It is a race against time. The first arrivals secure the top of the market, while to the laggards it means, may be, the loss of a £10 note on the night's catch. So every stitch of canvas is set, and, guying out the big lugs to make the most of the breeze, they bowl along like racers. With the wind about S.S.W., a little abaft the beam, the boats make one long reach into the bay, and rounding Penlee Point in single file drop their kedges off the village. The fish have been taken out of the nets and “tallied” on the voyage home, and are promptly transferred to the beach, and brought under the auctioneer's hammer. The confusion of tongues after the Tower of Babel, Donnybrook Fair, or a gathering of Socialists, where every man is contending that he is as good as any other man, if not a little better, can hardly equal the hubbub of one of these morning sales. The choice and forcible language of the salesmen, interlarded with expletives and Billingsgate; the banter of the buyers, intended to prove that, really, fish are a drug in the market, and that if they bid at all it is out of pure and unadulterated philanthropy; the vociferations of carters, packers, and ice-men; the “mee dears” and “mee beauties” of the fish wives, who, corvel on back, wait a chance to pick up a supply of fish for local consumption, blend in one long-drawn roar of voices and dialects, ranging over every note in the gamut. But, beneath all this wrangling and scrimmaging, there runs a current of keen business tact, and a lively appreciation of the value of the

almighty dollar, which intimately affects not only the parties immediately concerned but the unconscious public. The fish are packed in boxes and pads—on an average sixty fish in each—and are mostly consigned to Billingsgate for distribution. Taking the season all round, the fish fetch about ten shillings a hundred, or, say, one penny each. Now, everybody knows that a West End fishmonger will protest that he is giving away Mount's Bay mackerel at sixpence, and it is an interesting study to see how the difference is made up. The fisherman gets his ten shillings per hundred, minus five per cent. to the salesman. This represents his time, his capital, and the risks incidental to his calling. From the point of landing he has no interest in the article whatever. He has simply to 'bout ship and get him back to the fishing ground, yet, as a marketable commodity, the fruits of his labour are enhanced in value sixfold before they reach the consumer. How is it done? Where is the equity of the transaction which gives one-sixth to the "toiler and moiler" and five-sixths to the hangers-on on his industry? Well, first and foremost comes railway carriage, which, in spite of Commissions and Acts of Parliament, presses very hard on the springs of commerce, and is particularly inimical to the fishermen. Take the mackerel trade, for example. The carriage to London is £4 per ton of forty pads, or forty per cent. on the prime cost of the fish. Then there is a whole army of salesmen, buyers, retailers, and middlemen, all levying black mail on the fisherman's toil, and thrusting up the price of the commoner kinds of fish to such an extent that, in the course of the year, hundreds of tons, which should be available as a cheap and wholesome food for the people, are thrown away, not being able to bear the enormous intermediate charges. This is not the place to discuss the economic question as to how these two principal agents in the transaction—the fisherman and the consumer—now divorced by the intricate cogs and levers which we euphoniously call "trade," can be brought into closer relationship with each other; but this much may be said—so long as railway companies enjoy a monopoly of the trade of the country, and, having the power of a giant, use it like a giant, so long will our struggling industries be handicapped unfairly and anomalies occur bearing wrong on the face of them. Silk or tea can be brought from China cheaper, ton for ton, than fish can be carried from here to London.

Looked at from the sea, sprawling up the slope of Paul Hill,

its many gabled cottages reflected in Gwavas Lake—than which a finer sheet of water is not to be met with this side of Naples—Newlyn reminds one very much of Palermo or Stamboul, and, like its prototypes, it does not improve on closer acquaintance. There is the same accumulation of what Lord Palmerston called “matter in the wrong place,” the same struggle of the daylight to penetrate into the crooks and crannies, the same heaps of garbage and other offal which make so many Eastern cities pleasant to the eye, when distance lends enchantment to the view—and, withal, an abomination. Every alley ends in a *cul de sac*, the houses are huddled together all of a heap with the most supreme contempt for light, air, and sanitation, and the main street, if street it can be called, as it has only one side, is so perilously near the edge of the cliff that a passing vehicle—probably a fish cart driven at a breakneck pace to catch the train—scatters the wayfarers like a covey of partridges; and look out for broken limbs or neck if you cannot get out of the way. There is that peculiar fish-like smell hanging about which seems to be common to all such places from Scilly to the Shetlands. But, as Cologne is said to have several hundred separate and distinct stinks, each having its own particular flavour and pungency, so every fishing village may be known by an odour special to and characteristic of itself. It may be cod, it may be haddock, it may be herring, or it may be pilchards, but there it is, and there is no more mistaking it than there is of confounding assafœtida with attar of roses. This delicate perfume, aroma, or whatever else you may call it, becomes a part and parcel of the locality. A case is on record where a St. Ives man, away at the North for the annual fishing, fell into a swoon. They tried sal volatile, they tried salts, they tried ammonia, they tickled his feet and put straws up his nose, but nothing would rouse him, until a shipmate, by a happy thought, remembered that he had down in his locker some remains of the store provided by his better half as part of the “breeding of the boat” before they left the Digey, and producing part of a stale pilchard applied it to the proboscis of the patient. No sooner had those silent messengers, the olfactory nerves, conveyed the intelligence to the brain that pilchards were about, than the man’s face instantly lit up with a benignant smile, he muttered something which sounded like “Hevah!” and sitting bolt upright and as bright as a button, exclaimed, “Ah, now I am home.” Well, at Newlyn, one gets this boiled down double-

distilled compound potent essence of pilchard in a highly concentrated form. It is the presiding genius of the place—the all-pervading matter which permeates the air you breathe and the water you drink. It clings around you like a mother-in-law, and embraces you like a poor relation. Manifesting itself—not in puffs or whiffs—but in a good strong, steady trade breeze, this oily, saline, noisome, pungent, essential extract of pilchards, which meets you at every corner and confronts you at every turning, is at once the glory and the shame of Newlyn—the glory because its absence would mean the decay of one of its principal industries, the shame that it has not been found possible to improve the sanitary condition of the place, and thus make it what its position and surroundings entitle it to become—one of the most sheltered and picturesque spots in the West of England. That this is not merely a figure of speech is evidenced by the fact that a distinct school of artists have made it their home. Nowhere are the lights and shadows so enchanting. Nowhere are the tints so warm. Nowhere are the effects of sea and sky seen in such wondrous variety, and though the streets may be crooked, and the air not always laden with the spices of Arabia, nowhere is there so fine a field for the true lover of nature, who finds sermons in stones, music in the running brook, and beauty everywhere.

J. G. UREN.

PENZANCE.

(To be continued.)

The Mail Bag Apparatus Competition.



THE announcement by the Postmaster-General to civil engineers and others that he is prepared to give premiums of £250, £100, and £50 for the three best proposals for the improvement of the apparatus now in use for transferring mail bags to and from mail trains whilst in motion, or for a more perfect form of apparatus, has awakened keen interest and produced many competitors. How we have obtained possession of a preliminary Report on some of the suggestions made it is not at present necessary to explain; but as the document has not yet attained the inviolable sanctity of an "official paper," and as no one's interests are likely to suffer by its publication, we have thought that a few extracts might possibly interest our readers.

The Report starts with some general observations on the advantages and disadvantages of the present system, from which we surmise that from a purely Post Office point of view the existing apparatus is as nearly perfect as experience and ingenuity can make it. The desire of the Department, however, to avail itself of the highest mechanical skill in devising means which, while providing for the efficient performance of the work, shall also secure immunity from accident to the travelling public, has led, &c., &c. The Report proceeds: Many of the proposals received show much originality of conception, and are wrought out with considerable ingenuity, though, as might perhaps have been expected, considering the extremely technical nature of the subject, not a few of the applicants have overlooked some feature of the case which must of necessity interfere with the adoption of their plans. One or two examples will illustrate this.

No. 1. This gentleman suggests that the only safe and reasonable method of collecting and distributing bags from a rapidly moving train is by means of a trap door in the floor of the mail carriage. To obviate any risk of the bags so discharged rebounding under the wheels of the train, he proposes that the railway companies should be asked to extend the system of water troughs between the rails, from which locomotives are now supplied with water while in motion. "Thus," he says, "at the proper

“ point the trap door would be opened, and the mail bags, enclosed in water-tight and unsinkable cylinders, would be rolled into the water, which should, of course, be of sufficient depth. At a different point of the journey a simple grappling arm with automatic coupling attachment could be lowered to pick up the inward bag, the cylinder of which should be so constructed as to float in a particular position, with the coupling rings uppermost.”

NOTE.—The authorities of the London and North Western Railway, on being consulted with regard to this proposal, replied as follows:—“ While anxious to do all in our power to facilitate Postal operations on the L. and N.W. Railway, we really must decline to convert our permanent way into a canal for that purpose. May we suggest that your correspondent should be reminded that the water in his proposed mail bag tanks might freeze in winter, and so render his scheme unworkable ? ”

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No. 2.—This competitor takes a literally opposite view of the matter. He writes: “ If there is any danger to the public in the present apparatus, it is due to the fact that the mail bags to be taken on are hung at the *side* of the train, and in close proximity to the windows of the carriages. Obviously the proper plan is to hang the bags *over* the train, and this could be done by means of a light iron foot bridge, from which the bags could be lowered by my patent automatic spring slings, which admit of the height of the article suspended being adjusted to a nicety. At one end of the roof of the mail van there should be a cowl-shaped wooden hood, facing towards the engine, with a curved shoot and net inside. Directly the impact had thrown the bag into this hood, and so down the shoot into the net, the released slings would automatically spring up to the foot bridge. The present system of throwing off the bags might be retained.”

It was pointed out to this inventor that the funnel of the engine would materially interfere with the bags suspended on his “ patent spring slings.” He replied: “ Exactly; but I propose to kill two birds with one stone. If there is risk to the public in mail bags hung near the trains, there is infinitely more in the foul-smelling engine smoke which floats in at the windows. Let the companies abolish their funnels, and by forced draught carry the smoke and waste steam *under* the train, through a jointed pipe (like that used for the vacuum

“brake, but, of course, much larger) to be discharged from the end of the last vehicle. Note the threefold advantage of my scheme: (1) safety and convenience in receiving the mail bags; (2) absence of smoke in the windows, with unobscured view of the landscape; and (3) carriages comfortably warmed by the waste steam and smoke pipe underneath.”

NOTE.—This proposal is of so revolutionary a character that it has not been deemed advisable to take the opinion of the railway authorities upon it—for the present, at any rate. An experienced officer of one of the companies, to whom the proposal was referred informally, returned it with this terse comment: “This is a brilliant scheme, the initial expense of which to my company would be a mere bagatelle of a million or so; but, if carried out, I rather think it will result in the killing of more than the ‘two ‘birds’ mentioned by the inventor.”

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No. 3.—This correspondent plunges *in medias res* in a very light-hearted manner:—“You have seen Harlequin in a pantomime strike with his wand an apparently solid wall, and then disappear through it? There’s your idea to a dot! (The magic wand may be left out if incompatible with Departmental decorum). That portion of the scene through which Harlequin disappears is painted on an ingenious arrangement of strong whalebone springs, like the intersecting teeth of two large combs, which yield to the pressure of Mr. Spangles’ body, and fly back into place directly he has passed through. Have the ends of your mail vans built that way—proportionately stronger, of course. Paint a ‘sunburst’ on them for artistic effect. The present position of the mail van in the train is all wrong. Sorters can’t see where they are going; can’t hear either. Stick the van in front of the locomotive, and hang your bags from bridges, or from cranes on the top of cuttings—hang them from anything. Half a ton of mail bags hanging, like Mahomet’s coffin, betwixt heaven and earth! Mail train comes along. Bang! Mahomet’s coffin gone! Aurora on the front of the mail van smiling as before! Mail bags slumbering peacefully on a hammock inside! Put your outgoing bags in strong barrels, with rubber spring buffers on all sides. Have them painted red to be conspicuous, and, at the proper point, chuck them out of the window. They’ll land somewhere; chuck ‘em out! May kill a platelayer now and again; never mind that. Gives an

"impression of rush and bustle, and the public rather likes that.
 "I'll take the two-fifty in notes."

* * * *

Several other proposals are described, but in no case is one recommended for a premium. The following letters, which are appended to the Report, speak for themselves :—

Mr. H R H N, M.P. FOR TROT BURY: "May I suggest that the Post Office would do well to defer tinkering its 'apparatus' until it has instituted the obvious and necessary reforms to which I have persistently directed its attention for some years past?"

* * * *

Mr. FREDERIC MORRISON: "I am not very clear as to what it is the Postmaster-General is offering premiums for, but I can indicate one piece of Post Office 'apparatus' which calls for radical reform, and that is the decrepit and over-burdened machine which, at irregular intervals, delivers somebody else's letters at my house; (mine are generally handed, 'by mistake,' to a friend who lives about two miles off). Though there is little in either appearance or manner to warrant the assumption, I have reason to believe that the thing to which I refer is human, and that it is officially known as a 'Rural Postman.' That it is not entirely automatic is evidenced by occasional spasmodic attempts to arrange in proper order the letters, parcels, boxes, baskets, and bundles with which it is laden; an operation which is usually performed on my doorstep, somewhat to the inconvenience of any one entering or leaving the house. If it be possible to provide a person of ordinary intelligence to replace this eccentric representative of 'the Department,' I will gladly waive any claim to pecuniary reward for the suggestion."

* * * *

Mr. ROBERT WALLACE MCPHATER, THURSO, N.B.: "I am a Scotchman, and I live in Thurso. Now, it is a well-established fact that the farther north you go in Britain the greater is the average intelligence of the inhabitants. You will perceive, therefore, that, as I am not very far from what may be termed the intellectual apex of the country, I am possessed of exceptional natural qualifications for grappling with your apparatus problem. In fact, I feel confident that I could put the thing right in about half an hour; but, unfortunately, I have never seen your apparatus. Now, bawbees are not as plentiful as

"brains in Thurso, and it's a far cry to London; but, if you will remit a sufficient sum to cover travelling and other expenses, I will make it convenient to come and give you my opinion. (You will not, of course, deduct the expenses from the prize.) Before writing to you I have taken the opinion of the greatest man in the land on the subject, and have had a most encouraging reply on a post-card, which I enclose to help you to make up your mind if you should have any doubts on the matter."

It might be invidious to disclose the identity of "the greatest man in the land" (according to Mr. McPhater), but we may quote the minutely written text of the "encouraging" post card:—

"My dear Sir,—Though I have not the honour of your acquaintance, the account you give of your political sympathies—always excepting the too flattering references to myself—leaves little doubt in my mind that, failing the application of private enterprise, it might become the duty of the Government—if not now, at any rate at some future time—to think once, and twice, and thrice whether it would not be advisable, under certain clearly defined conditions, and, of course, with adequate limitations, to adopt measures which, if they did not further, would at least not hinder, the end you have in view. But many meet with disappointment in these days; and, if that, unhappily, should be your fate, *remember Mitchelstown!*"

* * * *

Mr. TIMOTHY DRISCOLL, Ballybunnion, Co. Kerry. "But what is this 'apparatus' at all, at all? Sure, the only travelling Post Office we have hereabouts is the boy Micky, and a mighty poor traveller he is—except he be after drink; with the devil a bit of an 'apparatus' about him, barring his coat tail pocket, in which he carries the letters; by the same token, he tucks the register ones betwixt his caubeen and his thick skull for safety. This very morning as ever was, I asked Father Geoghegan if he knew what the Government apparatus was. 'Indeed, I don't,' says he, 'unless it's a new name for Galway gaol—bad luck to it!'—'Faith, if that's it, your Reverence,' says I, 'it wants improving off the face of the earth; but it's an apparatus for delivering mails they're offering a reward of £250 for.' 'True for ye,' he says, 'and there's *males* in Galway now wanting delivering, 'as would be cheap at £250.' With that he winks, and goes off. Well, when all's said and done, I'm the man for your job, if it's

"anything a hand or a blackthorn stick can do. So just say the word, and I'll be at it like a pig at praties." "

* * * *

Messrs. RIVERS & Co. "We do not feel competent to tender for the construction of an improved mail bag apparatus, but we are prepared to make what you can hardly fail to regard as a liberal offer. When you have finally adopted the best obtainable form of apparatus, we will undertake to keep the whole plant in thorough efficiency, replacing all damage from accident or ordinary wear and tear, on condition that we are permitted to ornament the vans, bags, and the various parts of the machinery, with a highly artistic picture in colours, and the simple legend—
"RIVERS' SOAP! GORILLA BRAND! WON'T WASH CLOTHES!"

* * * *

COL. MANGO CHUTNEY, Sleepy Hollow. "As the net result of Post Office energy in this neighbourhood is the flooding of peaceable individuals with pestilent trash in the shape of rascally wine merchants' circulars (usually insufficiently stamped), begging letters, advertisements of quack medicines, and prospectuses of wild-cat schemes, my opinion is that the sooner you altogether abandon your infernal apparatus the better."

* * * *

In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

TALBOT THYNNE.



L'Homme Qui Rit.

*οὐ μὲν σ' οὐδὲ ἔωσι θεοὶ βεῖα ζῶντες
κλαίειν.*

BE wise now, therefore, hear my rhyme
O Gentleman of Lady born,*
Float lightly down the stream of time,
And smile ahead the smile of scorn.

The blatant mob, the upper ten,
O turn thy microscope on all;
But let thy interest in men
Be merely zoological.

Laugh, looker on, and mark the game,
While statesmen throw their loaded dice;
Laugh at the patriot's words of flame,
And calculate his market price.

Laugh at the choral interlude
That sweeps across the scoffing sky,
What time the swinish multitude
Grunts out its great "vox populi."

No "bitter cry," no "darkest land"
Shall come betwixt the wind and thee;
Because thou hast on either hand
Patrician impassivity.

The man that striveth—he shall fail,
And disappointment waits on hope;
The wise man whispers "point de zèle,"
And, smiling, gives the zealot rope.

Laugh, therefore, while the world rolls by,
And, if reformers bid thee work,
Laugh out "cui bono" to the sky—
Then lay thee down again—and shirk.

H. S. C.

* The super-refinement of an American novelist recently suggested to a critic the propriety of substituting "Gentleman that is born of a Lady" for the time-honoured exordium "Man that is born of a woman."

Surveying in Donegal.

(Concluded.)



It is these inborn idiosyncrasies of the Donegal peasant that make the problem of dealing with the congested districts so tremendously difficult. The preceding extracts show the enormous prices he is willing to pay for the tenant-right of a plot of wretched land so long as it is situated in his native district. The greater part of the peasants live and die in the cabins in which they are born. Ask one of them to leave his hut and little plot of stony land for a better house and a large holding on the other side of the road and he will refuse; compel him, and he will bear a grudge against you as long as you live. Enlarge his holding, and he will take the earliest opportunity of marrying his sons and daughters and giving them each a share, so that in a few years he is as badly off as ever. Send him to America, and as soon as he has saved a few pounds he will return to pay an extravagant price for the tenant-right of the miserable patch of bog on which he was born. Industries there are none; and no capitalist would think of investing money in Gweedore, because at any moment he might unwittingly offend the people's prejudices and be boycotted and ruined. So desperate is the situation that it has been seriously proposed to drive every soul off the land and positively forbid any residence thereon.

While in Gweedore last summer a well known journalist wrote:—"To talk of an agricultural rent, in the ordinary sense of the word, among these people is nonsense. They are cottars, labourers, fishermen, crofters—what you will, but not farmers. The two spots on which all the trouble has been, and of which we hear most, are the Hill and the Olphert Estates. On the first, the average rent is less than a pound a holding; on the second it runs to about three pounds. When we have realised the fact that these Donegal cottars are migratory labourers, paying from five-pence to eighteenpence a week for their houses, with enough land to raise some potatoes and a patch of corn, with grazing for as many sheep and cows as they can keep, with an abundant supply of fuel at their doors, with an unlimited amount of fresh air, and

with plenty of elbow room, we begin to be in a position to understand the problem, and to compare their condition with, let us say, that of a London dock labourer. It will be seen that their prosperity and comfort depend on two great factors—the goodness or otherwise of the potato crop, and the state of the labour market in the ‘Laggan,’ as the rich land around Raphoe and Lifford is called, and in the Lowlands of Scotland, to which they go every summer for work. On the potatoes they depend for sustaining their own existence; to the other earnings they look for such extras and luxuries as tea, tobacco, whiskey, clothing, and—occasionally—rent. When the potato crop fails there is starvation, or, at least, want, more or less grave, for those who through illness or ill-luck, or idleness, have failed to provide a sufficient reserve—that is, who have not earned and saved enough as labourers to carry them through the ‘bad times.’ But this is the case of labourers all the world over. People living constantly under such conditions, on the “ragged edge” of poverty, with just sufficient to exist on in average years, must suffer when the return falls below the average. The only permanent remedy, of course, is to get rid of the enormous overplus of population. And here, again, a sad and almost hopeless state of things presents itself. Whilst all over Ireland (except in the north-east, where the linen trade has supplied plenty of well-paid employment) the population has been decreasing, one might say, ‘by leaps and bounds,’ that of these congested parishes has been actually increasing. So long as the tendency continues in that direction, the weaker or idler section of the people must be in constant danger of want. Rent has comparatively little to do with it. Can it be reasonably maintained that on the increase or decrease by a few farthings of the fivepence a week the social happiness or misery of the people depends? If the whole rent were wiped out at a stroke, the problem of congestion would remain in all its essential features. But I see that Mr. Parnell in his recent birthday speech, took advantage of the opportunity to repeat to his cheering colleagues that the great object of his movement is ‘to keep our people at home.’ So at home they stay, and increase and multiply, and subdivide their holdings. And then when the inevitable pinch comes, all the blame is thrown on the unfortunate landlord.”

The real factors in the problem are the condition of the land and the habits of the people. The former factor is, however, in a

great degree dependent on the latter, for more industrious habits would produce better results, and a stoppage of subdivision would prevent the gradual diminution of the means of subsistence. Thus the problem may almost be said to be narrowed to that of the difficulties presented by what Father McFadden calls the "inborn idiosyncracies" of the people, and the question comes, Where can improvement be looked for? Who will teach the people to alter habits which are ruining them? Who will make them understand that as long as they rely almost exclusively on the potato for food they will always be on the brink of the pit of misery?

It is very difficult to answer this question, or rather, I should say perhaps that for the present the answer must be—no one. The only leaders of the people are the politicians and the priests. Of the former nothing can be expected the immediate politics of the hour occupy all their thoughts and speeches. Mr. John Morley recently stated that it would be an impertinence on his part if he were to offer the Irish people advice on social questions, and the county members are too busy marking policeman's coats with chalk, and endeavouring to hinder the Government of the day from doing any useful work in the country, to trouble themselves about such trifles.

In Scotland and in England the land is owned by persons who are the descendants in title, if not in blood, of those who have held the soil for eight hundred years, and in both countries centuries of co-operation, sympathy, and mutual good service, have united landlord and tenant in one common interest. But in the West of Ireland, where the almost entire absence of industrial pursuits pre-eminently marks out the landlord as the leader of the people, this feeling is altogether wanting, for the landlords are almost without exception of alien descent, and have acquired their titles from one or other of the numerous confiscations of the seventeenth century. Differences of religion have made the chasm still wider, and the penal laws have rendered it almost impassable. All this, as Mr. Lecky* remarks, served to debilitate the national character; the tendons of society have been, as it were, cut. The interests of the landlords have been directly opposed to those of their tenants, and the latter have too often allowed themselves to be controlled by professional agitators and unscrupulous adventurers.

* History of England in the eighteenth century. Vol. ii.

In default, then, of the natural leaders of the people, those who have practically studied the problem on the spot have generally turned to the priest. "Be in tune with him," writes George Meredith,* "he is the keynote for harmony. He is shepherd, doctor, nurse, comforter, anecdotist, and fun-maker to his poor flock, and you wonder that they see the burning gateway of their heaven in him. Conciliate the priest."

A hundred and fifty years ago, Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne—than whom Ireland never had a truer friend—addressed the priesthood as follows:—

"There still remains in this island a remarkable antipathy to labour. You, gentlemen, can alone conquer this innate hereditary sloth. Do you, then, as you love your country, exert yourselves. Your flocks are of all others most disposed to follow directions, and of all others want it most. And, indeed, what do they not want?"†

The good Bishop was far in advance of his age in thus appealing to the priests of a proscribed religion to lead the great work of social regeneration, but he was undoubtedly right in regarding them as the only persons who could possibly effect any good, and it is deeply to be deplored that in the circumstances of that time the Government was unable to conciliate the priests and make use of them in elevating the people. The priests were then educated at Douai, and the fact that they went abroad to receive their training often gave them a considerable knowledge of the world, and enabled them to take a broad view of things. The priests of the present day are, generally speaking, but little above the peasantry in knowledge and ideas, and possess in a full measure all the passions and prejudices of the class from which they spring, and to which they look for subsistence. With many

* "Diana of the Crossways," chap. i.

† The above extract is taken from a pamphlet entitled "A Word to the Wise." The Bishop published many of his views on Ireland, under the form of questions, in *The Querist*. The following are a few extracts:—

"Whether there ever is or will be an industrious nation poor, or an idle nation rich.

"Whether the bulk of our Irish natives are not kept from thriving by that cynical content in dirt and beggary which they possess to a degree beyond any people of Christendom.

"Whether wrong-headed maxims, customs, and fashions are not sufficient to destroy any people which hath so few resources as the people of Ireland.

"Whether there is not a great number of idle fingers among the wives and daughters of our peasants."

good qualities, therefore, they are not in a position to elevate in any appreciable degree the material condition of the peasantry. Educated wholesale at the great clerical seminary of Maynooth, they are not men of culture, they know little or nothing of the progress of thought and ideas, and like most men in that half-fledged state, they have not the moral fibre to sternly oppose practices which they know to be wrong, but which are popular among their parishioners. When, among the priests of Donegal and the West, there is to be found a leaven of men of high training and strong moral stamina who will follow what they know to be right in scorn of consequence, then, and not till then, there will be ground for a hope of improvement in the moral and material condition of the peasantry.

At present, the Saxon and the Celt appear to look at economic questions from a totally different point of view, and until one or the other gives way there is little prospect of an abiding settlement. The Saxon regards the Celtic point of view as founded on mere sentiment, while the Celt considers the Saxon's more logical view as a mere pedantic adherence to hard and fast rules framed for his special annoyance.

At Killala, on the northern shore of the county of Mayo, stands a queer little church which might, at a pinch, hold a couple of hundred people, and which is dignified by the name of cathedral. Hard by, across the street, is one of those gaunt round towers which give such an air of mystery and antiquity to the holy places of Ireland; and not far off is an old mansion now converted to ignoble uses, but which was, until sixty years ago, the residence of the Protestant bishop of the see. For nigh three hundred years, these apostolic men enjoyed some £3,000 a year and the finest house in north-western Mayo in return for guarding the spiritual interests of a handful of good Protestants. They appear, as a rule, to have vegetated in an ease and obscurity which knew no disturbance save when a band of Ribbonmen invaded the neighbourhood, or a party of French landed in the adjacent bay and made the palace its head-quarters. The fact that their ministrations were utterly contemned by ninety-nine persons out of every hundred in their diocese troubled not these right reverend men, until, at the end of the last century, John Law, an Englishman, was appointed to fill the Bishop-stool. Sincerely anxious to do something to earn his salary, and finding no other way open to him, he hit upon the notion of printing and dis-

tributing in the diocese, at his own expense, the works of a Roman Catholic divine named Gother. Considering that to expect the conversion of the people to Protestantism was hopeless, he determined, at any rate, to try and make them good Catholics. This is the spirit in which the Irish question of the day must be approached if any settlement is to be arrived at. If we cannot do what we could wish to do, let us do what we can. Let us, at any rate, do something, and let us do that something in a conciliatory spirit. Then perhaps it may be the good fortune of this generation to lay at rest the spectre of discontent and misery born of misunderstandings, which has for ages hung like a dark cloud over the sister island.

Could we but gaze for an hour—for a minute—
Deep in each other's unfathoméd eyes,
Love were begun, for that look would begin it,
Born in the flash of a mighty surprise.

F. J. BECKLEY.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

After Office Hours.

The Case for an Eight Hours' Bill.

CIRCUMSTANCES over which I have had no control have lately had the effect of creating in me a keen personal interest in "The Case for an Eight Hours Bill." The only way, indeed, in which a busy man like myself is able to meet the extra strain put upon his energies is by shortening the time usually devoted to sleep. But, though after two or three months' experience of this form of abstinence, one gets fairly accustomed to it, one does not get accustomed to the strain on one's mental faculties caused by the close application to work at high pressure, of a monotonous and worrying character. There is no word in the English language so much abused as the word "work." Give me ten hours at "work" in which I am interested, and in the doing of which I feel I may earn some credit. What is the result? Why, simply this, that at the end I shall be fresh and ready for a change of occupation. But give me three hours at a ledger, calculating interest at two and a half per cent., or extracting ledger entries into summaries, and at the end of that time I am half crazy, and ready for participation in any scheme for overturning the universe, or a portion of it. "After Office Hours" at these times is not a period of much profitableness. What, indeed, can an overworked brain, sick unto death of figures and accounts, totals and balances, do but preach a little sermon on over-work to his brother officers? I am not going into the dangerous question of voluntary or compulsory overtime. We all expect to work hard and for long hours in times of pressure. But, then, there are some kinds of work which involve little or no strain on the body, while there are others which, by reason of their wearing and harassing nature, take the life out of a man more effectually than fast living or deep thinking. It is ridiculous for a man who finds pleasure in his particular work to say to one who does not, "See how many hours I work, without complaining." The pleasure the work gives him is worth the toil and the long hours. In fact, he would be a fool if he did complain. But with the man to whom a particular work which he is called upon to perform is a painful drudgery, the case is, I venture to think, very different. And if, in addition to the painfulness of the work, he is also fully aware that he earns no credit to himself by his readiness to perform it, but that, on the contrary, he is probably injuring his own health, his official prospects, and those of his brother officers, the contrast between my two examples becomes all the more marked. I commend some very wise words to those of my brother officers, who, wrongly as I think, value opportunities for the performance of extra duty, on work which their own experience must tell them is permanently

injuring their health. "Many a man in the difficult conduct of life gets himself on to wrong lines—lines of over-work, of worry, of stress—which it is impossible for him to sustain. Whether it is better to stop now, and brave the check and the present loss, or to wilfully persist until broken health, or lunacy, or death, prove to be the final alternative? Men think they cannot stop at the present moment because duty forbids. In a few cases, no doubt, it is so; and individuals have to die as well as to live for their families. But, before a man makes up his mind to that, he should be very sure that it is his duty. Many a man's uninstructed conscience and too-great self-approbation prove his physiological ruin." These are not exaggerated statements; it is within my own experience that men who have been in the habit of working for the greater portion of the year on certain kinds of work, for fourteen or fifteen hours a day, have died, have gone mad, and have hopelessly injured themselves, morally and physically, in consequence of their readiness to avail themselves of opportunities which a State, careful of the type, but careless of the single life, puts in their way. And from this point of view the present Postmaster-General is to be congratulated on the excellent precedent he has set in limiting the hours of labour.

"Glencoonoge."

MR. SHERIDAN KNOWLES, of the Savings Bank Department, whose name alone suggests pleasant associations to all lovers of literature, has written a three-volume novel under the above title. As a picture of Irish life in some of its pleasantest, and, to English people, its least known phases, the book, in my opinion, possesses distinct artistic merit. I know just such a little village as Glencoonoge on the west coast of Ireland, and in Mr. Knowles' very pleasant and quite idyllic descriptions one is again made familiar with the scenes, habits, and customs which by reason of their strangeness at once arrest the attention of the Saxon traveller. The relations of the Catholic priest to his flock and the simple homely ideals which govern the conduct of the youths and maidens of Western Ireland are told very truthfully, and often very prettily, by Mr. Knowles. In everything which calls forth his talents as a painter or artist of Irish scenes, Irish landscapes, and Irish customs, Mr. Knowles is distinctly happy in his touch. He made me fall in love with Glencoonoge, "the glen of the little harbour." It is a living picture in my mind, and I have to thank him for several very pleasant hours spent in reading his book. Having said this I am now bold enough to suggest what are, to my mind, the defects in his work. Perhaps I can best illustrate what my opinion is when I say I was a great deal more interested in Glencoonoge itself than I was with any one of the personages of the story. That is to say, I think the story-telling and character-study are not quite worthy of the setting. I think the

story is thin, and I found sometimes considerable difficulty in keeping up an interest in the ultimate fate of the hero and heroine. I know what are the demands of a three-volume novel, and I blame the system under which the book is published rather than Mr. Knowles, for the fact that the story seems often to hang fire. Mr. Knowles is too well acquainted with the responsibilities of criticism to be angry with the way I have advanced a somewhat inexperienced opinion on his book. The fact is, his work possesses far too much promise and merit to be treated in any but a critical spirit. From start to finish it is easily and pleasantly written; its pictures of Irish life are as charming as they are true, and in the very style and language of Mr. Knowles there is a simplicity and grace singularly fitted for the purposes to which he applies it. I hope he will try his hand once more. For my own part, I must say that, although I suppose the love scenes, the fights between rivals, and the extraordinary coincidences which keep a story going must be the inevitable accompaniments of a modern novel, it is not on account of these I shall look out for fresh work from Mr. Knowles. I want to know more of Glencoonoge, of the quaint customs and old-world habits of the peasantry of the west of Ireland. Bother love; it wrecks human lives, and it sometimes takes the life out of a nice book. Let us get out into a healthier atmosphere. There is no lack of subjects:—

The primal duties shine aloft, like stars;
The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
Are scattered at the feet of Man, like flowers.

“Mademoiselle Ire.”

THE bare rumour that Mr. Gladstone had read and enjoyed “Mademoiselle Ire” sent hundreds of people to the circulating libraries for the now popular book. It would ill become me to scoff at a multitude of whom I am a modest member. But I wish to dissociate myself entirely from those rather mean and narrow-minded readers, who, having also enjoyed the book, industriously circulated the story that Mr. Gladstone’s daughter was the authoress. “*Hinc illæ laudes*,” said the wretches who hold that there is always some sinister motive underlying every utterance from Hawarden. “Mademoiselle Ire,” in my opinion, fully justifies Mr. Gladstone’s praises. Somebody said of it that it was “nihilism in a nutshell.” Into the commonplace life of one or two English families is introduced a Russian girl, who has a terrible mission to accomplish on behalf of her country. How she uses these people for her own purposes, how relentlessly she follows out her own aims, is told with much simplicity and vigour. And there is real tragedy in the contrast presented to us in the smug respectability of English life, with its absorption in little scandals and low ambitions, and the indignation which is eating the heart out

of the Russian against ills in her own country she cannot cure. It is one of the most noticeable features in Russian Nihilism that it attracts the best and most sympathetic natures to its ranks. It is the fashion, not only in Russia, but in this country, to brand the agitator with the mark of the criminal or of the good-for-nothing. The fact is, wherever there exists injustice and oppression, the men who rise against these things are generally the most intelligent and the best hearted men. They dare the most, they are the men whose sympathies are most easily moved, they are the salt of a nation's or of a society's life. It is often a true instinct which leads us to attribute to the so-called blackleg a deficiency in both intelligence and sympathy. However that may be, the flower of the Russian nation is in the ranks of the opponents of the Government. And how deep is the revolt in their minds against the system under which they groan may be understood from a perusal of the powerful story concerning which I have been talking.

THE EDITOR.

Notices of Books.

A HUNDRED YEARS BY POST: A JUBILEE RETROSPECT.
By J. Wilson Hyde. (Sampson, Low, Marston, and Co.)
1s., pp. 140.

"So fruitful has been the nineteenth century in discovery and invention, and so astounding the advancement made, that it is only by stopping in our maddening haste that we can realise how different is the present from the past." So writes Mr. Hyde in the opening pages of his latest contribution to the literature of the Post Office. Perhaps he had some little difficulty in checking himself in his wild career through the century in order to make "a Jubilee retrospect." But for this we might, no doubt, have had his pleasant booklet some months earlier, when as a Jubilee production it would have been decidedly more seasonable. This is a small matter, however, and not likely to very much affect its popularity. The weather always excepted, we know of no topic which seems so easily to interest all sorts and conditions of readers as anecdotal history of the Post Office, and a writer with such wide knowledge of postal antiquities and curiosities, who writes so pleasantly as Mr. Hyde, is nowadays not likely very long to want either a publisher or a public.

If we were required to hint a fault, we might, perhaps, say that the book is a little out of date in its open-mouthed admiration of recent improvements in the social mechanism, as compared with the mode of life of our great-grandfathers, some of whom we

believe to have been, nevertheless, quite respectable and intelligent persons. For the rest, Mr. Hyde gives us an interesting collection of stories about Post Office work and the allied channels of communication between man and man, from which we cannot but make a few quotations, enough, as we hope, to make our readers wish to read the rest for themselves in his book. Here, for instance, is a story of the franking system quoted by Mr. Hyde. "I remember," said the writer, "about 60 years ago an old Irish lady told me that she seldom paid any postage for letters, and that her correspondence never cost her friends anything. I inquired how she managed that. 'Oh,' she said, 'I just wrote, "Free, J. Suttie," in the corner of the cover of the letter, and then, sure, nothing more was charged for it.' I said, 'Were you not afraid of being hanged for forgery?' 'Oh, dear, no,' she replied, 'nobody ever heard of a lady being hanged in Ireland, and, troth, I just did what everybody else did!'"

Mr. Hyde draws a moral from a letter of which he was the subject, written less than five and twenty years ago. We omit the moral, but give the letter written by a friend who had been trying to make interest on his behalf with the Postmaster-General in the days before open competition had corrupted the Service. "I wrote to — (the Postmaster-General) about the Mr. J. W. Hyde, who desires to be permitted to compete for a clerkship in the London Post Office, described as a cousin of —."

The Postmaster has to-day replied that nominations to the Secretary's Office are not now given except to candidates who are actually gentlemen, that is sons of officers, clergymen, or the like. If I cannot satisfy the Postmaster-General on this point, I fear Mr. Hyde's candidature will go to the wall."

It has often been remarked that mail coaches were very seldom openly attacked, although the highway robberies of the old post-boys, carrying the mails on horseback, were very frequent. One instance Mr. Hyde relates, the only one in the experience of a veteran mail guard in which he ever had to make actual use of his weapons. This was when a party of sailors, going to join their ship, declared that they would ride upon his coach, which was already filled inside and out. The guard, however, arranged with the coachman to start at once at a gallop on a given signal, and as the coach moved off he drew one of his pistols and presented it at the ringleader, who was about to throw a large stone at his head. The man thereupon begged for mercy on his knees and the rest made off. Not all guards were as ready to protect the comfort of their passengers, and we read of another to whom a passenger complained that he was drenched by water coming through the roof. The only answer he received was "Ay, mony a ane has complained o' that hole." The Department was, however, sometimes at least, more considerate of the public. In 1791 the Postmaster-General gave directions that a warning should be issued against sending any cash by post "from the prejudice it does to the coin by the friction it occasions from the

great expedition with which it is conveyed." This speed was then apparently about five or six miles an hour. Ten years later eight miles an hour, including stoppages, was sometimes attained, but this was a dangerous speed and excited grave apprehensions in the official mind that it might cause the passengers to die of apoplexy.

The mail guards seem often to have been of a perverse race. One ancient inspector declared that half his time was occupied in receiving and answering letters of complaint from passengers respecting the improper conduct and impertinent language of the guards. But Mr. Hyde has other instances, and tells of one guard who received a special letter of thanks from the Postmaster-General. His coachman, who was drunk, had lost his reins, fallen from the box and caused the horses to bolt. The guard thereupon scrambled over the roof of the coach and out along the pole between the excited wheelers, recovered the reins, and so saved the coach from being wrecked. Another guard, who had been entrusted with a parcel of bank notes, was left behind by the coachman. He set off running to follow the coach, and before he overtook it had run a whole stage.

One of the best of Mr. Hyde's examples of the changes which follow the flight of time is taken from an account by Harriet Martineau of the mode in which in 1836 the mails were treated on board the fine sailing packet, the "*Orpheus*," 417 tons, in which she crossed the Atlantic. "I could not leave such a sight even for the amusement of hauling over the letter-bags. Mr. Ely put on his spectacles; Mrs. Ely drew a chair; others lay along on deck to examine the superscription of the letters from Irish emigrants to their friends. It is wonderful how some of these epistles reach their destination. The following, for instance, began on the top left-hand corner, and was elaborately prolonged to the bottom right one:—'Mrs. A. B., Ile of Man, douglas, wits sped England.' The letter bags are opened for the purpose of sorting out those which are for delivery in port from the rest. A fine day is always chosen, generally towards the end of the voyage, when amusements become scarce and the passengers are growing weary. It is pleasant to sit on the rail and see the passengers gather round the heap of letters, and to hear the shouts of merriment when any exceedingly original superscription comes under notice." Then later on we are told "The two Miss O'Briens appeared to-day on deck, speaking to nobody, sitting on the same seats, with their feet *on the same letter bag*, reading two volumes of the same book, and dressed alike."

THE LIFE OF PHILIP HENRY GOSSE. By his Son Edmund Gosse.

This is an interesting and well written biography of a remarkable man. P. H. Gosse was born in 1810, and began at a very early age to study natural history, which, after a few years in a counting house in Newfoundland, became the serious business of

his life. His first contribution to literature, "The Canadian Naturalist," was published in 1840, and from that time to almost the close of his life, in 1888, he continued to give to the world the result of his observations in a series of books, many of which are still regarded as authorities. He was the inventor of the marine aquarium, and spent much time at Weymouth, Tenby, and in Devonshire in collecting specimens, and while thus occupied seems to have met with some amusing adventures. At one time a Wesleyan Methodist, Mr. Gosse subsequently joined the "Brethren," and their narrowness seems to have had an unfortunate effect upon him, and to have induced him to undertake a reconciliation of Genesis and geology—an unhappy attempt which was alike offensive to the orthodox and to the man of science.

A HISTORY OF ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. By W. E. H. Lecky. Vols. vii. and viii.

After an interval of some years, Mr. Lecky has published the concluding volumes of his great work, which are devoted to Irish affairs, and deal very fully and, if it be not rash to express an opinion, impartially with the events that led up to the Rebellion of 1798, with the Rebellion itself, and with the Union. He has made use of sources of information inaccessible to previous writers, including a vast collection of papers ranging from 1795 to 1805, which remained under seal at Dublin Castle for more than sixty years, the Pelham papers now in the British Museum, and other manuscripts placed at his disposal by their possessors. It would be absurd to attempt in a short note to summarise or to criticise these large volumes, but everyone who wishes to understand the Irish question ought to study them. Their importance has been duly recognised in articles in the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* for January; and Mr. Goldwin Smith has something to say in *Macmillan's Magazine* about Mr. Lecky's estimate of Pitt's conduct in connection with the Union.

Mr. Lecky tells a curious story of the opening of Archbishop Troy's correspondence in the Irish Post Office, which shows how much the Castle authorities were kept in the dark as to the proceedings of the English ministry. Among the Archbishop's letters was one from Monsignor Erskine, of the Scotch family of Mar, and in 1798 *de facto* Papal Resident at the Court of St. James's, though the circumstance was not generally known. The writer strongly urged the Archbishop "to prevail on his brethren and their flocks to exert themselves on behalf of law and government," and Camden the Lord Lieutenant, communicated this gratifying fact to the Duke of Portland in London. The Duke replied that he was already aware of it, as Erskine had told him.

THE LETTERS OF "S. G. O." TO THE *TIMES*.

When it was announced that the letters of Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborne to the *Times* were being edited for republication by Mr. Arnold White, some very wise people shook their

heads and foretold a literary failure. As often happens, the prophets were wrong, and, though we think the collection might have been smaller, the letters have been read by many who were not born when they first appeared in print, and have been reperused by others who remember them in the columns of the newspaper. Their author, a cadet of the house of Leeds, the brother-in-law of Mr. J. A. Froude and of the late Charles Kingsley, was rector for thirty-four years of Dorweston in Dorsetshire. He was an excellent parish priest, but, as several of the letters show, he did not always agree with his own bishop, and he seems to have had a great aversion to the late Bishop Wilberforce. Over the well-known initials "S. G. O.," he wrote on the Dorsetshire poor, emigration, disease, crime, sanitation, labour questions, and other social subjects, in days somewhat remote, when social reformers were rarer than they are now. It is, perhaps, true that he was a better critic than constructor, but he was in many respects a very practical man, and some of his suggestions are excellent. He sometimes launched out upon subjects of a different nature—Religion, and the Church, and the Crimean War, for instance—and he was the writer of two famous letters, "A Belgravian Lament" and "Seven Dorsetshire Labourers at their Tea," which appeared without the usual signature and were assigned by rumour to other authors. We can heartily recommend these volumes to all who are interested in the history of social questions during the forty years ending in 1888, when the last letter appeared.

The following interesting letter was addressed by "S. G. O." to a gentleman in the Savings Bank, and is now printed for the first time:—

" June 28th, 1869.

"I am sorry that I cannot comply with your request, as I am not aware of anything likely to take me to London, a place I ever avoid.

"I have lectured at Bromley and elsewhere, but now seldom care to do so. My views of social matters are too pronounced for public delivery.

"I see the whole nation infected with a love of money and thirst for gambling in every shape. Immorality is fostered where the example of good should first be set.

"The aristocracy are cutting their own throats by their utterly selfish and sensuous life. The commercial community care for nothing in the way of integrity, Government means a Party; Party means a Man. We are great screamers for education and religion, and yet the very worst classes I know are the educated, who profess to uphold religion. On what could I lecture?"

"S. G. O."

AN OLD COACHMAN'S CHATTER. By Col. E. Corbett.
(Bentley.)

When a writer has prefixed to his book a modest title and a preface in which he disclaims all pretensions to literary merit, he doubtless thinks that he has disarmed criticism of his style and arrangement. But he cannot complain if his readers are forewarned that his estimate of himself is not a bit too low. Col. Corbett's book is, in fact, well nigh unreadable. It is nevertheless interesting; and, strange to say, the absence of literary polish is in some respects a gain, as it forces on the reader a conviction of the absolute truth and candour of the writer. The pen is, in his hand, a clumsy weapon, but he is evidently a master of the whip. To anyone who takes an interest in driving or in horses, Col. Corbett, as an old professional driver of mail-coaches, speaks with an authority which can be assumed by no mere amateur; and his personal reminiscences of the coaches and coachmen of fifty and sixty years ago cannot fail to be attractive. He has also collected a number of interesting and curious details about the mail service of the pre-railway days. It is, therefore, to be regretted that out of these promising materials he has only been able to make a kind of medley. The best way to read the book is to open it anywhere and run the eye over the pages until something interesting appears, carefully skipping every paragraph which promises to contain a funny story or an unreasonable digression. Perhaps the most amusing thing in the whole book is "A Scientific Chapter," in which the Colonel gravely proves that "the greater the weight, the longer the time required for pulling up," and deduces the corollary that "it would seem, therefore, as if a heavy weight, to a certain extent, assisted its own propulsion." He is apparently not quite sure that greater power is required to draw a given load at ten miles an hour than at five, and hints a doubt that it is beyond the resources of modern science to solve this "doughty question" as he calls it!

Colonel Corbett has made considerable use of old Post Office records bearing on mail-coaches.

St. Martin's Letter-Bag.

The Civil Service in the Good old Days.

We have received from a correspondent, who signs himself "A Junior Clerk," a long letter on the subject of the condition of the Civil Service in former times. It is too long to insert in full, but we quote that part in which he has gathered together some curious examples of the mode in which the Service was recruited in former times. Such ancient history is hardly, perhaps, of much interest in the present day, but we insert it for what it is worth.

"Writing in 1854, Sir E. Chadwick, of the Poor Law Board, says: 'It is a fact, really of most serious importance that the larger proportion of appointments has been given not only to persons of lower condition, but to persons of education and qualifications greatly below the average of their own class.

"A secretary, complaining of the disadvantages of his service, related in illustration that, out of three clerks sent to him from the usual sources, there was only one of whom any use whatever could be made, and that, of the other two, one came to take his place at the office leading a bulldog in a string.

"I have been assured that, under another commission, out of eighty clerks supplied by the Patronage Secretary there were not more than twelve who were worth their salt for the performance of service requiring only a sound common education.

"A retired Officer, writing to me on this subject of *lively* official interest, says that a faithful portrait of the persons who have procured appointments in public offices might well be considered a scandalous misrepresentation. Many instances could be given of young men, the sons of respectable parents, who were found unable to read or write and utterly ignorant of accounts. Two brothers, one almost imbecile, the other much below the average of intellect, long retained appointments, though never equal to higher work than the lowest description of copying. Another young man was found unable on entering to number the pages of a volume of official papers beyond 10.'

"In another Blue Book, to my horror I read this. Major Graham, Registrar-General, on the 30th April, 1860, was examined by the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments. He handed in a return of the ages and previous occupation of 55 persons of the age of 25 and upwards who were nominated by the Treasury between 1836 and 1854. 'Several of them,' he says, 'were

incompetent from their ages, some being 50 and some even 60 years of age.' Some of them he found perfectly unqualified; for instance, the accountant, who got the accounts into very bad order so that Major Graham's first step on resuming office was to remove him. 'I also found,' he says, 'persons there of very bad character. One man was sent with some money to the Bank of England; but he did not pay it in, and tried to impute the blame to one of the clerks in the Bank of England as having received it; and there were several things of that sort. Then, with regard to health, there was one man whom I was forced to keep in a room by himself, as he was in such a state of health that he could not associate with the other clerks. There was another clerk of whom complaints were made that he was so offensive that the other clerks could not be with him. I asked that person where he got his appointment. He was a very old man; and he told me that he had been a student in law in early life, and he then happened to be intimate with a legal friend who afterwards attained a very high position in this country, and that upon getting into difficulties, without having seen or known anything of that gentleman for thirty years, he went to him and told him he had not a shilling. This high legal gentleman mentioned his name to the Treasury, and he was immediately appointed to my office.

"I found from my predecessor's minutes that he had forced to dismiss four clerks for their disgraceful conduct. I also found there were some unnecessary appointments. I have two instances: There was a Deputy Registrar General; he was not in attendance; he was ill, and I got a letter from him asking that he might be allowed to remain absent, which I consented to, because I really did not know what to do with him, being badly off for room in the office; I wished to do the duties myself. For fifteen months I never saw him; at the end of the fifteen months (I did not want to be in a hurry) I reported to the Lords of the Treasury that the appointment was unnecessary, and their Lordships removed him and did away with the office.

"On the 3rd of May, 1860, Mr. E. Romilly, Chairman of the Board of Audit, stated in evidence before the same Committee, that, before the institution of the Civil Service Commission, there was in his office a case in which a gentleman was appointed who really could hardly read or write, he was almost an idiot, and and there was the greatest possible difficulty in getting him out of the office.

"In the Admiralty, however, a departmental examination was required. And this is what Sir R. M. Bromley, Accountant-General of the Navy, said about it on the 7th May, 1860: 'A nomination was made by the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the clerk so nominated was sent to the office; then the head of the department usually told his chief clerk, or one or two of the clerks in the office, to examine him as to his qualifications in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and the common rudiments of educa-

tion. It became so much a matter of form that we used to have an examination paper, which was generally known about the office, and which everybody almost had access to; it was, if I may so describe it, a leaping-bar test, and, if the clerk did not quite come up to the test, the bar was somewhat lowered until he made such a jump as to clear it."

A Poetical Grumble.

The following lines may be of interest to our readers. They show the manner in which a member of the public elected to complain, not of the insufficiency of the numbers, but of the youth and want of capacity of the staff in a certain office, and of the lack of supervision over them.

Air—"ENNISCORTHY."

I.

It's a dreadful undertaking, and of this there's no mistake,
You'll have lots of time for sleeping, tho' you're just as well awake,
And you'll find your patience ebbing, and your nerves receive a
shake,

When you want a postal order in "Montana."

You may knock upon the counter, you may trifle with your hat,
Or wind your Waterbury watch, or readjust your spat,
Or whistle till in time you gain attention from a brat,

When you want a postal order in "Montana."

II.

You are apt to be excited—to call the boy a fool,
Bless you! it's but the custom—the universal rule:
But don't mistake the office for a model infant school,

When you want a postal order in "Montana."

The child that's in the corner there, his face towards the door,
Is getting off by heart the fact that two and two make four,
And before you make him understand you'll maybe have to roar,

That you want a postal order in "Montana."

III.

There's Johnny and there's Tommy—see how they stand and muse!
You'll wonder if they're paid to look like monkeys in the blues,
And you'll not find one man-jack of them that's three feet in his
shoes,

When you want a postal order in "Montana."

These verses have a moral as perhaps I should have said:
You might do worse than carry up a patent folding bed,
And place it in the office there to rest your weary head,

While you're waiting for that order in "Montana"!

Some Post Office Curiosities.

DERBY is situated in the heart of the Midlands, and is not very often visited by foreigners; but a few find their way there and occasionally furnish good specimens of "English as she is wrote and spoke." One day last year an Italian, selling ices in the streets, wandered in to the Derby Post Office, and asked for some help in making out a letter he had received from his father in Italy. Whether accident or instinct brought him there is not clear, but at any rate he was very lucky to hit on an office where the Postmaster is such a good Italian linguist. The letter said that the father was coming "per d'un cherco," which the vendor of ices could only interpret as meaning that the old man had somehow got mixed up with a priest (*cherico*), a statement which, from his knowledge of his father's habits and manners, completely puzzled him. His mind, however, was soon set at rest by the explanation that the words should have been written "per Dun-cherco," *i.e.*, *via* Dunkirk.

On another occasion a Portuguese handed in a telegram worded thus, "Is ar 8." The Counter Clerk's knowledge of the vernacular was not quite equal to interpreting this, and the stranger had to be cross-examined in French and Spanish before it could be made out that what the message was intended for was, "It is all right."

It is well known what splendid opportunities we Post Office Officials have of studying Natural History. Bristol seems to be specially favoured in this respect. On one occasion, not long ago, a box supposed to contain flowers from France, burst open, and out hopped a dozen of lively green frogs, whose capture afforded a good half-hour's exciting sport to some of the Staff. Who are the people who send frogs through the post? Our friends never send us any, but, from the number that escape, there seems to be a brisk supply of them. To the juvenile mind it is very tantalizing to think that the Postman brings such nice letters to some people, and one young friend hearing of some of which the owner could not be found, could not resist writing lately to "the Master of Northamp Post Office," in the following terms:—

"Dear Sir,

"Would you pleas send me a frogs. I have seen in the newspaper that you have got a bout the place. Send to Mrs. B——.

I remain,

Your affectionate

friend, G. H. P.—"

During the recent alterations of the Post Office buildings at Bristol a cat crept under the old floor of one of the rooms, and the workmen repaired the floor without knowing she was there. After three or four days a ghostly mewing began to be observed. One of the Staff, of great courage, ventured to remove the boards in the neighbourhood of the sounds, and discovered not only a cat but three kittens also. The cat had a very conceited air, but was so weak

that she had to lean against the wall to mew! It was altogether, he said, a felin(e) spectacle.

It is good to be famous, but fame has its perils. Last year in the Postmaster-General's report we all read with interest of the tomtit that had made its nest and reared its brood in a letter-box at Castle Douglas. This year, some ruthless boys, having heard of its fame, broke open the box with stones and robbed the nest, and have probably broken up for ever that idyllic Post Office home. We hope the Postmaster-General will prosecute such ruthless monsters with the utmost rigour of the law.

Just as some people put more inside their letters than Post Office regulations permit, so others put a deal more outside their letters than is necessary. Here is a good sample of a very copious address:—

“Miss ————,
“4, Montpelier.”

“in that beautiful city which charms even eyes familiar with the masterpieces of Bramante and Palladio, and which the genius of Anstey and Smollett, of Frances Burney and of Jane Austen, has made classic ground.”

We do not know whether the writer wished to test the general literary and æsthetic knowledge of the Department, but it strikes us that this is rather a long way of saying “Go to Bath.”

Our colonial cousins seem sometimes to have a wonderful confidence either in the extent of our postal knowledge or in the smallness of the old country, probably in the latter. Some one in India, not long ago, sent a letter addressed—

“Mrs. S. Skron R———,
“Market Place,
“South Wales,
“England.”

The writer was, however, lucky, inasmuch as after a few days of wandering about, the letter was seen by an officer who happened to recognise the rather peculiar Christian name of the addressee as that of a resident in Llanelly.

If our friends and readers in the provinces will send us particulars of such little incidents as these from time to time, they may be sure that they will be received by all our readers with interest and by the editor with gratitude.

Hollow Murmurings.

IT is interesting to notice how the writers of letters to the newspapers seem spontaneously to group themselves around this or that favourite organ according to some leading trait of character which they possess in common. Thus, if we say that the common quality of the correspondence published in the *Daily Telegraph* is gush, it would appear equally true that the *Standard's* clients are distinguished by a grandmotherly and touching simplicity. Our

readers will probably remember the innocent person who lately wrote to this journal to complain that, having stumbled across a first edition of *Vanity Fair* in the original paper wrapper, and having sent it to be bound and gilt-edged, he, after all his trouble and expense, disposed of it for only a few shillings. The letters which appear from time to time in the *Spectator* not only combine the characteristics of the Telegraphites and Standardists, but with gush and simplicity blend a marked degree of priggishness. In January one of the *Spectator's* readers started an onslaught on the Post Office by complaining that at many provincial offices there was no one employed who knew French or German. This is of course true, but it is equally undeniable that in country towns of the same size there are rarely found among the class from which Postofficers are drawn persons who know these languages. The complaint, to be just, should be addressed to schoolmasters in general.

Then a gentleman from the Athenæum Club saw a chance of airing his knowledge of Italian. Twenty years ago, it appears, he sent the following telegram to Italy: "*Farotelo precipitevolissimevolmente*," meaning "I will do it for you with all possible speed." During the day a clerk was sent to tell him that the long word was objected to, but we gather that, on an explanation being given, the telegram was sent on. Since this outrage of twenty years since he has had, he admits, no cause to complain. But he goes on to prove what is not denied, viz., that this awful word of 26 letters, rivalling in length the well-known comic compounds of Aristophanes, is actually to be found in the Italian dictionaries; and he ends by dragging in a quotation from the *Rime* of Francesco Sacketti containing it:—

"Non scende, nò, ma ruzzola le scale
Precipitevolissimeevolmente."

Inspired by this erudite example another gentleman, who had nothing else to do, added his little grumble to the grievances of twenty years ago. He lived at Weybridge, and one day he received a letter from Germany addressed in *German characters* to "Weibridge." This letter had, it seems, been sent for trial at Milnbridge; and hence those tears. We should have thought, however, that the German *W*, together with the mis-spelling, would have fully accounted for the mistake and the delay.

Such was the *Spectator's* gird at the Post Office—a very feeble copy indeed of Mr. Frederick Harrison's irascible assault in *The Speaker*. There was some power in his blows, but the *Spectator's* correspondence is as mixed as the force which assaulted the Abbey of Quedlinberg and quite as unreal.

Mr. Frederic Harrison Again.

MR. HARRISON returns to the charge against our Department in *The Speaker* of the 17th January. After admitting that he has seriously overstated the profits of the Post Office, he proceeds:—

"Whether the profits are 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. they are enormous, when other carrying companies are content with 5 or 10 per cent. The Post Office stands on a very different footing from other spending departments of the State. The Army and Navy are not productive services; and it is reasonable that the Treasury should watch the enormous expenditure they involve with a very jealous eye. But the Post Office is a real commercial undertaking, probably the only Government commercial enterprise on any large scale. It is quite unreasonable that the Treasury should impose its orders on the Post Office in the same way in which it does on other departments. The Treasury is only concerned with such surplus as the Post Office can hand over to it, after all the requirements of the Post Service are fulfilled. As it is, the Treasury hampers and starves the Post Office service itself. It was no part of my purpose to attack any particular Government, nor do I wish to take any part in the current criticism of the Post Office staff. My remarks were confined to a general consideration of the system as part of the entire administrative scheme. And I take my stand on these intelligible public principles:—1. That until the Service is in a thoroughly satisfactory state, both as to the public and to its own employed, the Treasury has nothing to do with dictating what profits shall be carried over; 2. That constant discontent on the part of the public and of the staff proves that the Service is not satisfactory. I shall not now say anything as to recent disputes inside the Office, except that this constant irritation and friction is pretty clear evidence that much is wrong. I am surprised at the amount of support which since my article in your columns has poured in on me from the general public. From all parts of the country I hear tales of mismanagement, over-pressure, hard measure, and starving the business. For some years I have closely studied the working of the Office, both in town and country, and I may say, with constantly growing dissatisfaction. Unlike most busy men, I personally attend to post-office business of my own, both in town and country, and my experience is, overcrowding, want of office space, want of adequate staff, great delay, confusion of departments, helter-skelter—in a word, a greediness to undertake public duties, with a parsimonious and shabby way of fulfilling them."

Two More Growls.

MR. HENNIKER-HEATON, M.P., fills many pages of the *Contemporary Review* for March with a bitter tirade against the Post Office. After his usual wont he has accumulated a mass of materials, some of which reflect on the Treasury, others on the Telegraph Companies, while others, again, reflect on Parliament and the nations of Europe in general, and a few actually seem to cast a shadow over the General Post Office. He is dissatisfied

with the coinage of Europe, because it enables a German to send a telegram for a little less than an Englishman. He is disgusted with Austria, because it taxes newspapers. He is ashamed of the Parcel Post, because agricultural products—geese for instance—are not carried cheaper than other parcels. At one moment he says that the Post Office does not charge for the paper on which post cards are printed, and calls the Officials “wiseacres” for not charging, while a little further down the same page he complains that the paper is charged for (which is true), and that Postmasters put the amount in their pockets (which is untrue).

Mr. Henniker Heaton is the foundation on which Mr. Frederick Millar bases an attack on the Department, which is to be found in a new sheaf of essays, which have recently been issued by Murray, under the title of “A Plea for Liberty.” These essays are written by various authors of Individualist views, probably as a reply to the Fabian Essays on Socialism. Mr. Millar’s task is to prove that the Post Office is a hopeless abuse because it is a State monopoly. All he proves is that, if Mr. Henniker Heaton is correct, a good many improvements are desirable.

As Others See Us.

THIS is how the *Evening News* of the 28th January looks at the Secretary’s Office. It is amusing, if not strictly logical. “The Controller of the Savings Bank superintends a Staff of nearly 1,000 Officers, and deposits of public money amounting to £60,000,000, yet his maximum salary is £900 a year; and he has not the power to give an order for the purchase of a water bottle, a stool, or to extend a man’s leave of absence—or to punish him for insubordination. That most useful and ornamental department, the Secretary’s Office, decides on all such great and important matters of official administration, and these superior gentlemen are paid their high salaries to decide upon questions relating to a Department of which the very Sorters and Messenger Boys have infinitely more knowledge. Their great intellectual capacities are occupied in endorsing official documents: ‘It may be done,’ ‘I see no objection,’ ‘Can you?’ ‘I do not advise it.’ If ever there is a brainless question, or an unimportant one, it is made a Secretary’s paper of.”

Jupiter Tonans.

IT is a relief to turn from the scissors and paste and personalities of Mr. Henniker-Heaton to a fault-finder who knows what he wants, and puts his case forcibly. The *Times* of the 20th March contains a forcible attack on the Postmaster-General’s dealings with the District Messengers Service and News Company (Limited), a subject which is now engaging very general

attention in the press, and it winds up with an assault on the new Railway Letter Service. The following are some extracts:—

“Of course, if the legal question at issue is resolved in favour of the Post Office, there must be an end of the matter for the present, so far as the law is concerned. But the question of policy and of the public convenience would still remain. The monopoly conferred on the Post Office is, undoubtedly, very comprehensive and very stringent. Presumably Parliament has invested it with this character, on the understanding that it will be exercised with good sense and a due regard for the public interest and convenience, and, if this understanding is departed from, the monopoly can be taken away or altered. But the voice of the Post Office is ambiguous, and even contradictory. The Postmaster-General says in his place in Parliament that ‘he cannot allow organised services for the collection and delivery of letters to be set up side by side with those of the Department.’ This obviously begs the question of the identity of the two services. If, on the other hand, we turn to that miracle of complexity and confusion, the ‘Post Office Guide,’ we find that among letters which ‘need not be sent through the post’ are ‘letters sent by a messenger on purpose, concerning the private affairs of the sender or receiver thereof.’ To the plain man these words would seem to cover the case to which the Postmaster-General now threatens to extend his statutory prohibition. We must leave it to the Postmaster-General to reconcile these contradictory deliverances. It is a very impolitic exercise of a monopoly to prevent other parties from rendering a service which the holder of the monopoly does not render, and has no means of rendering. The Postmaster-General professes to believe that the new service to be established by the Post Office will be a better and a cheaper service than the companies are likely to provide. But the security is by no means so sound as could be wished. Even if the employment of telegraph messengers as special Post Office messengers be regarded as in itself an efficient substitute for the private agencies now existing, there remains the question of the ‘electric call system,’ already established by the private agencies, in spite of the difficulties created by the Post Office, and only promised by the Post Office in the dim and distant future, in the not very encouraging terms that ‘it is hoped and believed that some such service can be established.’

“The Post Office, it is known, has lately made arrangements for the conveyance of single post letters by railway. The procedure is as follows. The sender must first ascertain that his letter does not weigh more than an ounce, and take care that it does not contain, or appear to contain, a watch, coin, or jewellery. He must then hand it in at a passenger station, addressed to the station of receipt. Having consulted the official in attendance, who advises him to the best of his power, but explains that neither he nor the Postmaster-General is responsible for the advice given, he turns to ‘Bradshaw,’ which is bewildering enough, to find when his

letter will arrive at the station of address, and to the 'Post Office Guide,' which is simply maddening, to find when the letter, if posted at the station of address, will arrive at its final destination. As an alternative, he may direct it to be called for at the station, and then telegraph to his correspondent to tell him where to find it. It might, perhaps, be simpler to telegraph direct and have done with it. Of course the real procedure of any man already accustomed to send special letters by railway, and not qualified for a lunatic asylum, would be quite different. He would make up his letter in the form of an ordinary parcel. He would be under no restriction of weight, and might, if it suited him, enclose a watch in the parcel or anything else he pleased. He would then take it to the railway station and intrust it to the charge of the company, which, for a special fee, would undertake its immediate delivery at its destination. No doubt this is the precise procedure against which the new system devised by the Post Office is directly aimed. But any one practically acquainted with the matter will see at a glance that the new system is no efficient substitute for the old. It would probably occur to any one outside the Post Office that to make elaborate provision for the rapid transmission of special letters from one railway station to another, without making corresponding provision for their equally prompt transmission from the station of receipt to their final destination, is an absurdity in itself."

The Times of the 23rd inst. contains a very able reply, but we regret that we are obliged to postpone a notice of it until our next issue.

Olympian Revels.

A COSTUME carnival took place at Olympia on the 22nd January, and the first prize was taken by a Mr. Stanley, with a very original representation of "The Postal Service." His coat was covered entirely with old postage stamps, and it had exactly the effect of papier-mâché. His hat was made like a red pillar-box, his waistcoat was covered with postal orders, and a gigantic post-card appeared upon his back. We don't exactly know what the effect of papier-mâché is, but the description hardly sounds alluring. At one of Mr. Augustus Harris's recent fancy dress balls at the Opera House a young lady appeared dressed to represent a pillar-box.

Ministers.

IN the January number of the *Contemporary Review* Mr. L. J. Jennings, M.P., has an article entitled "Behind the Scenes in Parliament," in which he says: "What one often reads in the papers is that the work of the House of Commons is a mere bagatelle so far as the private member is concerned, and that if any

one is to be pitied it is the Minister. Why the Minister, to begin with? He holds a position which confers upon him great advantages, social and political; influences of all kinds are within reach of his arm, and probably he is not slow to turn some of them to account. He enjoys opportunities of being exceedingly useful to his friends; the larger part of his work is done for him by the permanent officials of his department; he has a very long holiday every year—practically as long as he chooses to make it—and his advance from post to post is absolutely certain, unless he voluntarily throws his chance away, a thing of rare occurrence. There are two or three positions in the Government—those of Foreign Secretary, Irish Secretary, and perhaps the Secretary of State for War—which are held under altogether different conditions. But of most of the others, in ordinary times, what I have just said holds good. The road to office is usually somewhat tortuous, but those who have once found it never want to go back. Yet they like the public to think that they suffer martyrdom for their country's good, and hence the condolences upon their hard fate which appear in the papers from time to time, to the great surprise of the Minister who is the subject of the article. How can such things get printed, as Mr. Vincent Crummies used to ask?

"There is another characteristic of these dignitaries which, when we are looking at the show from the front of the house, we do not perceive. It is that, somehow or other, they acquire the habit of presenting facts in a light which is calculated to confuse the common mind. An official contradiction or explanation seems quite decisive, and it is generally so regarded by the Press and the public. This is another of the illusions which will not survive even a brief Parliamentary experience. After studying the performance a few times, a ghastly doubt steals over the mind whether there is not one standard of truth and fair dealing for official and another for private life. It is impossible, of course, to suppose that a Minister, or an ex-Minister, would intentionally deceive. But there are times when he takes an exceedingly wide range in search of the truth, and does not always bring it back with him at last. It is possible to give an explanation which shall avoid or obscure the real point at issue. It would be easy to cite examples in illustration of this, but who would be so ill-natured as to do it? It might, however, be well for the outside public to understand that an official 'yes' or 'no' is not necessarily the last word that is to be said on the subject."

From "Punch."

TOO CIVIL BY HALF; OR, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

(A Drama Founded—more or less—upon Facts.)

ACT I.—"PAST."

Interior of the Savings Bank Department of the General Post Office. Employés engaged upon their work. The hour for customary cessation of labour strikes.

Official of a Higher Grade: Officers and Gentlemen, the exigencies of the Public Service require your presence for some time longer. I beg you to continue your work.

A Hundred Employés: Never! (Aside) Ha! ha! the employment of Female Clerks is avenged!

Official (almost in tears): Reconsider your decision, I beg—I implore!

Another Hundred Employés: Never! (Aside) Seven hours a day and no longer—shall be secured with one fell swoop!

Official (with indescribable emotion): Oh, my country! Oh, my Savings Bank Depositors! Oh, my dignity of the Civil Service!

[Faints in the arms of faithful employés, whilst the other Clerks defiantly depart. Tableau.

ACT II.—“PRESENT.”

Magnificent apartments of the Postmaster-General in the General Post Office. Deputation of contrite employés listening to the eloquent speech of their Official Chief.

Postmaster-General (in effect): I am delighted that you are such good fellows. Your conduct in owning that you were wrong in refusing to work after regular official hours almost effaces a painful page in the history of St. Martin's-le-Grand. Let it be clearly understood that extra work is not compulsory, but, if not undertaken, may lead (as in the present instance) to immediate suspension, if not dismissal. Surely no one can object to that? (Contrite Officials express mournful approval.) And now good bye, and a Happy New Year. As for the future—hope, my good friends, hope!

[Exeunt the contrite employés, leaving the Officials of a Higher Grade agitating the nerves controlling their eyelids spasmodically.

ACT III.—“FUTURE.”

Same Scene as Act I. Venerable employés discovered after twenty years' further service.

First Venerable Employé: Remember the words spoken a score of winters ago—Hope, brother, hope!

Second Venerable Employé: Yes—Hope, brother, hope!

As the Scene closes, the entire Establishment are left continuing the self-sustaining, but rather profitless, employment indefinitely. Curtain.

Post Office Antiquities.

IN connection with the little “Life of Thackeray,” recently issued by Mr. Walter Scott, a correspondent of the *Athenæum* points out that a jocosely letter, which is given as one of Thackeray's, is headed “Kensington, W., December 23, 1848.” Now, according to the correspondent, London was only divided into postal districts

in 1858*, and, if so, the letter would seem to be a forgery. Mr. Marzials, who, with Mr. Merivale, has edited the *Life*, states that the letter was printed from a copy, and the original does not appear to be in evidence.

The excavations made during the process of digging the foundations of the G.P.O. North have revealed a considerable length of the City wall, the appearances leaving but little doubt that, in this portion, at any rate, the Roman wall of London coincided with the mediæval. We are glad to know that almost the whole of this piece of wall is to be preserved, for since the recent destruction of the fragment in Pilgrim Street, this is the only one remaining between the Cripplegate bastion and the river. The greater part of our new office will be within the old City wall, but the Postmaster-General's office, which will occupy the site of the old Money Order Office, will be outside the wall, though still within the City bounds.

Civil Service Cycling Club.

THE thirteenth annual dinner of this old-established institution was held at the Criterion on Thursday, March 5th, Mr. A. C. Lyster, late of the Inland Revenue Department and Vice-President of the Club, presiding. The toast of the evening, "The Club," was proposed by Mr. E. Bennett, and responded to by Mr. W. W. Rishworth, the Captain. "The Officers of the club" was given by Mr. H. Leslie Simpson, and Mr. H. S. Thompson, the Hon. Secretary, replied. He stated that, although the Club was the most prosperous institution of the kind in the Service, he should be doubtful of its continued success on the old lines unless more members of the Civil Service rallied to its support. He should leave no stone unturned to accomplish that object. The toast of "The Visitors" was proposed by Dr. Dudfield, and was responded to by Mr. Copeland. Mr. Copeland said that what he particularly liked about this club was that it did not make a speciality of cycling. It had become truly a social club, and he for his part thought the old hands managed its affairs very well, and he should be sorry to see any serious changes take place. The toast of "The Chairman" was duly given, and in his reply Mr. Lyster stated that he hoped to be able to join them in a ride during the coming season. A pleasing incident of the evening was a presentation made to Mr. Frank Swinford in recognition of his services in providing the club with excellent musical entertainment during so many past years. Altogether the dinner was a brilliant success. The oboe playing of Mr. Grover, Mr. Swinford's and Mr. Thompson's songs, the humorous quartette of the "Imperial Glee Party" were special features in a musical programme worthy of the traditions of the club.

The club is now entering upon its fifteenth riding season, and

* The correct date of this great change was 1856.

during the summer arrangements will be made by which its two divisions (north and south) may meet together at some of the pleasant old-world villages on the banks of the Upper Thames. The Hon. Sec., Mr. H. S. Thompson, Savings Bank Department, G.P.O., will be happy to receive the names of intending members, or to give any further information relating to the Club.

Post Office Musical Society.

THIS Society, which now numbers about 300 members, meets every Tuesday, at 8 p.m., in the Lecture Hall of the Falcon-square Chapel. The music now in rehearsal is Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise." It is proposed to perform the work at a concert, at St. James's Hall, on the 28th of April, for the benefit of the Pension Fund of the Post Office Clerks Benevolent Fund, and the Central Telegraph Office Benevolent Fund. As usual with such societies, the cry is for tenors and basses, more help from the sterner sex being needed to bring the chorus to a proper balance. A very capable orchestra, of about 40 performers, has been got together. A sight-singing class, under the superintendence of Mr. W. H. Gill, has also been formed, and meets for practice at the Lecture Hall at 5 p.m., on Tuesdays. All particulars may be obtained from either of the honorary secretaries, Messrs. Leonard Barnes (R. and A. G. O.), and Edward Wedlake (Intelligence Branch Secretary's Office).

The London and Paris Telephone.

"HULLO! Hullo!" "Hullo!" "Who are you?" "Brown. Who are you?" "Jones, of the Secretary's office: this seems a great success." "Yes; quite as good as the speaking on the telephone wires in London." "Ods bodikins, man, much better. How do you like Paris?" "Very much." "I say, are you *really* in Paris?" "Yes, *really*."

This is a type of the conversation which passed over the new telephone cable, between Room 90 and Paris, during the first few hours after the wires were joined through. The land lines from London to Dover, and those from Calais to Paris had been completed some time previously, and the speaking through them was wonderfully clear. The missing link was supplied when the Monarch completed the laying of the cable across the Straits. There was some anxiety in St. Martin's-le-Grand, because even a short submarine section in a telephone line has much the same kind of effect on the electric current as a few cheeses interposed between a rifle and a target would have upon the bullet. "Retardation" is what they call it. The engineering branch had made their calculations, and said that all would be well. Still, there was an uneasy feeling, and news from the Monarch was eagerly

looked for. Meanwhile that unfortunate vessel was having a bad time of it. She laid the French end on the morning of the 9th March, and steamed away for England, laying the cable merrily as she went. The barometer was rising, and the weather seemed more promising than it had been for a fortnight. Just as she was half way across the Channel the blizzard began. The Monarch struggled on in a blinding snowstorm, and by three o'clock in the afternoon most of the cable had been laid; but, as it was impossible to see the shore through the snow, the English end of the cable could not be landed. There was nothing for it but to drop anchor and wait. At five o'clock the weather cleared, the cliffs could be recognised, and the anchor was promptly fished up. But alas! during the last two hours the Monarch had been so twirled and twisted about by the blizzard that the telephone cable was tightly knotted round the anchor. For three hours the cable staff laboured valiantly under very unfavourable circumstances—for the wind was very strong and snow was still falling—to clear the anchor from the cable. At eight o'clock the attempt had to be abandoned. The anchor was dropped overboard again, the rest of the cable was paid out, a buoy fastened to the end, so that it might be easily found again when wanted, and the Monarch made off with all speed to the Downs for shelter from the storm. Ultimately those coils round the anchor had to be cut out. On the 16th the laying of the cable was completed, and the predictions of the Engineering Branch were triumphantly vindicated.

Dots and Dashes.

A GOOD specimen of telegraphic humour occurred in the report of Mr. Gladstone's speech on the Religious Disabilities Bill. In the course of his genial bantering of Lord Hartington Mr. Gladstone said: "If there is any one entitled to praise in this matter, it is one with whom I have been officially connected—my noble friend the member for Rossendale. *Such is the modesty of my noble friend that he shakes his head and repels the compliment.* I must insist upon placing upon his head the crown which he is entitled to wear." The form in which the italicised sentence reached the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* was: "Such is the modesty of my noble friend that he *shaves* his head."

FAIR PLAY says:—"A few weeks ago I made mention of an intelligent mate who had never heard of the *firm* of Scylla & Charybdis. Here is another record in the same line. Mr. Litchfield, the art furnisher, exhibited some panels of old tapestry at the Manchester Jubilee Exhibition, and, the return of one of these being required, he telegraphed, 'Please send panel eight by ten Venus and Adonis—Litchfield.' In the absence of the head of the department at the Exhibition, a clerk returned the message

to the post-office as 'not understandable.' The post-office people, equally obtuse, transmitted the message to the City of Lichfield, and received the following reply, 'No such firm as Venus & Adonis known here; try Manchester.'"

A MR. C. C. BELL, of Epworth, writes in the *Daily News*, of the 22nd February: "Perhaps some one who denies the existence of any degree of reasoning power in dogs will explain the following fact. Some years ago I was in a neighbouring post-office (which had been opened only two months before) when the needle of the telegraph instrument began to sound, and immediately afterwards a handsome retriever came in from the house with the postmaster's hat in his mouth. The dog had learnt in that short space of time not only to associate the idea of a run out with the sound of the needle, but, as I afterwards assured myself, to distinguish between the call-signal of his master's office and those of the other offices on the circuit. Several of these signals were exceedingly similar in sound, and none but a trained ear could have distinguished between them; yet I never knew the dog to make a mistake."

What a pity that the late Mr. Jingle is no longer amongst us! He could hardly endure in silence to see his Ponto's fame eclipsed in this manner.

The Blizzard.

THE recent severe weather has been very trying for rural Postmen. The Postmistress of Wimborne writes:—

"I am rather proud of my rural Postmen. They have been out every day, and in some cases have formed the only link that out-lying districts have had with the town. I was rather dismayed yesterday for one of the men. I was doubtful if I ought to let him go, and during the morning a carter with a waggon came in, and on my inquiring how the Postman had got on, I was told, 'They was a digging of him out when I came along.' I found out, however, it was the way before him that was dug out, not the man himself. Another man who goes to Kingston Lacy fell over one of those barrows on the Downs into a drift, and as his feet were very much higher than his head he had great difficulty in getting out. The Witchampton man drove as far as Claygate, where his horse disappeared into a drift and nearly kicked the cart to pieces. The horse and cart had to be left, and he walked on with about 70lbs. on his back. The train service has been most irregular. The Somerset and Dorset line blocked for two days, so was the line between Salisbury and Bristol, and the line between Dorchester and Weymouth."

Blandford.

HERE good fellowship prevails. The Postmaster is doubtless right in stating, as he did at the Post Office supper, with which the Blandford officials wound up the old year, that the very best mechanism requires oil to keep it in good working order, and that there is nothing like an annual supper as a lubricant for the official wheels. The after-supper oratory enriched the Service with a new motto—"Duty before Dignity." This is a capital emendation of Mr. Midshipman Easy's famous "Duty before Decency." One can picture a postman, after a fruitless first application for a Christmas-box, steeling himself by its aid to a second attempt. On the same lines a number of pregnant and alliterative *mots d'ordre* might be invented. "Duty before Dinner" may be recommended to those who unduly prolong the time of lunch. A nearer approach to the original model would be "Duty before Decorum." "Duty before Deference" has a tempting sound, but dangerous withal.

Brighton.

MR. C. J. Whiting, who entered the Service as long ago as 1832, has just retired from the Postmastership of Brighton, which he has held since 1850, a period during which the Staff had increased from 30 to 312. On the 23rd January a large number of them assembled at the Committee Room of the Town Hall to present him with a piece of plate and an address. Mr. M. Embling occupied the chair and Mr. Hooke, the Chief Clerk, made the presentation. Mr. Whiting, jun., of the Savings Bank, replied on behalf of his father, who, however, was subsequently led by his emotions to address a few words of thanks to the meeting.

Poor Piggy.

IN the cases of societies and clubs applying for permission to deposit in the Post Office Savings Bank, there is considerable amusement to be sometimes derived from a perusal of the rules of such institutions, which the applicants are compelled to submit before authority can be given to open an account. In the particular case of a Pig Club the following is a copy of the document which did duty with the trustees for their rules. There is in it an outspokenness and a superiority to the technicalities of legal phraseology which should go straight to the heart of every hater of red tape. "Our Society is in case if a member should have a Pig Die with the Swine Favour or any other unnatarul Death so as to Receve the Worth of the Pig out of the Fonds of this Society. We are chiefly Agricultral Laberers." Of course, the only inference from this statement is that, in the eyes of these honest agri-

cultural labourers, the natural god-given death of a pig is to be stuck. Most people think the same, but haven't the cold-bloodedness to acknowledge it.

Another copy of the rules of a Club was made up as follows, nothing more, and nothing less:—

"1. That the Society be called —

"2. That Mr. John Smith be Secretary.

"3. That everything that John Smith says is Law."

Comment is needless. It is the most genuine case of a "corporation sole" we have ever yet come across.

An Old Civilian.

THERE is now appearing in *Temple Bar* a series of papers by Mr. H. W. Chisholm, late Warden of the Standards, showing what life in the Civil Service was half a century ago:—"The Duke of Newcastle, who preceded Lord Grenville in the sinecure office of Auditor of the Exchequer, when he gave an appointment to a clerk, charged the salary with an annual sum payable to his butler, or some other dependant, and this charge was known as a 'rider.' Mr. Chisholm tells us of even stranger things that used to be done in the good old times. The supply of stationery formed a nice little perquisite to civil servants in his father's time. Stationery to a certain amount was allowed to each clerk, and at the end of the year any surplus over the cost of the stationery actually supplied was credited to the clerk by the contractors. He could take out this amount for anything he chose. Mr. Chisholm's father took out *his* surplus in books, and in this way obtained the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall,' Hume and Smollett's 'England,' and other works, handsomely bound, which are now in his son's bookcases. 'Rare times these, Mr. Rigmarole!' 'Pretty much like our own, Mrs. Quickly!'"

The late Mr. C. L. Lewes.

WE regret to have to record the death of this gentleman, which took place at Luxor on the 26th February. He was the eldest son of George Henry Lewes, and was born in 1843. Writing in 1860, George Eliot says: "I think we are peculiarly blessed in the fact that this eldest lad seems the most entirely lovable human animal of seventeen and a half that I have ever met with or heard of; he has a sweetness of disposition which is saved from weakness by a remarkable sense of duty." Mr. Lewes entered the Secretary's Office in the same year, and when he retired from the Service in October, 1886, he was a principal clerk of the lower section, and head of the telegraph general correspondence section. In 1880, on

the death of George Eliot, he succeeded to a large property which enabled him to retire without obtaining a pension, and to devote himself to public questions. He was one of the secretaries of the Hampstead Heath Extension Committee, and it is in no small measure due to his exertions that the large sum of £52,000 was raised by private donation to complete the purchase of the Parliament Hill estate. Shortly afterwards, at the election of County Councillors for London, Mr. Lewes stood for one of the divisions of St. Pancras, and his great services led to his easy return. Unfortunately, the exertion of addressing numerous public meetings and exposure to sudden changes of temperature had led to a serious affection of the throat. Though Mr. Lewes recovered from this attack and was able to resume his duties as County Councillor, he never completely regained his former health, and symptoms of some gravity obliged him to spend the present winter in Egypt.

Mr. J. Esmonde Kearney.

WE have to record with regret the retirement of Mr. J. Esmonde Kearney, of the Savings Bank Department. Mr. Kearney entered the service of the General Post Office as long ago as 1846, and, until the establishment of the Post Office Savings Bank, he held an appointment in the Money Order Office. In the work of organising and directing the Savings Bank, from its early days down to the present time, he took a prominent part. And he leaves the Department with the good wishes and regrets of all who have had the privilege of working under him. Mr. Kearney during the last few years of his official career was Chief Clerk for correspondence, and in that capacity he witnessed many changes and crises in the life of his Department. By men who knew but little of him he was sometimes misunderstood, but those who had the privilege of a nearer acquaintanceship with him knew that his faults were but the defects of the high qualities which he, in common with other Irishmen, possesses. Like most men with any marked individuality he had his strong dislikes, but he was as true as steel to everybody who treated him fairly and who took him into their confidence. He was a good companion, and in a circle of friends, which is not broken by his retirement, he shines as a good fellow and an excellent raconteur. On Saturday, March 7th, a number of his more immediate friends in the Savings Bank Department entertained him at dinner at the Café Royal. Mr. J. Duncan Long, M.A., presided, and Mr. G. A. F. Rogers took the vice-chair. The toast of the evening was proposed by the chairman, and Mr. Kearney in reply expressed the greatest satisfaction at the kindly feelings towards him which had prompted the dinner. Speaking for ourselves, we can but express the wish frequently reiterated during the evening that he may enjoy many years of well-earned leisure. Judging from his

greatly improved appearance, there is every prospect of his doing so.

Mr. Kearney comes of a good old Irish family. His near relative, Sir Thomas Esmonde, sits in Parliament as "the patriot" member for a division of Dublin City, and one of his ancestors, John Esmonde, fell a victim in the cause of his country in 1798. Mr. Kearney himself is faithful to the political traditions of his family, and is a warm supporter of the Home Rule policy on national lines.

Retirement of Mr. E. Finch.

ON the 15th February the officers of the London Postal Service presented to Mr. Finch, Sub-Controller of the Circulation Office, a handsome service of silver plate, on his retirement from the service. In making the presentation, the Controller (Mr. R. C. Tombs) said they were assembled together to do honour to a worthy man on his retirement from their midst. Mr. Finch donned official harness as a clerk in the Rochester Office, on December 27th, 1839, his father being the Postmaster of the town. By his lip and life he had set a bright example of official amenity to those about him, whether high or low, and so had worthily won for himself respect and affection. He had set a further example of untiring devotion to duty by his having so ordered his way of life as to have overcome the ills that flesh is heir to in such a manner as to never have been away from his post for a single day on the plea of illness during his half-century of service. Many who are from time to time racked with aches and pains must regard Mr. Finch's immunity as one of his greatest blessings. Time and tide wait for no man. Although Mr. Finch's juniors might think he had had a pretty long innings, he had now to quit the scene. The Post Office machine grinds on without pause. Almost before the shouts of "The Sub-Controller has retired" were over they would have to proclaim another Sub-Controller.

Mr. Finch, in replying, said he could hardly find words in which to properly and sufficiently express his gratitude to them for the honour they had done him in giving him that handsome testimonial, but still more for the very kind feelings they had expressed in the address presented to him. He began in that almost forgotten branch of the Post Office—the Ship Letter Office. The foreign mails were then sent by private ships. After that he served under Mr. Bokenham, Mr. Boucher, Mr. Trollope, Mr. Cunynghame, Mr. Stow, Mr. Jeffery, and, lastly, under Mr. Tombs. What the Post Office would arrive at he could not say. Whether it would take over the railways it was impossible to say; but it would never stand still; it would continue to be the most popular and the most useful service under the Government.

Mr. S. Walliker.

THIS gentleman, whose approaching retirement is announced, was born in 1821, and in 1841 entered the Money Order Office. Seeing that the system on which the accounts were kept admitted of improvement, he in 1848 submitted a plan for economising labour and securing greater efficiency in the Office, which was approved. He was also closely connected with improvements in the Accountant General's Office, and for his services he was appointed Postmaster of Hull in 1864. He subsequently served on several committees on Telegraph and Money Order business, and in 1881 he was promoted to the Postmastership of Birmingham. Birmingham was then included in the South Midland Surveyor's District, but in 1887 it was made a separate district, Mr. Walliker being made the first Surveyor. In the previous year he had acted as chairman of a committee of Postmasters which was called together to discuss various proposed alterations.

Mr. Walliker is very popular with the staff of his office, for, although a strict disciplinarian, he is at the same time a man of a kind heart and large sympathies. The telegraph boys were a special object of his kindness, while he also interested himself in brightening the lives of the aged poor by organising trips into the country for them. In his room at the Birmingham Post Office is an oil painting executed by an old man who had been his guest on one of these occasions. It represents a sea view with a fishing boat, and bears on the back the following inscription, "Having had two or three trips to Withernsea, and I enjoyed myself very much, and for his kindness to me Mr. Walliker, I have presented that gentleman with this painting. Yours truly, Wm. Griffiths, aged 81 years."

Mr. Walliker took an active part in the formation of the Civil Service Rifle Volunteers, in which regiment he was for some years a lieutenant.

Changes and Chances.

SINCE our last issue, the three vacant Surveyorships have been filled up by the appointment of Messrs. Hetherington, Rushton, and Salisbury. Mr. Thoms has been promoted to the Postmastership of Norwich, and the vacancy thus created has been filled by the appointment of Mr. R. A. Egerton as Assistant Surveyor. Mr. Egerton has joined the South Wales District, while Mr. P. V. Turner has returned to his old district, the Western.

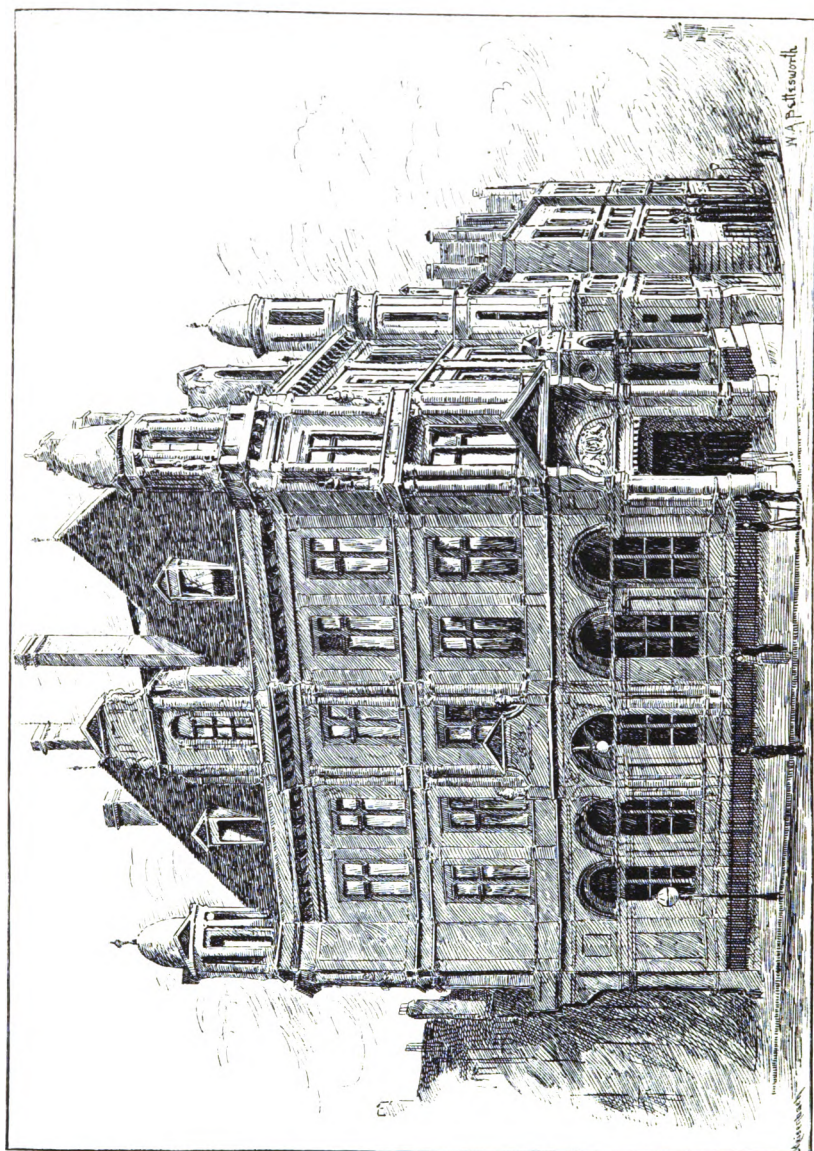
Mr. F. H. Maberly, who has been a Surveyor's Clerk since 1839, has been promoted to the brevet rank of Assistant Surveyor previous to his retirement. Mr. Maberly is a brother of Mr. L. F. S. Maberly, of the Dublin Office, and a nephew of the late

Colonel Maberly, during whose tenure of office he received his appointment.

We regret to announce the deaths of Mr. W. E. Pratt, of Nottingham, and Mr. B. V. Winch, of Norwich. Both these gentlemen began their official career in the old Dead Letter Office, the one in 1840 and the other in 1852. Mr. Pratt was appointed a Surveyor's Clerk, and was made Postmaster of Nottingham in 1873.

The vacancy in the Controllershship of the Money Order Office, caused by the retirement of Mr. Hawkins, has been filled up by the promotion of Mr. T. J. Hanley, whose place as Assistant Controller has been taken by Mr. J. Manson. Mr. F. Stanfield has been promoted to the vacant Principal Clerkship, and Mr. A. C. Pemberton to the Clerkship of the First Class.

Mr. Robshaw, Postmaster of Beverley, has been promoted to Lowestoft; and Mr. G. F. Herring, who has for many years acted as Head Stationery Clerk in the North-Western Provincial District, has succeeded to Beverley.



BIRMINGHAM NEW POST OFFICE.

ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND :

The Post Office Magazine.

JULY, 1891.

A Trip to China Twenty Years Ago.

(Continued.)

WE had now arrived at the temperature when punkahs are necessary between decks, and when many of the passengers prefer to sleep on deck to passing the night in their own confined and hot cabins ; so towards half-past ten the stewards would be seen bringing up mattresses and bed clothes, and finding out the snuggest places for their masters. Many people sleep on deck during the whole voyage east of Suez, but for my own part I always preferred my cabin so long as I could have my port open, with a wind-sail rigged out from it to blow the fresh cool air into my berth. But the low ports, as I before mentioned, often prevent this, for with the least sea on the ports are obliged to be closed, and then it is almost impossible to sleep below. I tried hard to do it one night, and although the sole occupant of a good-sized cabin and dressed in the slightest of sleeping gear, and lying on a grass mat in place of a mattress, I felt as though I were in a Turkish bath and streamed from every pore, until at length I could endure it no longer, and taking a supply of wrappers rushed on deck, where I passed the remainder of the night as unpleasantly cold as I had before been uncomfortably hot. The worst of this deck sleeping is that you are always roused out at the unearthly hour of four in the morning to allow the crew to swab the decks ; and it is by no means pleasant to be disturbed out of one's dreams of home and absent friends before cock-crow. We were now approaching

Aden, and although early in December the thermometer marked 84 in the shade at noon, and we were all glad when baggage day came, when we might get out our thin clothing. For the benefit of the uninitiated, I should explain that all the passengers' baggage, with the exception of the smaller articles which may conveniently be placed in the cabins, is sent down below, but that once a week notice is exhibited that any baggage required will be brought up on informing your steward what you wish for. I did not go on shore at Aden, as we arrived after sunset and left again before daylight. Aden is a picturesque-looking place from the sea, but, like many other seaside places, the distant view is probably better than a nearer one. The heat now became very great and the weather somewhat rough, and we had to suffer the discomfort of closed ports at night. At length we came in sight of the mountains of Ceylon, and we were all excited at the prospect of getting on shore for a few hours, for a fortnight at sea, in spite of agreeable fellow travellers, is very monotonous. This was my first view of the tropics, and I shall not easily forget the beauty of the shore, lined to the very water's edge with the graceful coconut tree, with small native cottages almost hidden amongst them, and little mahogany coloured children stark naked running about, and even the men and women in a state of semi-nudity.

Here many of us, who had become intimate, were to part, some bound for India, others for China and Australia; so on arriving at Point de Galle we all went on shore, and had a parting dinner at the Oriental Hotel—a splendid house, with a fine view over the harbour; I might say the most splendid hotel in the East. Of course, amongst so large a number of passengers there were a few oddities who got somewhat quizzed. One of the ladies we nicknamed “the tinted Venus,” because she always appeared profusely pinked and whited and most elaborately dressed, although in extremely bad taste. Her lady friends, who soon discovered her little weakness, had only to wind her up, and she would talk for hours about the number and magnificence of her dresses. Another curious specimen of womankind was an ancient maiden whose brothers had long been settled in Australia, and as they could not come to her she was going to join them. If they had been favoured with a photograph of her beforehand, I doubt if they would have invited so antiquated a housekeeper. She obtained among us the soubriquet of “101 in the shade.” This old lady, on coming on board at Suez, accosted a gentleman (rather an oddity himself), who is a celebrated bigwig at Calcutta, asking, “Are you the steward?” “No,” replied

he, "but I am a great friend of one of the stewards." "Then," said she, "carry this box below, young man, and call the steward to show me my cabin." One young fellow, a Cingalee dandy who, having been educated in England, was returning to his native clime, remarked to his cabin companions, after a few days at sea, "By Jove, how the sun does tan a fellow!" His long residence in England had probably made him oblivious of the fact that he was by nature a darkey.

On the next day we started again, and after another six days at sea arrived at Penang, where again a ramble on shore was most enjoyable. We found several very pretty carriages with ponies waiting at the landing-place, and following the usual custom of passengers Eastward bound, we all drove to the hotel at the foot of the mountains to indulge in the luxury of a bath and a lunch on shore. No one who has not visited the tropics can conceive the luxury of a plunge into a large natural swimming bath fed with cool water from a mountain torrent; and here, adjoining the hotel, is such a bath, which is the first object of all travellers visiting Penang. After the bath, it was the proper thing (and we did it) to ramble through the nutmeg woods and up the mountain sides to the waterfall whence comes that delightful bath. Here for the first time, although I often saw it afterwards, I found the sensitive plant growing wild, a common weed with a pretty little pink star-shaped flower.

After a few hours stay at Penang we left for Singapore, our last haven of rest before encountering the north-east monsoon in the China Sea. Our captain, like a judicious man, took a course to cheat the weather by keeping to the south-east, towards the Palawan Islands, and thus made a fair weather passage during the first six days. He was then obliged to go north across the track of the monsoon, and for two days and nights we poor passengers were in misery—tossed and tumbled, bumped and bruised. At length, to our relief, we got into smoother water, and heard that, all things being prosperous, we might reach Hong Kong on the 8th January, and happily this was accomplished. I took leave of the steamer, the dear old beast, as we called her, without any desire to renew our acquaintance.

It was evening when we arrived, and we could only see the outline of the mountain which forms the backbone of Hong Kong, and the lights of the town at its base. Nevertheless all Hong Kong came on board to hear the news and to meet their friends. I, having no friends, took a boat and went on shore to seek my fortune, and on

landing was in danger of being torn to pieces by a dozen chair coolies, who quarrelled among themselves for my patronage, when a policeman opportunely came to the rescue, and by a free use of his staff, such as would not be tolerated in England, put an end to the scene. The elected chairmen instantly hoisted me, chair and all, on to their shoulders, and bore me off to the house of a gentleman to whom I had a letter of introduction. On my way I pondered over the degradation of turning men into beasts of burden, and doubted if I were justified in adopting this custom; but before I had been many days in Hong Kong I saw reason to feel reconciled to it. I was carried by my stalwart chairmen, at a jog trot, up one street and across another, until we left the town far below; and in the dusk of evening I could discern that we were passing through lanes with gardens on each side, and here and there a handsome villa, from which the lights gleamed cheerfully. At length my bearers turned off the road into an enclosure, and passing through a shrubbery, stopped at the base of a flight of steps which led to an inviting-looking hall door. This was the house of my friend, and by his hospitality became my home for many weeks afterwards.

Tired as I was I slept but little that night; revolving in my mind all I had seen during the last six weeks, and the thousands of miles I had traversed: a large portion of my existence seemed to have been crowded into those few weeks. I tried to realize the fact, which I hardly could do, that I was at length in China, in that flowery land which had been a wonder to me from my youth upwards, the land of mandarins and of pigtails.

In the morning, I walked out into the verandah which surrounds the house, and was charmed with my first view of Hong Kong by daylight. The house was situated on the side of the mountain, and commanded a splendid view over the town and harbour below. I say the harbour, because it is generally so called, though it is in reality only a beautiful strait, separating the island from the main land, varying from two to three miles in width, and crowded with shipping of all kinds, men-of-war, P. and O. steamers, merchant ships, American river boats, Chinese junks, and everything that can float. Here may be seen the flags of all nations, and ships from all countries; indeed, the trade of Hong Kong is said to be second only to that of Liverpool.

The town of Victoria is a continuous line of street fronting the sea, backed by a fine range of granite mountain, which forms the centre of the island, rising to a peak 1,800 feet high, called Victoria

Peak, on the summit of which is a signal station, from which a look-out is kept for ships coming into the port. In fine weather a steamer can be seen thirty miles off at sea, and at five miles distance the look-out men can learn from signal flags what she is and where from, intelligence which is at once signalled to the town below. From my point of view the harbour had all the appearance of a fine lake, hemmed in on each side by mountains of a rich brown colour. Above the town are numerous handsome villas, which are approached by roads running zig-zag up the mountain side. Some of these villas are very large and elegant, testifying to the wealth of Hong Kong's merchant princes, whose hospitality is as large and elegant as their houses. The soil being all rock, there is, of course, no great amount of vegetation; but, nevertheless, English wealth and Chinese industry combined have done wonders in horticulture. The rock has been cleared away wherever practicable, and each mansion has its own grounds, and frequently a good garden also. Government House itself, a very handsome and commodious building, has an excellent garden, and above it is a spacious public garden, extremely well designed and carefully kept. Here, once a week, a military band plays during the afternoon, the attraction principally of native nurses and children.

Immense labour must have been expended in reclaiming so extensive a surface from the barren mountain side, and clothing it with verdure and flowers. The artist has cleverly adapted the natural formation of the ground to his purpose, by making the garden a succession of terraces, approached every here and there by a flight of stone steps. The style is perhaps a little formal, but this it was no doubt difficult to avoid; at all events it is justified by the precedents of St. Cloud and other famous public gardens. Happily for Hong Kong, the sun sets almost behind the mountain against which the town is built, so that, after sunset, these gardens are delightfully cool and agreeable; and to me it was a great pleasure to sit there and inhale the sea breeze and contemplate the noble prospect below. Altogether, Hong Kong is by no means so bad a place as people in England suppose: as regards beauty of prospect I have rarely seen anything superior to it, but of course its amusements are somewhat limited. Nevertheless, the good people who find themselves compelled to live there, manage to pass the time not unpleasantly. They are much given to hospitality, and what with dinner parties, pic-nics, and other gaieties, time passes agreeably enough. There is rather a "horsey" clique in the

colony, and during the winter months training goes on for the annual races, which usually come off at the end of February or early in March. There is an excellent race-course, about two miles from the town, nearly a mile round and almost flat, but with the ground rising all round, forming in effect a kind of natural amphitheatre. To this place we all repair every morning about 6 o'clock in carriages, on horseback or on foot, to witness the training, and if this amusement has any disadvantage in making some of the young fellows horsey, it has the compensating advantage of inducing almost everybody to rise early and get out into the fresh air before the sun rises and makes exercise too fatiguing. After the horse business is finished everyone returns home to his cold tub, and to dress for breakfast; after which the real business of the day commences, and the representatives of the great merchants' houses and of the banks are to be found at their counting-houses busily engaged in their affairs until 5 o'clock, when, the sun having gone over the mountain, all the world sets forth to walk or drive until dark, when they saunter into the club for a gossip until it is time to dress for dinner. Hong Kong is very rigorous as to its dinner costume, and it is the custom always to appear, even in bachelor houses, in evening dress. This looks, perhaps, a little formal, but after the day's business and the walk a change is necessary, and one may as well dress in a black coat and white tie as in any other manner.

Dinner parties are very frequent, and give very little trouble owing to the excellent custom which exists of each guest taking his own "boy" to attend him at table, so that the host has only to tell his butler to provide dinner for a certain number of guests; he need not trouble himself as to the means of attending upon them. On the other hand, the guest has his own attendant, whose sole care is his master's comfort. It was to me a sight as pretty as novel to see the diners-out flitting along in the dusk of evening borne in their chairs, and each preceded by a Chinese paper lantern, like so many fire flies glancing in the night; and then again, on emerging after dinner to see the throng of chair coolies sitting or lying around waiting to carry their masters home. For my own part, I never could distinguish my chairmen from the rest of the crowd, they all seemed so alike; but my men knew me and always came to the front on my appearance. Poor, hard worked, honest fellows, these chair coolies! They never grumbled, however late you might keep them up. Whether you dismissed them after your evening walk, or

kept them until the small hours of the morning, you always found them at their post ready to carry you abroad after breakfast. Where and when they get their food, and where they live, you heed not; they remain near you all day long wherever you go, snatching a hasty meal or a brief repose when the opportunity offers, and ready at a moment's notice to obey your next command. I consider the chair coolies and the chairs of Hong Kong among the best institutions of the East. The chairs are made entirely of bamboo, very strong and light, with a covered top for use during the day, but removable after the setting sun has rendered its protection unnecessary. They are mostly carried by two coolies, but official and other portly gentlemen have four coolies; it looks more important. There is no other conveyance so easy and pleasant for a hot climate. As I mentioned before, I felt reluctance at first in making men beasts of burden, but I found that the chair was the only suitable mode of conveyance in Hong Kong, where the streets are too precipitous to allow of carriages being used, and the sun is too powerful to make walking safe for Europeans.

I fancy that my readers will consider my sketch of Hong-Kong incomplete without a few words about the Chinese ladies, so I will give them the results of my observations of the sex, although I feel little qualified to write on the subject with my brief experience. No ladies are ever seen walking in the streets; they always go about in covered chairs, and you only catch a glimpse of a pair of small black eyes peering out. The few women about the street are only of the lower class; many of them, especially the old ones, have their feet bandaged up, looking like hoofs, but the larger portion have their feet of the natural shape, and generally very small and pretty. I fancy the custom of distorting the feet is dying out, and is little practised in the south of China. The women soon grow old and hideously ugly. Now and then, but rarely, one sees a young and pretty girl. Probably all the pretty ones are engaged and kept at home under lock and key, as they are seldom seen about.

The dress of the Chinese girls is, I think, very becoming, and certainly modest, consisting of loose trousers down to the instep, and a loose coat reaching below the knees. In Hong Kong they delight in pretty English made stockings and shoes, which look exceedingly nice on their well formed feet. They usually wear the hair elaborately dressed and gummed, ornamented sometimes with natural flowers and sometimes with long gold pins stuck through the back hair with flowers and butterflies in enamel. Every girl has some

ornaments in the shape of ear-rings or armlets made of jade, a precious stone of opaque green colour, very much prized in China, and of great value when a fine specimen. This completes the costume. No bonnet is worn, and in cold weather two or three additional under-coats provide the necessary warmth. An umbrella and a fan are indispensable for outdoor use.

We know very little of the inner life of Chinese families, for foreigners are seldom allowed to penetrate below the surface. Chinese merchants and gentlemen rarely invite a foreigner to their home, and if they do, they never present the female members of the family. On one occasion a rich Chinaman invited me to dine with him, but much to my disappointment instead of entertaining me at his house, where I had hoped to see something of Chinese domestic life, he gave his dinner at the Chinese club, and in spite of the delicacies of bird's nest soup, sharks' fins, and other native dishes, I did not feel half the pleasure that I should have felt in dining at a Chinese private house.

It may not be uninteresting to some to read a Chinese bill of fare.

Birds' nest soup.

Stewed pigeons.

Soup, with morsels of fowl, ham, &c.

Bean curd and slices of cucumber.

Soup of fowl, ham, and vegetables from Shanghai.

Sharks' fins.

Kabobs of duck and ham.

Oysters from Japan.

Fish bones stewed into isinglass, with ham and mushrooms.

Stewed mushrooms from Hankow, with slices of young bamboo.

Fish roe, with shreds of ham and leeks.

Fish boiled whole, with vegetables and ham.

Boiled fowl and ham *a l'anglaise*.

Pigs' palate and liver, with slices of bamboo.

Mushroom, bamboo, and cucumber.

Seaweed, with shreds of ham and bamboo shoots.

Crab, with ham and eggs.

Roast pork and dough puddings.

A dish of almond tea.

Sponge cake and fruit tart.

Rice and salted eggs.

Tea.

Dessert.

Grapes from Tien-Tsin, wampees, pistachio nuts, sliced pears, apples, bananas, fresh lychees, preserved ginger, and preserved plums.

Drinks.

Champagne and sherry, samshu and soda water.

Our host on the occasion was a portly, fat, good-natured Chinaman, who is right fond of a good dinner and is proud to entertain foreigners. On arriving at the club we were shown into a large top room, in which our host was waiting to welcome us, which he did very heartily. In the centre of the room was a large round table laid for ten guests, with a pair of chop sticks and a champagne glass and tumbler for each guest. The centre of the table was ornamented with flowers and fruit, somewhat in our own style; while all round the table, just in front of the place where your plate would be, were scattered loose flower leaves, giving it, as I thought, rather an untidy appearance. The room was well lighted by pretty paper lanterns hung in great numbers from the ceiling. The windows were all wide open, and through them you could walk into a wide verandah overlooking the street. On a bench on one side of the room sat three male musicians and nine singing girls, who were to amuse us during the feast. As soon as we entered the men struck up, and one of the girls sang to the music; but it was a most discordant noise, and we were all glad when it ended. Our host then introduced us to the girls, and bade them tell us their names. There was one girl for each guest, and I selected a damsel with beautiful large black eyes and a painted face. They all had black eyes and painted faces, so that there was little to choose between them, only I thought my girl's eyes were larger and more languishing than those of the others. We sat down to dinner, each man having his girl sitting on a stool at his right a little behind him, for the ladies are not expected to eat, their office is only to amuse. We helped them occasionally to champagne and samshu, and also to plates of melon seeds, but these were the only things they would take. Occasionally my lady challenged other gentlemen to drink and their ladies challenged me. We were a merry party and taxed our host's ingenuity to describe each dish as it came to table. I need hardly say I could not get on with the chop sticks, and was obliged to have recourse to an English spoon and fork, which at my request were forthcoming.

I tasted everything, but could hardly have made a dinner out of the whole twenty-two courses. The dinner lasted three hours, and we were glad to leave our seats and remove with the ladies into the cooler verandah, where we were again entertained with music, all the girls in turn being required to play or sing. After a time the music became very wearisome, and at 11 o'clock we chinchinned our host and the "petticoats"—I should, perhaps, more correctly say the "trousers"—and departed.

One of the institutions of Hong Kong is the Sunday tiffin. The week's business is closed, and the hard-worked merchant lays himself out for an afternoon's enjoyment. Of course he goes to church in the morning, where the sensible custom prevails of having only morning prayers and a short sermon. In so hot a climate more than this would be altogether unendurable, and even as it is there would be few attendants at church but for the punkahs, which are kept going during the whole service, the parson having a special one (and he needs it) for himself. Afterwards all the men adjourn to the club, or to some neighbouring friend's, for a cock-tail or a sherry cobbler, to reinvigorate them after the fatigues of the service. At one o'clock the tiffin party usually assembles to enjoy an elegant repast, which they call tiffin, but which we should call an early dinner, consisting as it does of soup and hot made dishes, with savoury pies and cold joints to follow. After tiffin the company retire, each one to the most comfortable lounge chair he can find in the verandah, and with the latest Saturday Review, Illustrated News, or Punch, to make a pretence of being awake, go to sleep until the cool of the evening, when a party is generally made for a walk over the Peak, or, in the hot weather, to Scandal point, a fashionable Sunday evening lounge, with a beautiful view over the western sea passage leading into Hong Kong. The ladies seated in their chairs, and the men perched on the long, low wall, like so many jackdaws, remain at this halting place until dusk, enjoying the sea breeze and the last bit of scandal.

The climate of Hong Kong is most agreeable for about three months of the year—November, December, and January; even February is usually cool and pleasant, but afterwards the warm weather commences and gradually grows hotter until about July it reaches its climax, and then it is something unbearable. No quantity of cool drinks or of cold baths will prevent your suffering, and most persons become martyrs to prickly heat, a kind of rash which covers the body from head to foot and is excessively irritating. At length, when the air has become so hot that one can scarcely breathe, comes a storm of thunder and rain to clear the atmosphere. I love grand storms, and in July witnessed one that was truly tropical. I watched its advance for miles from seaward, and could see the rain pouring in torrents far away on the distant hills; the heavy clouds marched on like vapouring giants, and at last with a roar and a dash down came the grateful rain, and the cool wind rushed by, making another climate. I never, until then, realized fully Longfellow's fine poem—"How beautiful is the rain in summer." The storm lasted

at intervals all the evening and through the night, and the whole heaven was ablaze with sheet lightning, opening out for a few seconds the whole panorama of hills and water and ships, and then shutting it up in greater darkness than before. Even the sea was coloured for fully a mile out from the shore with the water which rushed from the ravines in small rivers, carrying with them half the soil of the island.

My brief sketch of Hong Kong will hardly be complete without a few words upon the population of the colony. Less than thirty years ago the population consisted of a few poor fishermen, and perhaps a horde or two of pirates on the look out for passing merchantmen. It now comprises about two thousand European residents, and a hundred and twenty thousand Chinese. Can any other place in the world boast of a similar progress within so brief a period? Its wealth and trade are enormous, and there is a constant arrival and departure of shipping from all quarters of the globe. There are daily passage boats to Canton and Macao, carrying hundreds of passengers; indeed from Canton come the principal market supplies for Hong Kong, consisting of fish, vegetables, fruit, and flowers. Unfortunately these passage boats, besides bringing the necessary supplies, convey a large portion of the ruffianism of Canton, and it is by no means safe to find one's self belated outside the populous quarters of the town, for you run great risk of getting your head broken, or of being robbed of your watch and purse. Some men in their evening walks carry a revolver in case of any little difficulty arising; but to my thinking a revolver is of very little use against a man who, just as you have passed a projection of the rock, slips noiselessly from his lurking place and, coming suddenly behind you, fells you to the ground with a long bamboo pole. Safety is to be found alone in prudence, and in getting home before nightfall. So large a number of ruffians renders necessary a considerable police force, the majority of which consists of Sikhs and Malays with a moderate body of Chinese, and a picked body of Europeans as a staff. The large prison is constantly full, and a few years ago it was found necessary to build another on English territory, at Kowloon on the opposite side of the harbour; but a judicious alteration of the law, which has added flogging to the punishments for petty crimes, has considerably diminished the number of prisoners, for John Chinaman does not relish having his back scored, and the consequence is that the new prison at Kowloon has never yet been occupied, and probably never will be.

What may be the feelings of a man whose destiny it is to live at Hong Kong during some of the fairest years of his life, I cannot say; he goes there probably with the hope of making a fortune and returning home to enjoy it after a few years of patient toil, but his chances are much greater of returning with an enlarged spleen and all taste for enjoyment gone; or, worse still, of occupying a few feet of silent earth in the cemetery of the Happy Valley. My destiny was far otherwise. One glaring summer was all I had to test my constitution, and to give me a fair idea of what a summer at Hong Kong is; and I took my leave, half regretfully, of as agreeable a community and as hospitable a set of people as the round world can produce. As on the steamer's arrival, so on its departure, all the world comes on board to see the last of the homeward bound, and I verily believe that many, on shaking hands with me for the last time, and saying "good-bye," almost persuaded themselves that they were nearer home in taking a last look at the lucky fellow who was *en route* for that paradise of the absent, "*Home*."

E. H. REA.

Birmingham New Post Office.

THE view of this building which we give, shows the principal front facing New Street, in which is situated the public office, with the postmaster's office over it. From the back of this block, two long wings diverge, that to the right having the letter-sorting room below, with the instrument room above, each measuring 207 feet by 42 feet.

The left hand, or Pinfold Street block, contains the engineer's office, and rooms for the medical officers, messengers, and mail cart drivers, as well as store rooms. Half way down, these two blocks are connected by a cross range of buildings containing lavatories, &c., while the further ends of the two side blocks are joined by a lower building, in which is situated the postmen's room. Roughly speaking, the plan is like a capital A, only that the lower ends of the side arms are joined, while the principal rooms are at the apex.

The principal front faces New Street, and is built entirely of free stone, while the wings of the building are of red brick with stone dressings. There are two entrances to this block, placed angle-wise at the corners. There are five windows on the ground floor, with granite shafts between. The central window has over it an elaborate portico, ending in a small pediment, and a pair of urns, which serves to protect the apertures to the letter box situated under the window. Our artist has overlooked this last point, and shut the letter box in by continuing the railing across its front. The public office is a fine room, in the centre of which will be placed a statue of Sir Rowland Hill. The ceiling, which is handsomely panelled, is supported by four massive pillars, around which writing tables, for the convenience of the public, will be fixed. Letters, when posted, drop into the receiving baskets, and will be carried on a tramway to the sorting room. The building, which covers about an acre of ground, will be lighted by electricity, supplied by means of engines on the premises; pneumatic tubes are fixed wherever they are likely to be wanted, and the hydraulic lifts, which will convey the mails from the office to the railway station, are in working order.

The following figures will show how the business at the Birmingham Office has increased during the past eighteen or twenty years. In 1873 the number of letters, book packets, post cards, newspapers,

&c., for delivery weekly, was 466,611 ; in 1891 it is 1,102,009. The number of registered letters in 1873 was 116,255, but last year it reached no fewer than 603,817. In 1873, the number of telegrams dealt with during the year was 903,056, and now it reaches 3,773,009. It is noteworthy that the office which the present building replaces was only opened in 1873, but the growth of work has been so enormous that it is now utterly inadequate.

The transfer of the telegraphs from the old to the new post office was an arduous duty, but it was accomplished in a way which reflects great credit on the District Engineer and his staff. The following is taken from an interesting account of the operation from the pen of Mr. H. King :—

“It may, perhaps, give some idea of the work to be accomplished, if I state that there are at present 253 Superintending Officers, clerks, and telegraphists, besides a battalion of messengers numbering 188. (By way of contrast to this, I may mention that the staff when transferred from the old Companies consisted of 57 clerks and 37 messengers). Then we have 150 telegraph instruments, including three Hexodes, four Quadruplex, and seven Repeaters ; while no less than 4707 cells are required to work these instruments. The hexodes are each composed of no less than forty-five parts, all of which have to be carefully connected together by fine gutta-percha covered copper wire. Each instrument is led to a test box which contains in all 2879 terminals. In order to make the various connections, nearly 60 miles of wire were needed inside the building, while between the old and the new office buildings there were laid down five cables with a total number of 298 wires, all of which had to be spliced to old cables and tested.

“Now, considering that all the instruments and batteries had to be transferred a distance of about 440 yards between the hours of 8.0 p.m. on Saturday the 28th March and 6.0 a.m. on Monday the 30th, it will be readily understood that every one engaged had to be hard at work, and that there was no lagging. All was accomplished without interfering, for a moment, either with the circuits working into Birmingham or the trunk wires which connect London with the northern towns. It was, therefore, very satisfactory to every one concerned to find that by the time fixed all wires were in good working order, and that all trunk lines were joined through correctly and working well.”

My Sweetheart.

A Telegraph Story.

CHAPTER I.



WAY in the sunny south of North America, near the shores of the Pacific, nestling in a gorge between two mountain ranges, hides the pretty little town of Trouville. Trouville may not be familiar to everybody, nor even its big neighbour Montaur, for both have grown up, like many American "cities," in a few years. After the war, my father, who had grown tired of bustle and strife, settled down upon a farm in this secluded spot. Secluded it was then, for Trouville was but the name of his farm (the name he himself had given it), and the present Trouville was not in existence. At this time Montaur was but a row of houses facing the sea. I was a baby then, but now, when I am quite a woman, we have a Trouville that is the wonder of all travellers who happen to visit it. Montaur, also, can hold its head aloft, for along all the Pacific coast, from Mendosina to Loreto, it is unsurpassed for beauty; from all around visitors flock to this favoured spot; and the season at its height is what one is not likely to forget—at least, not I—for there are other things perhaps which help to charm me, but of that I will tell you anon.

Montaur is built in the shape of a crescent. The houses, hotels, and places of amusement are prettily built, and the sun shining upon its three mile curve of unbroken sands, together with the two large piers running out to sea, makes the pretty watering-place look pleasing in the extreme. Of music, in season, there is no lack, the large pier at sunset presenting a sight to be remembered, when the dancers are whirling hither and thither to the strains of the band, in which there are many old soldiers who fought throughout the war.

We had a brisk little Post and Telegraph Office at Trouville, of which my father took charge. I, in course of time, learned to work the instrument, and latterly no one save myself ever put fingers to it. We had a wire to Montaur and one to our head office, Brownville—rather, we had only a single wire connecting us

with both stations. Brownville was situated away up country, about twenty miles from Trouville. In the summer, when the evenings were long and I could not leave the office, I used to wile away the time by talking on the wire. I soon learned that there were but three persons at Montaur who could use the telegraph. These were Lizzie Sturgrove, her younger sister Mima, and an old postman. We used to enjoy our talks very much, and the nights would often slip by before I was aware of it. Of course we used to talk about all sorts of things, and now and again we would get some BR. (that's Brownville) clerk to join in with us; but we could never tell who they were, there were so many clerks at Brownville, mostly young men.

However, one evening I was sitting at the wire knitting——oh! —*mim!—what a rude girl I am! I've been talking to you all this time and never introduced myself. Please forgive me. I know you will when you know me. My name is Brownie Murdoch, and—and——well, what else am I to say? I can't tell you all about my looks. I'm nice looking, I know. Of course all girls are; but to tell you the truth, I've grown quite tired of my face long ago. Who can help it, seeing the same old face laughing at you every morning in the looking glass, when you are obliged to go thither to make your toilet, mim? Well, never mind about my looks; I've been told I'm a good-natured girl, so that will do; that's better than good looks.

One evening I was sitting at the wire, knitting, when some one said, "You there, dear?"

Before I could lift my hand it was answered, "Yes, who are you?"

"Ron."

"Mim!"

And then they began making love to one another.

One of the speakers was Liz, I knew, but who the clerk at Brownville was, I had no idea.

The conversation continued all night till I left, and next evening at the same hour the same thing happened. I began to feel curious to know who "Ron" was, and in time I found out that it was some one called Ronald Munroe; and bye-and-bye, quite a friendship sprung up between the three of us—Ronald, Liz, and myself. The love making used to go on fast and furious as the evening proceeded, and especially as the closing hours drew nigh, when there were no messages to interrupt us. But it was generally Ron and Liz who took part in the love making, I only now and again putting in a

* Mim—a telegraphic expletive, expressing a shade of irony or amusement. It is further explained on a subsequent page.

word, when I thought I could puzzle them by answering some of the questions as if I were Liz or Ron.

One day when the office was closed early, I resolved to go over to Montaur, about three miles distant, and see Liz, who had often invited me to visit her. I was met at the station by Liz, and we were soon good friends. I enjoyed myself immensely, and after being very kindly treated at her home, proceeded with her for a last stroll on the sands before I should say good-bye.

Quite naturally we began talking about Ron; each expressed a wish to see him. I gathered that Ronald was all that was good, and a nice looking fellow too. Liz was a few years older than I, and more cunning, I suppose, for she said that she had spoken to some girls at BR. about Ron, and they all agreed that he was a fine fellow, although none of them knew much about him. He was reserved and quiet, and would scarcely speak to a girl, but it was his frankness with other clerks that they judged him by.

Somehow or other from that time onwards I felt an interest in Ron, which increased more and more as our intimacy on the wire proceeded. His conversation, although often enough about current events and little flirtations, early began to show me that he was different from others; and many things I would have laughed at in others, when they came from Ron, made an impression upon me. There was not a word of flattery in his talk, but there was something apologetic, and at the same time truthful in it. After I came back from my visit to Liz, she used to call me wee Brownie, and sometimes pretty wee Brownie. I remember she had told me, as if in confidence, that I was very nice looking, and bye-and-bye it came about that Ronald used the same expression, although he had never seen me.

Compared with Liz, I certainly might be termed pretty, for she was really too much like a boy to be a nice girl. At any rate, whether she was nice looking or not, she appeared to know plenty of young men; while I—poor I—had no such acquaintances. Somehow I did not seem to be sorry for this. I never cared much for young men; but after I knew Ron, in some strange way I became altered. I seemed to have made up my mind all at once that I had found a sweetheart; and anything that came between Ron and me, made me all the more determined—no, not determined (I must not use that word, it sounds too wilful)—more—more—yes, more enthusiastic over my invisible sweetheart; for by some peculiar measure I had told myself that he was such, and that he was beautiful and brave and all that my

girlish fancy could picture him. In fact, I wanted a sweetheart, and he was to be the best sweetheart in the whole world, and his name was to be Ronald. Mim! Liz, I know, had often invited Ronald to come to Montaur, but he always had some excuse for declining, even although some other BR. youths (whose acquaintance had been made on the wire) had visited Montaur and seen Liz.

This was one day when three young fellows from Brownville, on a holiday, had gone to Montaur to see what sort of a place it was, and also to see its telegraphist. I was invited to join them that day, but although I had a holiday, I never thought of going. I contented myself with wandering over the hills with my little sister, picking flowers all the long burning afternoon, and I can remember quite distinctly asking her if she thought Ronald was not a nice name. Mim! Nice or not nice, Ronald the imaginable was in my head the whole day, and when I returned home at sunset I walked into the house singing quite unconsciously some lines from "The Macgregors' Gathering," an old Scotch song which I have often heard my father sing.

Liz was full of news next day, telling me all about her visitors, and wishing I had been there. They were nice fellows, she said, and had given her all the news about Ronald, and everything else in the big office at Brownville.

A long time before this there had been some word of Trouville having a wire direct to Brownville, and now at last it had become an accomplished fact. One fine summer morning the first person to enter our little office was a lineman, who brought with him another new instrument, and ere the day was gone I had spoken to Ron on the direct wire. We had now a wire direct to Brownville and one to Montaur, whereas previously both stations had been on the same wire.

I felt jubilant that day, for now I saw that I might have some nice quiet confidential talks with my sweetheart. Mim! I may tell you I never felt comfortable when I spoke to Ron on the other wire, for I knew Liz was always sitting at her instrument listening; so that this day you may guess I felt pleased. The reason I did not like to speak to Ron on the old wire was because Liz had come to think that he was her particular friend, and that I was only an inter-loper. This was true enough. It was Liz who first introduced him to me, but still there was, perhaps, more than this; for I do believe she was afraid I might succeed where she had failed—in persuading Ron to visit us.

Now, however, there was no need to fear Lizzie's jealousy, or whatever it might be, for with our new wire I could speak to Ron without anyone hearing but himself; and that very night, just after I had returned from tea and sat down, and was thinking of him, the little brass instrument said—

“You there, Brownie?”

“Mim! Yes. Who are you?” said I, springing forward.

“Oh, never mind, I was only wondering what wee Brownie—mim! —pretty wee Brownie was doing.”

“Mim! I was thinking of you.”

“Oh, oh (two big, big Oh's he sent), now don't, please. You're a pretty girl, but you must not make jokes.”

“Away with you. It is you who are joking. Tell me, why do you call me pretty wee Brownie? Mim! Why pretty?”

“Simply because you are pretty.”

“How am I?”

“Well, you have brown curls.”

“Yes.”

“And you are wee?”

“So my father says.”

“You have large blue eyes?”

“So I'm told.”

“And there's a smile on your face just now?”

“Mim! How did you know that?”

“Mim! Now, do you wish to know; with your large blue eyes and laughing face, peeping out from beneath your brown curls, can you be anything else but pretty?”

“But how did you know I was smiling just now?”

“Because you have such a good nature, and there's always a smile on your face.”

And when I thought of it, I remembered that I smiled at the least thing. But how did he know that? So I said, “But what do you know of my nature?”

“Mim! I know a lot about wee Brownie.”

“Then you must have seen me?”

“Mim!”

“You have been in Trouville?”

“Mim!”

“Have you, then?”

“Mim!”

“Tell me, please. Have you been in Trouville?”

“Mim!”

Mim.—that word “mim.” An outsider cannot understand the exact meaning of it. It is intended to indicate that the person who uses it is smiling, or amused at something. To a hundred different remarks the one solitary word is often returned—“mim.” But it means more than a mere smile, too. It may mean, “I’m laughing at your stupidity,” “Your innocent talk amuses me,” “You really don’t mean it,” “That’s a fact,” and many other things. Of course you cannot see the face of the person you are speaking to, and you can only imagine what the “mim” really does mean.

I spoke again and again, but received no answer. Then I concluded Ron had been sent to some other wire. I sat thinking over what had just passed, when the thought struck me, and this, together with the persistent manner in which he excused himself from visiting our neighbourhood, made me think, that although he had called me pretty names he had no thoughts of me; and I own I became quite sad, and more especially so as all my attempts to get him again to-night were fruitless.

CHAPTER II.

MANY days passed thus, and the time sped swiftly. Ron and I used to talk as usual; only we grew more affectionate.

He used to speak about such curious things, and in such strange language, that I could not follow him. This was only at first. I soon began to understand things that before were mere blanks to me; and by our conversations, which grew longer and pleasanter, a new world of discovery was opened up to my wandering fancy. His words made such impressions upon me that I used to write them down, and long after he had gone from the wire I would sit reading them. Little by little he seemed to grow greater in my eyes, and the time came when I almost believed I knew what love was; but this was soon dispelled, for love, too, seemed as A B C to him; and again he proved that he was far ahead of poor me.

However, I could not help being drawn closer to him, and I solemnly vowed that I believed I should know him were I to see him.

The day at length came when my fervent wish was fulfilled. It was towards the close of a summer holiday. Ron had said that he would like to see Montaur before the summer passed away. So, quite naturally—I mean—well, at any rate, I found myself at Montaur

towards noon of this said day, and somehow or other I never thought of going to see Liz.

The day was sultry and oppressive, and for relief I sought the pier, where I might feel the breath of the cool sea breeze. The band was playing, and as I listened to its strains, I caught the tune of the song of Patience: "I cannot tell what this love may be." Mim! Sure enough it was that very song; perhaps it was a hint for poor little me.

My eyes were wandering about in search of a vacant seat; for although I saw many seats where I might have rested, there were always some youths on or near them, so that I did not like to go; not that I was bashful, but somehow or other I wanted a seat all to myself. At length I saw one. An old gentleman near the railings rose from what I at first thought was a camp stool; but directly he moved away I saw he had been seated upon a small bench intended to hold two or three persons. Luckily, I was close to him, and in spite of two young ladies with wasp-like waists I took possession and spread myself out. Mim! They looked hurt when they saw they were too late. From my seat I could see the bathers below on the sands, away in the distance, and while being quite close to the band, could, out from beneath my little brown silk sunshade, watch intently all and sundry who passed up and down; and then—Mim! yes, I was at it again—I was dreaming of Ronald.

Every youth, as he hove in sight, coming up the long stretch of promenade, I imagined to be Ronald; but as he drew near I would see some fault in him, I would shake my head and say he was not a Ronald. I had watched about a score in this manner, when suddenly my eyes became riveted upon a group standing not far from me. Sure enough there was Liz and another young lady, and with them stood a young man. The thought struck me like a shock—Was this Ronald? He was nice-looking, and very quiet and respectful in his manner; but still there was nothing very striking in his looks, but the mere thought that this was Ronald almost made me lose my breath. However, I kept my presence of mind, and holding my sunshade well down over my face, watched them. Presently they moved further away from me, and took a seat on the other side of the pier end. I could still see them at intervals as the groups of pleasure seekers kept moving. Oh, how I felt then! How I longed to go to him! How I envied Liz!

Suddenly a bell rang, and immediately there was a stampede to the railings, and I was unceremoniously hustled by some youths who

rushed towards my seat. Some boat race was about to take place, and the bell, it appears, was the signal for getting ready. However, the race was soon over, the onlookers dispersed over the pier, and I was left in possession of my seat once more. I had now lost sight of Liz, and in my search for her I became conscious that some one was watching me. Not far away, on my right, stood a youth whose eyes were fixed upon me. I did not like to return his gaze, but by gradually lowering my sunshade I could see him without being seen by him. He was a youth of medium height and well-proportioned, but, oh, what a lovely face! He moved from his position, and approached nearer. I felt a little uneasy; but he did not, for nearer and nearer he came, cool and deliberate, till he was within a few feet of me.

Then I saw his face plainly. Oh, how those eyes shot darts of delight through me! It was always a fault of mine that I could never help admiring passionately all things beautiful. Almost within reach of my sunshade he had come, and the audacious stranger halted not here. Deliberately seating himself beside me, he put his hand upon the top of my sunshade, and, holding it aside, he looked right into my eyes, and said quietly, "Well, Brownie?"

I don't know how long it took me to answer him, for I was fairly and truly bewildered. I hardly realised what had passed.

Holding his hand out, he asked in a pleading tone of voice—

"Won't you shake hands?"

I'm afraid I positively gaped at him.

"You surely can guess who I am?" he said, but I was as wise as ever.

"Mim!" he said; "this is too bad of you."

"Ronald!" I almost cried aloud, and grasped his hand.

"Of course," he replied.

"But, how," I asked, after I had got over my excitement and hand-shaking, "how did you know me?"

"Oh," he replied, "I happened to notice your little shoe moving up and down. Watching it quite unconsciously, I saw you were calling BR. (Brownville) and TV. (Trouville). Mim! Then you used my name, and other little snatches of words told me it was Brownie."

"Mim! but you were looking for me?" I said, and then I was sorry I had said it.

"Mim!" he replied, "I was. And you—you never thought of me."

"Perhaps," I replied, for I did not want him to know I had come purposely to Montaur to try and see him.

And so my foot had betrayed me, or rather helped me. It was a habit I had formed, to "send" my thoughts, when I was dreaming, with my foot or fingers in the manner of telegraphing.

That was a day long to be remembered by me. When I mentioned to Ronald that I had seen Liz, he told me he did not wish to come across her. He pleased me more and more, and when at length the time had come to say good-bye, he gave me a pleasant piece of news.

He had received orders to come to Montaur for two months to relieve Liz, who had obtained two months' leave. This was delightful, for Montaur was only three miles from Trouville, and the thought of seeing Ronald often was enchanting; besides, we could speak to one another all day long, even when we were apart.

"Brownie," he said that night, taking my hand before parting, and turning those awful eyes (they *did* fill me with awe) upon me—"Brownie," I have not known you long, but I think I understand you. Before I return home to-night tell me you will be my little sweetheart."

"Mim! away you go!"

"Good-bye," he said, smiling.

"Good-bye," I answered.

"Dear!" he added.

"Mim! darling!"

* * * *

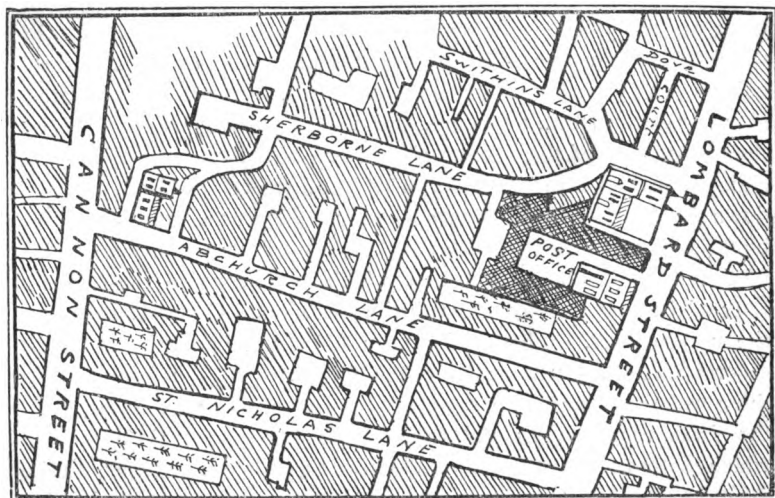
Five long years have passed, and although I believe my feelings for Ronald then were but those of girlish happiness, I have a strong suspicion that I love him now, when he is my husband.

IVANHOE.

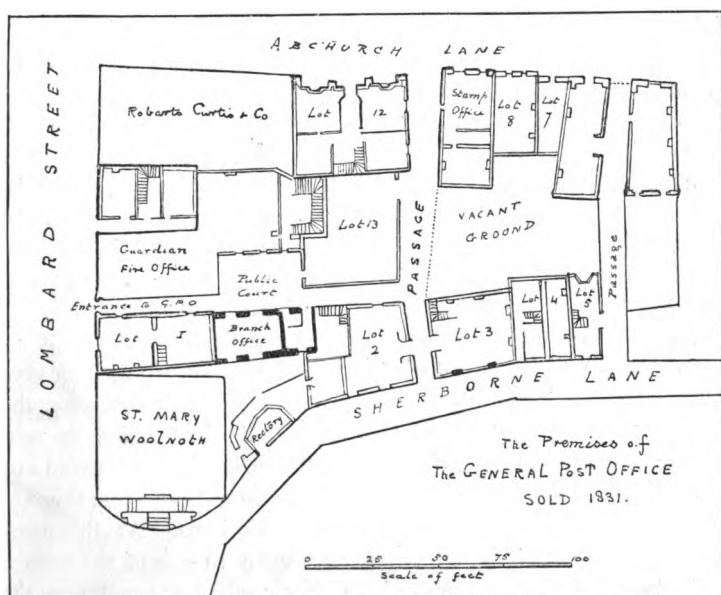
The Old Home of the Post Office.

Continued from page 155.

IN my first chapter I gave some description of the Lombard Street Office as it was in the early years of the 18th century, and I must now attempt to give some idea of it at the beginning of this century. The main front was then, as always, towards Lombard Street, but had extended farther eastward and occupied about 120 feet of the south side, from the church of St. Mary Woolnoth, to Abchurch Lane. Up to 1828, the year in which the office was finally removed to St. Martin's-le-Grand, all the space between Lombard Street and Cannon Street was covered with a network of narrow lanes, which were afterwards cleared away in great part by the opening of King William Street as an approach to London Bridge. That street, with St. Mary's Church at the corner passes over a great part of the premises which the Post Office had gradually absorbed as its business extended in the course of the 18th century. In one of the two plans published with this paper is shown a general sketch of the locality between the two main streets. This plan is taken from a map published in the 1754 Edition of "Stow's Survey," but it practically represents the arrangement of streets for the next eighty years. The second plan is copied from that issued in 1831 by the Auctioneer, Mr. Hogart, who, on the 6th May in that year, at the Auction Mart, sold the "important and valuable estates comprising the late General Post Office, in fourteen lots." From this plan it will be seen that the office had gradually extended so as to occupy all the ground between Abchurch Lane and Sherborne Lane. The front premises, which are marked as belonging to the Guardian Fire Company and Messrs. Robarts, Curtis & Co., had previously been disposed of, and practically represented the site of the old Inland Office and Letter Carriers' room. The house between the entrance passage and St. Mary's was the old Mail Coach office. Then looking at Abchurch Lane, we find that a rather handsome house (marked lot 12 on the plan) was chiefly used as the Secretary's residence, although some part of the ground floor appears to have been occupied by the "Frank Office," and the office of the



THE ENVIRONS OF THE OLD GENERAL POST OFFICE, LOMBARD STREET.



Inspector of Letter Carriers. At the back of this house was another, marked lot 13, the lowest floor of which was part of the letter carriers' office, while on the first floor was the Board Room, in which the Postmasters-General transacted business with their chief officers, "a lofty room about 27 ft. by 23 ft., with a room adjoining about 21 ft. by 18 ft., with bow, and a small room at the back." In the description of the Secretary's drawing-room, "a statuary marble chimney-piece" is mentioned as a mark of great distinction. Lower down Abchurch Lane, and across the passage, was a house occupied by "the Stamp Office" in 1831, but previously it was probably part of the Receiver-General's Office, which also occupied the ground floor of the next two houses, with the Accountant-General's office on the upper floors. The last house in Abchurch Lane, shown in the second plan, was "the Ship Letter Office." At the back of all these premises there were spaces of vacant ground used at times by the foreign merchants and their clerks waiting for their letters, which often arrived at most unseasonable and irregular times. It is said that in these spaces from 500 to 700 persons would often be waiting at one time. In order to deal promptly with the mails when they did arrive, the foreign sorters who, even in 1815, were only sixteen in number, were lodged in some houses on the other side of the open ground and fronting the lower part of Sherborne Lane. Higher up that lane, marked on the plan lot 3, came the Twopenny Post Office, which was to a great extent a separate institution, with a separate staff of letter carriers, who dealt only with local London letters. On the other side of the public passage was a large house occupied by the Secretary's office. The side windows looked on to the churchyard of St. Mary's, and it was no doubt in one of the basement rooms of this house that Sir John Tilley began his official career, as he told us last year at the Penny Post Jubilee dinner. The rectory adjoining St. Mary's is now the property of the department, but I think it must have been acquired in later years.

In a previous number we gave a picture of the old Inland Office. That office was however pulled down in 1810, and rebuilt in a very handsome manner "for the purpose of forming new checks on the sorting of letters, and expediting the public business with new sorting tables, divisions, &c." In 1809, the offices in Abchurch Lane were rebuilt at a cost of £5,520, so that we may imagine them to have been, in later days, tolerably commodious. At this time apparently, the Dead Letter Office, previously in one of the houses in Sherborne Lane, was moved to Abchurch Lane. When the

premises were sold in 1831, they realised only £11,670 in all, a good deal less apparently than their estimated value, which, with the value of those in Lombard Street previously disposed of, is said to have been £32,375.

As I have said in another number, it was practically the introduction of mail coaches which made the Lombard Street office unsuitable for its purpose. Only in Lombard Street itself could coaches stand to take up mails, and even there only two or three at a time. The extension of London westwards, and the development of its suburbs in that direction, also made Lombard Street a less convenient centre than it had been when correspondence was almost entirely limited to the merchants and bankers in and around that spot. In 1814, a committee of the House of Commons was appointed to take evidence, but separated without any decision. Again in the next year another committee was appointed, and, after much evidence and deliberation, recommended the present site as the best, not however without considering others. Furnival's Inn was offered to the Postmaster-General as a site. The Goldsmiths' Company wished to sell large premises bounded by Fetter Lane and Shoe Lane, lying between Holborn and Fleet Street. A proposition was also submitted to the Treasury that the Post Office should be built on the west side of the Old Bailey, a proposal which, if carried out, would have given our predecessors a good view of the executions in front of Newgate. Lastly, the College of Physicians offered their premises in Warwick Lane. None of these sites however commended themselves to the official mind, which was disposed to prefer a large new building erected on the Lombard Street site, and to that end Mr. Joseph Kay, architect to the Post Office, then a permanent officer, prepared a plan showing how this might be arranged. But the committee decided wisely that more space was wanted, and as the Corporation were anxious to clear away the rookeries within the liberty of St. Martin's, and to widen Cheapside and Newgate Street, as well as to secure a fine public building in an imposing site, an arrangement was come to under which the Post Office was to assist by purchasing part of the ground when cleared. The committee, however, feared the civic thirst for architectural beauty, and wound up their report with a warning that "ornamental decorations, introduced for the mere purpose of embellishment, and unconnected with utility, while they prodigiously enhance the cost, rarely produce an effect in point of elegance and grandeur which can compensate for it." And they finished with

these severe words: "an office for the receiving and delivery of letters which should be concealed behind a front fit for a palace, and flanked by triumphal arches, would present an incongruity no less offensive to good taste than inconsistent with rational economy." Surely that committee would have enjoyed the modern improvements of Smirke's masterpiece.

In looking through old papers connected with the removal of the Chief Office, one comes across odd bits of information. For instance, it appears that, whereas the office was originally lighted by candles, of the cost of which some particulars were given in a previous number, it was, at the beginning of this century, lighted by oil lamps. Then coal-gas was introduced, but the company's charges—15s. 6d. per 1,000 feet—were too high, and plant was set up in order that oil gas might be manufactured on the premises. Dismal, however, were the complaints of the unfortunate officers obliged to work in the consequent odours, and prolonged was their sick leave. Finally, the old oil lamps were put up again, and it was not until the move was made to St. Martin's that coal-gas lighting was regularly introduced in the Post Office. We have all heard of the method of "charging" single and double letters according to the number of sheets which they contained. From the statement of Sir. Francis Freeling it appears that this duty was always done by holding up the letters to artificial light close behind them. Daylight was not sufficient for the purpose. Then again, from the evidence of Mr. E. Johnson, Comptroller of the Twopenny Post Office, we learn that on Monday, March 6th, 1815, the number of persons entering the Chief Office between 8 and 11 a.m. was 285, between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. 560, between 2 and 5 p.m. 563, and between 5 and 8 p.m. 559, which altogether, allowing 33 persons as the number before 8 a.m., make up a round 2,000. By a curious slip this number was enlarged by Sir Francis Freeling in his evidence before the committee to 20,000.

Between 1800 and 1815 no less a sum than £88,000 appears to have been spent in repairs and alterations at the Chief Office, and this was done although it had been in contemplation for twenty-five years to build a new office. The amount of Foreign correspondence in 1815 as compared with the whole Inland correspondence was as one to five.

In considering the position of the new office the great object was to secure a "central" position, and many details of business East and West of Lombard Street were given.

Thus, it appears that East of Cheapside there were only 9 receiving houses in 1815, and 54 to the Westward. Of Bellmen only 33 perambulated the streets to the East, while 74 collected the letters of the West.

There were then about 110 bankers in London, of whom 78 had their offices East of the Post Office and 32 resided to the West. The number of Assurance Companies was 14, all of which did business West of Lombard Street, as well as nearly all the law agents for country attornies, of whom it was touchingly remarked that "their postage inwards was immense, and still more so was their postage outwards to their country correspondents." During the week from the 4th to the 9th July, 1814, the number of letters delivered and the postage for the two sides of the Chief Office were carefully reckoned, and the following table gives the result :—

EAST.			WEST.		
Date, 1814.	No. of Letters.	Postage.	No. of Letters.	Postage.	
—	—	£ s. d.	—	£ s. d.	
Monday, July 4th	11,508	618 9 11	31,163	1,090 3 1	
Tuesday, „ 5th	6,449	315 15 11	17,386	601 19 1	
Wednesday, „ 6th	7,384	349 19 0	20,197	717 2 8	
Thursday, „ 7th	7,631	404 9 10	20,447	766 5 6	
Friday, „ 8th	9,837	865 2 0	22,666	1,132 17 10	
Saturday, „ 9th	8,733	521 16 0	22,156	876 7 3	
	51,542	3,075 12 8	134,015	5,184 15 5	

In concluding this paper I must remind my readers that all I promised was a selection of odd bits of gossip about our old home, and that is all I have been able to give. But I hope that some better antiquarian will continue the subject. In old newspapers, and in the public records and elsewhere, there must be abundant information to be obtained; and perhaps, some day, a more worthy historian will pursue the subject and give us a complete picture of the life and work of our predecessors in the last century.

A. M. OGILVIE.

Cornwall and the Cornish.

(*Concluded.*)

THE fame of Cornwall as a camping ground for artists is too well known to need further mention here. Every year, an increasing number of knights of the brush wend their way westward to the boulder-strewn shore of Bude and Bos, the sombre rocks of the Gurnard's Head, the serpentine cliffs of Mullion, Kynance, and the Lizard, or some granite sentinel like Pardenack, or Tol Pedn, which, down through all the ages, has stood the rude assault of wind and wave. Then again there is King Arthur's castle on the north, St. Michael's Mount on the south, the beautiful vale of Lanherne, and the rugged slopes of Rough Tor and Brown Willey ; but everywhere there are beauties which poets will sing and painters will limn as long as language avails to express our thoughts, or colours assist us, however inadequately, to transfer to canvas some of Nature's most cunning handiwork.

But of all the range of coast from Bude to Downderry, nowhere perhaps focussed into a given space, is there so charming a view as from the high ground above the village of Newlyn. At your feet, fringing the crescent-shaped shore, and basking like some Oriental city in the sun, lies Penzance—the church of St. Mary a prominent object in the foreground, and the crooked, winding streets all converging on the market place, where an ugly building, capped by a hideous cupola, mars the approach to the town. St Michael's Mount—that “gem set in a silvery sea”—rich in historical associations, and happily in the possession of a nobleman, Lord St. Levan, who knows how to preserve and prize its priceless worth, stands out from a background of green hills and fertile fields over against the ancient town of Market Jew or Marazion. The whole of Mounts Bay, one of the finest sheets of water in the three kingdoms, into which Plymouth Sound, breakwater and all, might be dropped without perceptibly diminishing its area, is spread out like a map. It is shut in by the promontory of the Lizard, and, to all appearance, perfectly land-locked ; but an awkward hiatus in the formation of the coast leaves it exposed to the full force of the prevailing

gales, and converts its otherwise splendid anchorage into a dead lee-shore.

Looking westward, the cliffs are scored and furrowed, and broken by the picturesque valleys of Lamorna, St. Loy, and Penberth. The massive granite outliers still present a bold front to the enemy, but yawning clefts and "gawns" bite every year deeper into the adjoining land, and threaten, at no distant date, entirely to bisect the county, here narrowed down to a mere strip scarcely ten miles across. To the east, from Gunwalloe to the old Lizard Head, the coast rises abruptly in a series of bold headlands, with here and there a stretch of golden sand. When the sky presages rain—as it frequently does in this watery climate—this eastern land stands out sharp and clear, with every rock and every patch of heath and bracken distinctly visible though, in a bee line, quite ten miles away. But, with the wind from the south, a blue haze—a cross between a Scotch mist and a Dartmoor drizzle—obscures the view, and nothing is to be seen but a line of surf, and the breakers chafing against the dreaded Stags.* The sea—as changeable as the skies above it—ranges in colour, varying from a deep indigo blue to an emerald green. It should be seen in two different moods—when the summer zephyrs in fitful cats'-paws flit across its surface, and the pulse of old Ocean scarcely seems to throb; and when, driven before the fierce west wind, the mighty billows rear their angry crests, till sea is sky, and sky is sea; when churned into foam, it frets around the submerged reefs, and, rising like a wall of *lapis lazuli* capped with virgin snow, spends its fury on the yellow strand, or thunders through the caves; when the storm fiend shrieks, the solid earth shakes, and far inland the air is salt with spray.

No wonder that the Newlyn artists, numbering amongst them men like Walter Langley, Norman Garstein, and Stanhope Forbes, catching inspiration from their surroundings, and painting nature in her loveliest guise, should found a school which bids fair to leave its impress on the world of art. Nor are the native types less interesting. A blend of the fair-haired Saxon and the brawny Dane, with just a dash of Moorish blood from the hidalgoes of old Spain †

* The Stags are two dangerous rocks off the Lizard, right in the fairway for shipping, but protected by the twin lighthouses on the Point.

† There are evident traces and well-authenticated records of some ships of the Spanish Armada having made a descent on Mounts Bay, and, no doubt, certain members of the crews may have remained behind and intermarried with the natives. Names like "Gruzelier" and "Rouffagnac" are clearly of foreign origin; and confirmatory of this is the appearance of some members of these families, who might have stepped out of a picture by Murillo.

grafted on the Celtic stock, has produced a race which, taken all round, cannot be excelled. The men are brave, stalwart, sober, and God-fearing; the women, tall and comely. Wherever he goes—and he navigates the entire coast from Wick to the Scillies—the Mounts Bay fisherman is well and favourably known. His boat is the very pink of cleanliness and order. Painted and scraped from truck to keelson, with hull blacklead, and ropes all ataut, she looks and sails like a yacht. At Arbroath or Aberdeen, he goes to kirk with the regularity of a Covenanter. At Howth or Kinsale, he is as puritanical as a Quaker. At Whitby or Scarborough, he frequents the seamen's Bethel, or joins the Salvation Army. Unlike the canny Scot, who could not afford to break the Sabbath for less than seven and sixpence, nothing will induce the Cornish fisherman to fish on Sunday. All days are the same to his rivals the north and east countrymen, and, owing to the falling off in the supply, Sunday's catch frequently brings a better price than any other day of the week. No matter—the Cornishman would not handle a net on the Sunday if fish were nuggets. There is an unwritten law which proscribes Sunday fishing, any breach of which calls down the severest penalties; * in fact, fish are not allowed to be landed on Sunday, and nobody will touch them with a long pole. This seems, and doubtless is, Sabbatarianism run mad. Still, the motives which prompt this rigid observance of the day of rest is to be commended in this iconoclastic age, when nothing is sacred from the impious hands of the reformer.

It is a fairly good test of the social condition of any community if we take note of the way in which the people live. If—as is too often the case in the teeming North—you see the bread winners, while clamouring for less work and more pay, devoting their leisure to the race-course and the betting ring; rushing off in pursuit of pleasure by road, by river, and by rail, wherever a fight is to be fought, or a wager won; spending their nights in theatres, concert halls, gin palaces, and casinos; helping to swell the enormous returns of alcoholic liquors, and drinking the Chancellor of the Exchequer into a surplus—you may be pretty sure that, in that

* A case came before the St. Ives' magistrates recently, and was re-heard by a jury before Judge Howard of the County Court, where a howling mob broke into the cellar of a man who was only suspected of fishing on Sunday. They smashed his implements, pulled the place down about his ears, and threw the fish (over 5,000 herrings) overboard, the man and his family being obliged to run for their lives; and though the illegality of the thing was admitted, and the ringleaders were heavily fined, public sympathy went with the rioters and not with the victim.

community, purity is at a discount, and religion and morals at a very low ebb. Now, I do not mean to say that Cornwall is Arcadia. Human nature is human nature under the fisherman's guernsey, the operative's apron, or the collier's smock. But I do say that in Cornwall there is an utter absence of that rowdyism and lawlessness, to be seen at every turn in most of our great cities and manufacturing centres. With earnings 50 per cent. less—the wages of a Cornish miner do not average 15/- a week—there is an air of snug respectability about the working man which contrasts favourably with the same genus on the Clyde, the Tyne, the Humber, or the Tees. Instead of using his Sunday (and frequently the Monday and Tuesday) to sleep off the effects of Saturday night's debauch, the Cornishman delights to don his top hat and broadcloth, and carrying his head erect, as much as to say, "I owe not any man," to tramp for many a mile to the little chapel on the hillside, which has been built and endowed by his exertions. Perhaps he is a "local,"* and after giving out a hymn, and joining in prayer, he mounts the rude pulpit—wrought, it may be, out of a solid piece of granite—and expounds the Scriptures according to his lights. He does not busy himself about forms and ceremonies; he does not care a rap whether the Archbishop of Canterbury is right, or the Bishop of Lincoln; whether it is orthodoxy or heterodoxy: he only knows that within the four bare walls which echo with the loud *Amens* he stands in the presence of his Maker, and can pour out his soul before the throne of grace.

These characteristics, pertaining to Cornishmen in general, are strikingly exemplified in the Mounts Bay fishermen. Living a life of extreme frugality, an abstainer, and all but a vegetarian—his principal food is bread and tea, with perhaps a mackerel taken out of the net and clapped into the pot—he is a warning and an example to the narrow-minded zealots who would thrust temperance down people's throats by Act of Parliament, of what can be done by voluntary effort. Drunkenness is almost unknown. With a population of over 5,000 souls, the one or two public houses languish for want of customers. One policeman does duty for the whole parish, and his office is a sinecure. Crime is at zero, and deeds of violence of very rare occurrence. But, while the public houses are empty, and grass

* A "local" is a member of some dissenting body put down "on the plan" to preach in the absence of the regular minister, or at some village or roadside chapel where the congregation is not large enough to support a professional. There are hundreds of them throughout Cornwall, and a very worthy class of men they are.

grows in the gaols, the chapels are full to overflowing. The nearest approach to human happiness for a Mounts Bay fisherman is to go to a prayer meeting or a love feast. With a child-like faith he believes that missionaries are really the salt of the earth, and that the salvation of souls, and not the almighty dollar, is at the bottom of all their efforts. Hence the function known as "passing round the hat" is in full swing; and, in recognition of the principle that the stomach is the centre of the human organism, and that in proportion to its being distended, the heart is warmed, and the purse-strings unloosed, social gatherings, with plenty of "tay, crame, and heavy caake," are a never-failing institution. Imbued with a spirit of superstition, as fatalistic as a Turk, or a Chinaman who prays for a good Joss, the Mounts Bay fisherman takes the first fruits of his labour and lays them at the feet of his minister, in the firm belief that otherwise he would have no luck during the season. Of course this kind of fetish is encouraged by the "sky pilots," who, while giving the course and distance to a better world, must live in this; and so, while asking a blessing upon the meat offerings of their flock, they take care to appropriate the gifts for such mundane purposes as cookery involves.

It was by appealing to the emotional temperament of the Cornish, and their first cousins the Welsh, that John Wesley made most of his converts; and to this day Nonconformity has a firm hold on the population. The mummerly and millinery, posturings, and genuflections practised in some of our Churches stinks in the nostrils of the simple-minded Cornishman. Church rates and tithes have always been his *bête noire*. Before the Liberation Society was, or tithes had become a burning question, the Mounts Bay fishermen had cut the Gordian knot in a very rough and ready way. Shaking the dust of the Establishment off their feet, and going out into the wilderness of dissent, they set up in their midst the unpretending, barn-like conventicle, and there worshipped God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

Tithes, the Cornish fishermen dealt with in a much more summary fashion. I forget for the moment who is the latest champion in the crusade against the Church; whether it be Mr. Osborne Morgan or one of the ab Griffiths', ab Jenkins', ab Thomas', or ab Davies', of that hot-bed of militant nonconformity, gallant little Wales. But it would have made the heart of the late Mr. Miall leap for joy to have seen how the Cornish fishermen went to work to rid themselves of a form of tithe which was particularly obnoxious to them. Under

some ancient statutes, now, I believe, obsolete, tithes were leviable on all the fish caught. As law-abiding citizens, they groaned under this impost for many years. The hateful tax-gatherer took toll of the fruits of their industry, and gave back nothing in return. He was the outward and visible sign of that religious intolerance which their forefathers had fought against. So, one day, they fell upon the unlucky wight tooth and nail. They ducked him in the brine tubs, and belaboured him with dogs;* they festooned him with fish entrails; and pelted him with offal; till running for dear life, with a mob of irate fishermen and their termagant wives at his heels, he gained the shelter of some neutral ground and cried peccavi! Then the men of Newlyn vowed a vow—come what would, they would pay no more fish tithe. And to register this compact, and to hand it down to their children, and their children's children, they set up a sign (which may be seen to this day), upon which appeared these words:—"No tithes, one and all," and from that time to this no one has dared to collect fish tithes in the village of Newlyn.

But I seem to see crowds of surfeited readers appealing beseechingly to the editor to interpose his veto on my long-winded effusions. I seem to hear the P.D.—imp that he is—threatening to form an "ink-slingers' suppression league;" and, as all sorts and conditions of men make nothing, now-a-day, of striking on the slightest provocation, I will take warning from recent experiences, and what the Yankees call "dry up." Still, I have a parent's fondness for the bantlings which, after laborious parturition, you have generously allowed to start their little lives on the literary stage. The subject is a large one. There are other traits in Cornishmen, other legends and anecdotes peculiar to the county, which, in abler hands, might well find a place in future numbers of *St. Martin's-le-Grand*; and failing a better man, who knows but what I may again some day tempt the fates with more of my scribblings?

PENZANCE.

J. G. UREN.

* That is dogfish which are thrown aside as worthless.

With the Benevolent Society at Glasgow.



THIS is the fourth year in succession that I have had the honour of representing my department at the Annual Meeting of the United Kingdom Postal and Telegraph Service Benevolent Society. In the Savings Bank Department, as most post office men are aware, we conduct our affairs on advanced democratic lines, and when representatives have to be chosen for any meeting or agitation, the opportunity is eagerly seized to hold an election. On previous occasions I have been elected a delegate by thumping majorities, but owing, I presume, to a supposed change of front on my part on the subject of widows and orphans I failed this year to obtain a place among the successful candidates. A gentleman who possesses superior advantages in the shape of a potential widow and potential orphans was preferred before me; in fact, I understand that the persistency with which I adhere to bachelorhood is laying me open to a charge of insincerity as regards the interest I take in the welfare of the Society. "Bennett only looks upon the meeting as the occasion for an annual pleasure trip; don't vote for him; vote for some married man who has a stake in the Society." This was the kind of language used by my opponents, and it required some little wire-pulling on my part to circumvent them, and qualify myself for Glasgow in spite of a hostile vote at the poll. This is how it was done. A rumour was set about that an elaborate attack on the financial position of the Society *might* appear in these columns at no distant date, and it was therefore deemed advisable by our local secretary to call another meeting at the last moment. A "Bennett Relief Bill" was passed; a saloon ticket to Glasgow was forced into my hands, and eulogistic speeches were made by my former opponents on my knowledge of finance, my oratorical powers, and on the qualifications I possessed as a journalist to give a true and impartial account of the meeting. Such is the power of the press in this country.

I should indeed have been sorry to have been absent from the meeting this year. There was every promise of its being the most largely attended and the most exciting meeting in the history of the

Society. Politics are only interesting when the speakers indulge in personalities, and the same criticism might apply to speakers on insurance and reserve funds. Instead of the usual dry debates that characterise our Society's meetings, there promised to be this year any amount of personal recrimination; and to me, as a student of human nature, the prospect of this kind of sport was exceptionally inviting. During the past year a Committee had been considering the question of a reserve fund, and a report containing very drastic proposals had been issued to members. The report had aroused an angry feeling throughout the Society, and the anger had taken the somewhat illogical form of opposition, not so much to the re-election of the Committee, who were responsible for the report, but to the re-election of the Central Secretary, who had no responsibility for it whatever. To some of us it was quite a matter of curiosity to obtain a sight of the individuals whose reasoning took such an illogical form. Mr. John Asher, the Postmaster of Carmarthen, and father of the Society, was the chosen candidate of these malcontents, and he had issued an address of a rather violent and uncompromising character. It was a veritable call to arms, and the enemy against whom he hoped to lead his host to victory was a certain clique in the Savings Bank Department, "whose agitation and harassment" he had forgiven but not forgotten. There we had it, in plain, unmistakable language, in Mr. Asher's circular—jealousy of the influence of the Savings Bank. Again I say, to some of us, it was a matter of curiosity simply to look into the faces of any brother officers whose action in this life could possibly be prompted by jealousy of the most unfortunate department in Her Majesty's service. We, forsooth, who are accustomed to receive weekly and sometimes daily reproofs from headquarters on our many shortcomings, were for a short period the object of envy on the part of hundreds of post office officials! Merely to sympathise with us in our troubles is sometimes sufficient to condemn the sympathiser to a back seat in the Service, but to envy us would seem to show that there is a serious spirit of insubordination abroad in the Post Office. However that may be, the fact remains that the object of Mr. Asher's candidature was to defeat a certain clique in the Savings Bank. And as a humble member of that clique, I felt not a little aggrieved at the manner in which the fight was being conducted by Mr. Asher. I have known him for several years as a very earnest and capable man, and I could scarcely believe my eyes when I first read his electioneering address. Then laughter succeeded amazement, and

I said to myself, "Mr. Asher is having a joke with us; he, like the rest of us, is anxious to get up a more entertaining meeting than usual." Here are some of the literary plums from Mr. Asher's pen. "I had forgiven much of agitation and harassment of years ago from the S. B. D., but I cannot forget it, nor the persistent tinkering and distinctly hostile action from that quarter ever since they unfortunately joined us, not in the infancy of the Society, but after it was well established. Considering that the Society has been officered from, and centred in, the Savings Bank Department for ten years I call their whole course of action base ingratitude. The Society must be rescued from them at once and be placed in distinctly loyal and faithful hands."

"The whole clique must go out of office, and I mean to accomplish this."

"I leave nothing to blind chance."

"I fight right along the whole line."

And so on to the concluding sentences. "But the old watch-dog was not dead—not sleeping even—but merely resting. Some have asked for my age. Well, I am not quite forty-six, nor an 'old man' yet. I was eighteen when I first insured, and began to carefully study insurance, and thirty when I founded this Society." With this interesting piece of autobiography the address ends.

I have quoted enough to show my readers that the attack was aimed principally at my own Department. Now, we in the Savings Bank have our own burdens to bear, but we have certainly a clear conscience as regards Mr. Asher and the Society which he founded. Since, as he says, we unfortunately joined the Society it has increased in numbers to the extent of thousands; and we have provided two Central Secretaries, who in ability are at least the equals of Mr. Asher. In this connection I care only to speak of Mr. Belcher, and I say what is in the knowledge of every member, that our great success has been largely due to the fact that we had for so many years a man for Central Secretary whose tact, business capacities, clear-headedness, and personal popularity it would be difficult to equal from among the ranks of the General Post Office. I regret that Mr. Asher's unfortunate prejudices should have carried his reason away to the extent of forgetting this fact; and though he most certainly started the Society, not all the well-meant enthusiasm in the world could have prevented it from collapsing years ago had not a sounder policy than that represented by him been carried out by the executive.

So much for Mr. Asher's address and the struggle into which he has dragged the Society. It remains for me now to chronicle what actually happened. I left St. Pancras Station on Monday, June 1st, at 9.45, in a saloon carriage, in company with Mr. Belcher and the central Secretary. We arrived in Glasgow about 7 p.m., and we at once took up our quarters at the North British Hotel. There were delegates everywhere, and all were discussing *ad nauseam* the question of a reserve fund. One delegate complained to me bitterly of the way in which his efforts to find his way about Glasgow had been met by the police. Here is what occurred.

Scene, Buchanan Street, Glasgow. 7 p.m. 1st June, 1891. London delegate (a stranger in Glasgow, and wishing to ferret out some colleagues who have come north via Midland Railway) to P.C. No. —, at a crossing—"Can you direct me to the Midland Hotel, please?"

P.C. No. —. "Mon, a dinna ken the place."

L.D. "Well, can you direct me to the terminus of the Midland Railway?"

P.C. (impressively). "Ay, mon, it's at Carlisle."

The London delegate then gave the Scotchman up, but subsequently ascertained from his friends that it was St. Enoch's Hotel and Station he should have asked for. I suppose the Scotchman resented the idea of an English railway company having effected an entrance into Glasgow. For I doubt whether he really intended to be humorous.

After tea I gave the Central Secretary the slip, and sought a refuge from delegates and debates on insurance in a little bar-parlour, where I discussed the result of the Paisley election with a Scotch publican, who drank his whiskey raw, but always sent a thimble-full of water down his throat after each draught. I asked him if he really thought the water caught the whiskey up, but he only said rather grimly he hoped not, and that his whiskey was too good to be spoilt with water. Then I wound up the evening at a smoking concert, organised by the Glasgow reception committee for the benefit of the delegates. There I met many old acquaintances of former years: Mr. Maggs, of Bristol, Mr. Cox, of Brighton, Mr. Scarborough, of Belfast, and Mr. Douglas, of Glasgow. The coming fight was forgotten in the shaking of hands and in the cup that cheers. I missed the face of the champion of the fray, but I was informed he was elsewhere. To quote a well-known text, "Asher continued on the sea-shore and abode in his breaches." In other

words, he was at the Central Station Hotel, consulting with his trusted lieutenants.

The annual meeting was held the following morning in the Christian Institute, Bothwell Street, Glasgow, Mr. Midgley, of the Glasgow Post Office, being in the chair. There were about 200 delegates present. After some preliminary skirmishing, the report of the committee came on for discussion. Mr. Braid, of Edinburgh, proposed its adoption, and explained at some length the reasons which had induced the committee to recommend such drastic measures. He read extracts from the reports of the actuaries, and exhorted the members present, if they disapproved of his particular plan, to adopt some other measures to safeguard the future of the Society. Mr. Boughton, of Stafford, seconded the adoption of the report, and defended himself very vigorously against the attacks of Mr. Asher. After some other speeches, Mr. Asher delivered a vigorous attack on the report and the executive, and Mr. Belcher replied to him. All the speakers in favour of a reserve fund dwelt upon the necessity of doing something to secure the constant flow of new members into the Society. In the end the report was thrown out by a large majority.

But although the meeting threw out the proposals of the committee, the advice of Mr. Braid was followed to the extent of carrying this very important resolution: "That as soon as the contributions will admit, the maximum payments at death shall be, in the First Class £150; and in the Second Class £60. The amounts exceeding these sums after paying expenses to be retained by the Central Secretary until they accumulate to a sufficient amount for one case in either of the respective classes to be remitted together—that is, in the First Class the surplus over £150 to be retained until the amount of £150 is accumulated to remit a claim in that class; and the same over £60 in the Second Class to be retained until £60 is accumulated, and a claim can be remitted in that class also." To those who understand the working of the Society it will be abundantly clear that an important step in securing the interests of the younger members has been taken by the passing of this resolution, and, as the amount already realised at the death of a member is over £150, the resolution will take immediate effect. Mr. Summerfield, of Aberdeen, moved the resolution, having on two previous occasions acted unsuccessfully in the same capacity.

Then followed the election of Central Secretary. Mr. Belcher proposed Mr. Sutch, and Mr. Pounds proposed Mr. Asher. Amidst

a scene of great excitement a division was taken. The numbers were: For Mr. Sutch, 113; for Mr. Asher, 84. Mr. Sutch was therefore re-elected. Most of the delegates' minds seemed in a rather confused condition, for after having relieved their souls by nearly driving Mr. Sutch out of the Central Secretaryship, they returned, with one exception, the whole of the old committee at the head of the poll. The logic of this step puzzled me, because if the language of Mr. Asher and his supporters meant anything, the committee should have been wiped out of existence. But some of these delegates were curiosities in the way of intelligence. They reasoned in much the same way as the working man over the Tichborne case. "I don't care whether he's Orton or whether he's Tichborne, but I do say it's a d——d shame that a poor man should be kep' out of his rights." However, all's well that ends well, and one of the pleasantest features of the Glasgow meeting was the very admirable way in which the losing side took their beating. At the banquet in the Trades Hall, in the evening, Sir John Cuthbertson presided. About 220 guests were at the tables, and letters of apology for non-attendance from many eminent persons were read by Mr. Douglas, the indefatigable Secretary of the Reception Committee. The usual loyal toasts having been proposed by the chairman, Mr. North, of London, proposed "The Postmaster General." Mr. Lewis, of Birmingham, proposed "The Postal and Telegraphic Services," and Mr. Small, of London, and Mr. Scarborough, of Belfast, responded. The toast of "The Society" fell to my share, and Mr. Sutch, the Central Secretary, responded. Mr. Belcher proposed "The Reception Committee," and Mr. Midgley and Mr. Douglas responded. Mr. Braid, of Edinburgh, proposed the toast "Let Glasgow flourish!" and Sir John Cuthbertson replied. Mr. P. Millar, of Glasgow, proposed "The Local Secretaries and Delegates," and Mr. Berridge, of London, responded.

I was told the following day that in my speech at the banquet I had needlessly gone out of my way to stir up quarrels which it was hoped were subsiding. The fact of the matter is, I had described the crisis the Society was passing through as a struggle between personal and impersonal government, and I had illustrated my argument from the example of General Boulanger and his attempt to seize hold of the reins of government in France. It appeared to me a distinctly parallel instance, and no amount of subsequent shaking of hands and general palaver all round can induce me to acquit Mr. Asher of similar designs on the Benevolent Society.

I do not hesitate to say with the full responsibility which I know attaches to my words, that had Mr. Asher been elected as Central Secretary, with a commission to carry out the reactionary policy indicated in his circulars and letters, the future existence of the Society would have been very seriously imperilled. Much as I regret his action, however, I cannot help admiring the very excellent way in which he took his defeat, and more especially the speech he made at the banquet. In it he announced his intention of doing his best to support the executive. He exhorted his followers to do the same. Some of his more fiery supporters were, I think, a little disappointed at the moderate tone of his speeches as compared with the tone of his circulars. "He don't speak so fine as he writes, do he?" said one letter-carrier to another within my hearing, and they both shook their heads ominously.

The following day, by invitation of the Reception Committee, the delegates went to Tarbert and back on board the "Columbia." The weather was glorious, and although much of the route was familiar to me, I have never seen the Kyles of Bute under more favourable circumstances. The hospitality of the Glasgow men was quite overwhelming. Mr. Dixon, Mr. Campbell, and Mr. Douglas, in their attentions to me personally, made me regret the many hard words I have spoken against Scotchmen. Mr. Summerfield, of Aberdeen, indeed had been so affected by what I had written in October last about Scotchmen that he endeavoured to convince me, over a glass of "scotch," he was an Englishman because he was born at Windsor.

During the sail, the ozone, the fresh air, and Glasgow hospitality combined, caused one or two of our delegates to be a little indistinct in their speech. It was my delight to approach friends in this condition, and get them on to a discussion concerning the pros and cons of a reserve fund. The words "actuarial basis" proved a severe trial to many towards the end of the day; indeed, the due pronunciation of the word "actuarial" is at any time a test of the condition of a man's temperature. In the evening, in company with Mr. Belcher and Mr. Sutch, I started for London by the night train. It is the chance, unarranged joys of life that are usually the sweetest, and we are all agreed that a certain little supper at Carlisle was perhaps the most enjoyable experience of the two days' outing. But then perhaps we were now a little less heavy-hearted than we were on the outward journey, or in Glasgow. We felt that we had been in a measure instrumental in keeping the Society on right

lines. A night in a saloon carriage on the Midland Railway is not an unpleasant experience. And the time passes all the pleasanter if you are imbued with a due recognition of what the Post Office expects from you in these *fin de siècle* days, and are able to take a hand at whist.

I have perhaps spoken out rather strongly on the crisis which the Society is passing through, and I have no doubt my opposition to Mr. Asher will be put down in certain quarters to the fact of my connection with the Savings Bank Department. None the less I hope that every member of the Society who reads this account will acquit me of either insincerity or personal spite. I ask them also to carefully consider the position in which the Society stands at this moment. Everything depends upon our ability to maintain a constant flow of new blood into the Society. And this flow will only continue so long as we can keep the calls on members at a figure considerably lower than the premiums which are charged for a similar payment at death in insurance offices. In other words, though we were able at Glasgow to insert the thin end of the wedge, there is abundant work left for future annual meetings to take up in the direction of securing the interests of the younger members. A full report of the Glasgow meeting is now published, and I ask my brother officers to study for themselves very carefully the singularly lucid speech of Mr. Belcher on the situation. It is true he is in the Savings Bank, and is therefore one of a very bad lot. But the instruments for good are not always selected in this world from among the elect. And I live in hope that some day the poor, much-abused Savings Bank may have at least one good deed credited to its chequered career, viz., the salvation of the United Kingdom Postal and Telegraph Service Benevolent Society.

EDWARD BENNETT.

SAVINGS BANK DEPARTMENT, G.P.O.

*The Post Office Monopoly from an Economic Point of View.**

THE literature of the discussion which arose in the newspapers during the recent contest between the Postmaster-General and the Boy Messenger Companies was enriched by a masterly article contributed to *The Times* by an anonymous correspondent under the title of "The Case for the Post Office." This paper had appeared (on March 23) before the issue of our last number, but after it had gone to press; and we were therefore compelled to wait until the present opportunity before presenting an abridgment of it to our readers.

After a preamble on the popular prejudice against the general idea of monopoly, the writer proceeds with his defence of its special embodiment in the State Post Office, pointing out that the sole right of conveying letters is not a relic of feudalism, but was deliberately assumed by the Government in the days of the Long Parliament and retained under the sanction of a reformed Parliament of the present reign.

"Nor," he continues, "is a State post and telegraph bureau 'peculiar to this country. Every civilized State provides for its members the means of communication both by letter and telegraph, and forbids private competition. It may be taken as an axiom, then, that a Government monopoly of posts and telegraphs is for the good of the community. But, if this is granted, it follows that the monopoly must be maintained. To assume a monopoly and not to enforce it is merely to encourage a spirit of lawlessness. It is easy to talk of not 'straining' the monopoly. *De minimis non curat lex*. No Postmaster-General is likely to spend his time in a microscopic examination of isolated acts which may possibly involve an infringement of his monopoly. But when such a systematic infringement is brought to his notice he must stop it. If he does not, fresh inroads will be made on the privileges entrusted to him, and no long time will elapse before the very critics who are loudest in their complaints of official interference will bitterly accuse him of unfaithful stewardship."

* Two interesting articles by the Solicitor on the history of the monopoly will be found in Vol. X. of *Blackfriars*.

Then we have a description of the gradual growth of the Boy Messenger Company. They began with only a few messengers and said that their enterprise was in the interest of the boys themselves, as much as in those of the shareholders. As the business increased a new company — the District Messengers Company — came on the scene, and proposed to employ the electric call system.

“The older company is not slow to take the hint. They also will “put up this electric apparatus for the summoning of their boys. “And there is no reason to suppose that the enterprise would “be confined to these two bodies. Other agencies are, no doubt, “ready to enter the field, if any profit is to be made. Thus the “small company employing a few boys to give them a decent means “of livelihood develops into a group of associations carrying let- “ters throughout London.

“But the Postmaster-General, who can look on unconcerned at “the delivery of a few letters by a handful of errand boys, cannot be “indifferent to the organization of letter-carrying on a grand scale “by competing companies. And when, to improve their service, the “companies propose to introduce an elaborate system of telegraphy, “the interests confided to him are still more nearly touched. In “such a case both the work of conveying letters and the work of “transmitting telegrams, which the State has deliberately assumed, “are undertaken, and undertaken systematically and on a large scale, “by private agencies. No one will assert that the representative of “the State can stand by and see the wishes of the Legislature thus “set at naught, and the revenues of which he is the guardian “impaired. Sooner or later the law must be enforced; if it is not “enforced at an early stage it is a hardship to those who have invested “their capital in the organization of private undertakings. It is the “kindest course in the interests of those who infringe the monopoly, “as well as the course most in the interests of order and good “government, to enforce the law so soon as there appears to be any “systematic and deliberate disregard of its provisions. Parliament, “which has forbidden the carriage of letters and the working of “telegraphs by private agencies, and not the Minister who gives “effect to the law, is responsible if in any point the public con- “venience suffers.

“It is urged, however, that the Postmaster-General might obtain “the advantage of the energy and elasticity of private enterprise, “while protecting the interests of the community, by allowing licensed “companies to perform some of his functions on payment of proper “royalties. But this is to press a monopoly in its most odious form. “A royalty payable for leave to carry on a business is a tax, and a “tax in restraint of trade and industry. The receipts of the Post “Office, on the contrary, are not a tax, but a return for services “rendered. The State did not assume the duty of conveying letters

“and working telegraphs in order to tax and impede the means of
“communication. On the contrary, the object was to facilitate
“intercourse between her Majesty’s subjects, to provide a better
“service of posts and telegraphs for rich and poor alike than would
“be provided by any other means. To farm out branches of the
“monopoly is inconsistent with the history and purpose of the Post
“Office. On a large scale no one would dream of defending it; on
“a small scale it is, in truth, equally indefensible, and very soon leads
“to an inferior service, and to the checking of the improvements
“which would otherwise naturally take place in methods of inter-
“course. That this is the result is not mere guesswork. The
“experiment of farming the monopoly has been tried in the case of
“the telephone. Few persons will say that it has been successful.
“It is matter of common talk that the telephone has not taken its
“proper place in England, that the service rendered by the
“companies is not so good as it should be, and that the Post Office
“ought to do the work. The telephone companies reply that they
“would do better if they had not to pay a tax to the State. This is
“only putting the complaint in another way. The State, which has
“assumed the control of telegraphy, cannot afford to see its service
“interfered with and its revenues cut down by the competition of
“telephonic communication, which is only a branch of telegraphy.
“It must protect itself in some way. It might undertake the new
“and important branch of work which the progress of science has
“made possible. If it does not, but leaves the field to private
“agencies, it can only allow them to work under restrictions and
“upon payment of a tax. Thus their energies are impaired, while
“the advantages of a State service, which was the object of the
“purchase of the telegraphs, are lost. And it is difficult to retrieve
“the error, for large vested interests have been created, and the
“State would have to pay heavily to get rid of the monster of its
“own creation.

“Similar consequences would certainly ensue from permitting the
“companies, with which the public is now sympathizing, to institute
“the electric call system and to carry letters upon payment of a
“royalty or tax. On the one hand there would inevitably be a
“competition with the State posts and telegraphs. Hitherto the work
“of the companies has been tentative. The Boy Messenger
“Company has, on its own showing, been told from the first that its
“proceedings were illegal, and though it grew tired of waiting to be
“stopped, and gradually developed its organization, it cannot be
“doubted that it has worked under restraint. The District Mes-
“senger company, with the same warning before its eyes, had walked
“warily. Give each company free way, and it would act very
“differently. Rates would be lowered, messengers multiplied, and
“every endeavour made to secure as large a custom as possible in
“the direct delivery of letters. But such an organization would
“undoubtedly affect correspondence by the post between different
“parts of Central London; and in order to prevent that result such

“conditions would probably be imposed by the State as would tend to maim and dwarf the new service. The companies would not long submit quietly. They would point out how much better they could do the work, if the Postmaster-General would only let them alone, and, as in the case of the telephone, the public would be made to feel that they were not reaping the full benefit of modern inventiveness.

“The fact is, every attempt to farm out part of the work which the Postmaster-General exists to do must lead to irritating distinctions which have no good ground, except the protection of that field of work which he still retains. Why should not a telephonic message be written down and delivered in writing? The only reason is that it would then be a telegram, and the telephone companies would be carrying telegrams and directly competing with the Post Office. Why should not the companies now so anxious to put up call-boxes, if permitted to do so, put up telephones instead? But if they put up telephones and deliver the messages sent over them they would be carrying telegrams. Or, again, why, if they are allowed to carry individual letters, should they not carry by the same messenger several letters for different persons to addresses in the same quarter of the town? But if they are allowed to do this they become simply postmen, and are directly competing with the ordinary post. In the hands of the Postmaster-General any description of postal and telegraphic service may be combined with any other, and the public will obtain the full benefit both of the great organization of the Post Office and of every invention to facilitate communication to which the fertile mind of the time gives birth. In the hands of private companies working under the permission of the Post Office and paying a royalty or tax this can never take place. Hence, in the long run, whatever may appear to be the case at the outset, the public, so long as there is a monopoly, must be best served by the performance by the State itself of the work which it has undertaken. Any attempt to combine the State monopoly with restricted and fettered private enterprise will inevitably be a more or less conspicuous failure.”

The writer concludes by answering the objection, that outside competition is necessary to keep a State bureau up to its work. Public opinion, he maintains, which is always freely expressed about the Post Office, is quite sufficient, and he instances the railway companies, which are fairly satisfactory monopolies, not even subject in any appreciable degree to outside criticism, in proof of his contention.

As might have been expected, this brilliant defence of the Post Office was not long left unassailed; and on the following day, March 24, *The Times* published a letter from Mr. Alfred Marshall, the well-known Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge. Professor

Marshall, after complimenting his adversary on his "semi-official apology" to which he promises "a permanent place in economic history," proceeds at once to question the "axiom that a Government monopoly of posts and telegraphs is for the good of the community," the assumption of which, he declares, begs the whole question. He concedes that postal business suffers less than almost any other from being under a Government monopoly, owing to its amenableness to public criticism; he further admits the advantages of "production on a large scale" to be conspicuous in Post Office business; but he maintains that the further claim of the State to a monopoly of that business has been acquiesced in *per incuriam* rather than admitted as the result of careful scientific inquiry. And if, after all, the State can be undersold by private companies, it is evident that it is not for the benefit of the people that it should have a monopoly. We append extracts from Professor Marshall's letter.

"It is idle to lay stress on the need of keeping up the Post Office revenue. For that part of the revenue which is reaped by the State as a result of its possessing the economies of production on a large scale would not be appreciably affected by the loss of its monopoly; and this is the only part of the revenue which is capable of being defended for a moment on economic grounds. It is probable that that part of the Post Office revenue which depends on its having a monopoly is not very great; that so far as it goes it is very nearly the worst form of tax ever invented; and that it probably takes at least ten times as much out of the pockets of the people in proportion to the net receipts of the State as any other tax that is now levied in this country.....

"I submit that where private enterprise has a fair field the inventions of public departments make no show at all; and that where they make any show at all it is only because the privileges of public departments have enabled them to make it not worth while for private enterprise to try expensive experiments. It is in its bearing on this last point that the recent action of the Post Office has its chief significance for me.....

"The character of Post Office business is such that we might expect *a priori* that there, at least, Socialism would not perceptibly tend towards lethargy. But experience has shown otherwise. In most other kinds of business the producer anticipates the wants of the consumer, and invents new ways of satisfying them. In postal affairs alone the consumer has to clamour long before he gets the most simple and obvious reforms; and, indeed, in spite of his special facilities for clamouring, on which the apologist of the Post Office justly insists, he often does not get them at all. Private enterprise makes few improvements in business neighbouring on that of the Post Office, because the Post Office, slothful in many

“directions, is vigorous only in this—that when private persons are inclined to invest their time and capital in the attempt to think out new ideas for the public benefit, the Post Office warns them to desist, and hinders them; and, if they still persist, at last appropriates to itself one part of their idea by offering to the public a poor substitute, while the greater part is lost to the world. The Post Office gains little, while the inventors are robbed; the germs of contrivances that might ultimately have revolutionised our means of communication are destroyed; and we secure, so far as the influence of the Post Office reaches, most of the evils of Socialism with but few of its benefits.”

A rejoinder appeared in *The Times* of March 30 from the writer of the original article, who disclaims the semi-official capacity attributed to him. With considerable shrewdness and some wit he twits the Professor and other correspondents who had taken part in the fray with grumbling at the Post Office monopoly for grumbling's sake. Well knowing that the monopoly could not be given up, they felt that they incurred no serious responsibility in attacking it. Professor Marshall, indeed, is understood to contend that the work of the Post Office would be better done if left to private enterprise; but this is an opinion which cannot be practically tested until, in some part of the civilised world, such an experiment has been tried. The discussion, therefore, leaves this point, to turn on the claim of the State to a monopoly of Post Office work. As for its scientific basis, “a fair array of authority might probably be cited in defence of the monopoly.” But the deliberate opinion of the community in this and other civilised States is surely authority enough. Wherever there is a Post Office it is a State Post Office, and a State monopoly. Nor can the State carry on the work without securing the sole right to do so.

“The telegraph monopoly was conferred under circumstances which give its existence peculiar value in this connection. When Parliament determined that the State should buy the telegraphs, it did not at first authorise a monopoly. The Act of 1868, which sanctioned the purchase, conferred no monopoly. But further consideration showed that, unless the transaction was to amount to a handsome present to the telegraph companies and nothing more, they must be interdicted from competing with the State. And the reason is not far to seek. Both in the case of postal and telegraphic work, if the State, bound to give a complete service, were at the same time merely one of several competitors for public custom, private companies would compete for the more profitable share of the business, while the provision of posts and telegraphs for outlying places, where custom was small, would be left to the State.”

The reason why the State can be undersold is not Professor Marshall's reason—lack of enterprise, but simply that it is bound to do the whole work at equal rates, though some of it is done at a loss, whereas the private companies can pick and choose the profitable parts of the undertaking.

“So long as a community requires that the means of correspondence should be supplied throughout the country on something like equal terms—so long as it requires whole sections of business to be transacted at a loss—it must undertake the work itself, and it must prohibit competition. If it takes the first step, but not the second, the State bureau will be undersold and deprived of business, where business pays, while it will be left in the undisturbed enjoyment of unremunerative work. It will be undersold, not (as Professor Marshall suggests) because the State cannot perform its work so well as private agencies, or because its servants lack enterprise, but because its competitors can pick and choose, while the State department is bound to work at a loss as well as at a profit. If competitors were forced to cover the whole ground covered by the State, and to observe a similar uniformity of treatment, the State might well allow competition. But where would competitors be found? Professor Marshall seems to have overlooked these considerations when he offers the opinion that ‘that part of the Post Office revenue which depends on its having a monopoly is not very great.’ The probability is that, in the absence of a monopoly, the Post Office could not be conducted except at a grievous loss. Whether a tax on correspondence is a bad tax, as Professor Marshall avers, is a question on which there is something to be said, but which it is scarcely worth while to discuss. The Post Office exists not to tax, but to facilitate correspondence, and it possesses a monopoly only that it may do its work efficiently and without loss to the State.”

Of the rest of the letter, the greater part is devoted to proving that, under the spur of public opinion, the State Post Office has been the very reverse of unenterprising. According to the champion of the Post Office, even Sir Rowland Hill's great reform would have had little chance of acceptance at the hands of a private company. The Post Office, it is true, more often adopts than initiates reforms, but it is, at any rate, less conservative than the railway companies. Then we have a brief outline of the progress made in the working of the posts and telegraphs during the past 30 years, which makes an imposing array in print. Next comes a protest against the idea that the British Post Office is behind those of other countries; or that our telegraphs are inferior to those controlled by American companies. So far is this from being the case that the Postmaster-General is paying £2,000 a year to an

American inventor for the use of a patent, which is, in his own country, still neglected.

The concluding paragraphs are interesting from the fact that it denounces the license system, which, curiously enough, about this very date was adopted by the Postmaster-General as the basis of a compromise with the messenger companies, as the very worst of the possible courses open to the State.

"It may be said that the telephone is more widely used in America. But this tells, not against the State monopoly, but against farming it out. If the Government of the day had, in 1882, bought up the telephone patents instead of granting licenses to their owners to work telephones, a very different story would now be told. The system of authorizing private persons to develop an invention under restrictions imposed by the State for the protection of its monopoly is probably the worst system that can be devised. The licensee is fettered in his work; the State stands aside and does nothing. So it would be if the Postmaster-General were unhappily to adopt the advice now so freely tendered to him, and to license the messenger companies to introduce the electric-call system coupled with the delivery of letters. Unfettered competition cannot be allowed because it is competition affecting only the profitable branches of Post Office work—short-distance letters and telegrams. But if the companies are put to work under licences containing such conditions and provisions as are necessary to keep the competition within bounds, and are made to pay a royalty on their receipts, then, in truth, private enterprise is taxed and impeded, and the monopoly works injury rather than benefit to the community."

In a subsequent letter Professor Marshall explains his position, which had been misunderstood by his antagonist. So far from maintaining that postal business would be better done if left to private enterprise, the Professor declares that, "to make any suggestion of the kind would not be the act of a sane person." But this is not all. Mr. Marshall not only thinks that a State Post Office is an absolute necessity, but admits that it ought to have a virtual monopoly of many kinds of postal business. Indeed his objection to the monopoly at all seems to be more academic than practical. Not improbably more harm than good would come of an attempt to retrace our steps in this matter, and he is "not even prepared to say straight off, that the legal monopoly could be unconditionally abolished." Wherefore the Professor abandons the discussion of the theoretic question, and tries to find a *modus vivendi* for the Post Office and the Companies. His idea is that the law should be altered so as to free the Postmaster-General from the necessity of

prosecuting all infringers of his solitary domain. Before a person can be prohibited from carrying letters or delivering telegrams, it must be proved to the satisfaction of a new Court to be created specially, *ad hoc*, that he is seriously injuring the Post Office without conferring any commensurate advantage on the public. If this Court should find that private enterprise had originated an important way of serving the public which, however, it would be for the interest of the nation that the Post Office should carry out, it might fix equitable terms at which the Post Office might buy out the newer enterprise, thereby encouraging inventors without interfering with the monopoly.

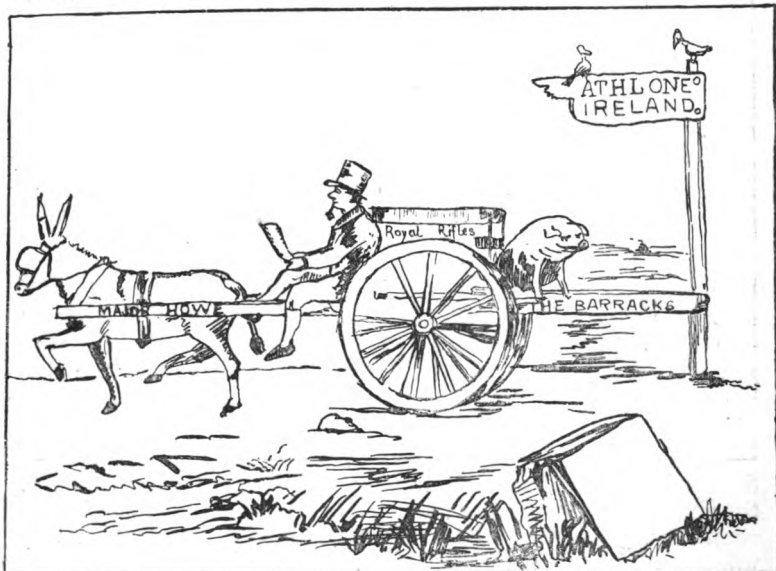
Having thus provided for allowing people to interfere with the monopoly as long as they don't injure it, and for pulling them up when they do without injuring them, Mr. Marshall proceeds to advocate wholesale interferences with the most profitable parts of the monopoly. Quietly ignoring his adversary's contention that companies would pick and choose the most profitable fields, leaving the unprofitable to the Department, he proceeds to advocate the establishment in large towns of private posts, charging one half-penny each for delivering letters within a mile, and larger sums for longer distances. He would then set the Post Office to work to organise rival posts to cut out the companies. Here, of course, he is entering on an entirely new field, and is utterly ignoring the system of uniform rates, independent of distance, which was one of the great features of Rowland Hill's system, and which is still universally regarded as a principle of the first importance. Taken altogether, we cannot congratulate the Professor on his second letter, and it must not for one moment be concluded that, because it was not answered, it was unanswerable.

P. Q.

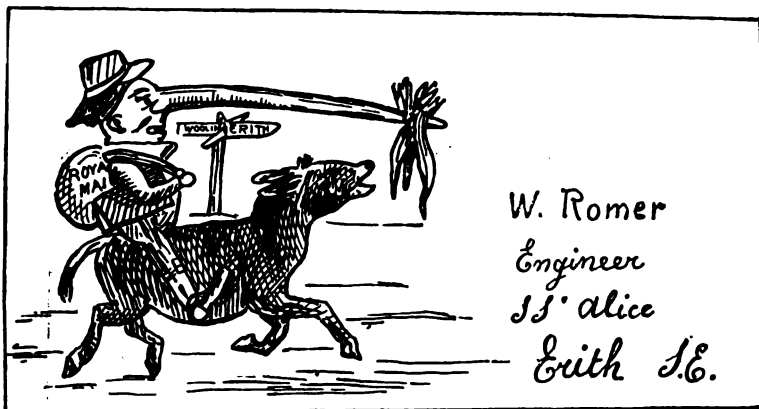
Humours of the Post Office.



NDER the above title a number of curious and amusing addresses, originally inscribed on the face of letters transmitted through the Post Office, and copied *en route* into the Post Office scrap books, are reproduced in the



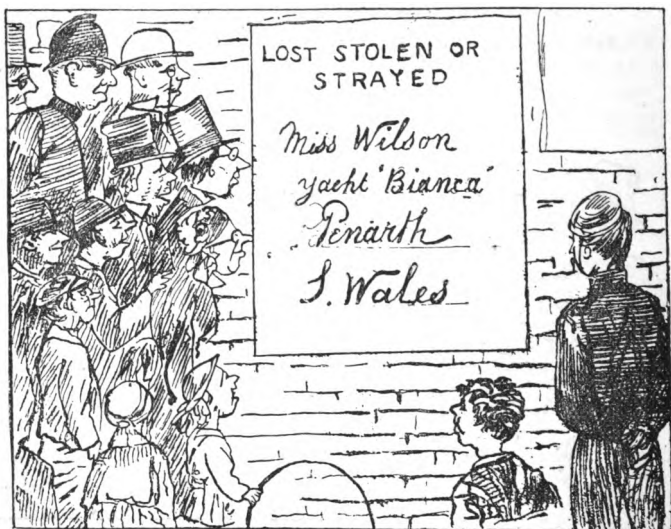
May and June issues of the *Strand Magazine*. Through the kindness of the editor, Mr. George Newnes, M.P., we are enabled to present a few of these to our readers. We must observe *en passant* that one of the statements made in the article which accompanies



the engravings is not strictly accurate. The pictures do not all appear "for the first time in any publication;" some of them have been previously given to the public in that very interesting volume *The Royal Mail*, by Mr. J. W. Hyde. As for the interpretation of



the picture-puzzles included in these pages we prefer to leave it to the ingenuity of our readers, who, for further elucidation and other specimens, may be referred to the *Strand Magazine*, wherein they will find the subject treated at length.



Uncle George.

“Cum sapimus patruos, tunc, tunc ignoscite.”

“You can’t make a head and brains out of a brass knob with nothing in it : you couldn’t do it when your Uncle George was living, much less when he’s dead.”

MR. F.’s AUNT.



IN the days when cave-hyenas gnawed palæolithic men,
Germs of human brains were scarcely differentiated
then.

In the 'prentice-years of brass work, in the time of Tubal Cain,
Nature lightly made a product passing very well for brain.

Friar Bungay's brazen head, the triumph of the Middle Age,
Had as many brains, most likely, as a mediæval sage.

So a head and brains, constructed simply of a knob of brass,
Up to Uncle George's days were amply good enough to pass.

Then, however, evolution—so at least I hear it said—
Altogether modified the convolutions in one's head.

So that Nature, in her smithy, who of brass has *quantum suff.*,
Finds that in the days of science simple brass is not enough.

Thus it is she goes a-wailing, toiling at her Titan forge,
Looking backward to the time before the days of Uncle George.



After Office Hours.

The Post Office and Literature.

IN the early part of the year, about the time of an unfortunate incident in the history of my Department, a friend of mine was filling up some enforced leisure which had been granted to him by skating on the Serpentine. He overheard the following conversation between two London roughs. "What cheer, oh ! Bill." "Hoi, sonny, avin a skite?" "What ! left the old man?" "Yus, but I've got a noo job on to-morrer ; I'm a goin to hoffer myself as a Post Horfice Savins Bank clerk." "Gawd, Bill, 'as it come to that?" And the other day, looking through an old volume of *Punch*, I came across the following depreciatory reference to the Post Office, under the heading of "Gentle Paternal Satire." "Irate parent—'O, yer don't want to go into business, don't yer? O, yer want to be a clerk in the Post Horfice, do yer? Post Horfice, indeed ! Why, all you're fit for is to stand outside with your tongue hout for people to wet their stamps against.'" It is unfortunately true that we are misunderstood by the public, and I am afraid that sometimes this is due to our own actions.

But there are Post Office Clerks *and* Post Office Clerks. Some are gaining a name outside their own department, and we are proud of them. I am glad to see that Mr. Aitken, of the Secretary's Office, the author of the "Life of Steele," has another work almost ready, viz., the "Life of Dr. Arbuthnot." He has been successful in discovering another neglected corner of English literature ; indeed, it is surprising that he, whom Dr. Johnson called "the first man among the eminent writers in Queen Anne's time," should have hitherto been so disregarded by students in want of an inspiration. Another Post Office man, Mr. H. A. Sherburn, of the Savings Bank Department, is the author of "Hubby," a play running at the Shaftesbury Theatre, and of "A Night in Town," which was tried at a *matinée* at the Strand Theatre a few weeks ago.

I want in every number of the Magazine to call special attention to any Post Office men or women who are distinguishing themselves in literature, art, music, or the drama, and I ask for the co-operation of my brother officers in my efforts to make such notices complete. The ladies of the Postal Order Branch have sent me the second issue of a manuscript magazine, which they are bringing out once a quarter. My friend, the editress, asks me to be merciful in what I say about it : she says she is afraid of my inveterate habit of making fun of everything with which I come into contact. I am not going to make fun of "The Boomerang." On the contrary, I do not think it is at all an unpromising production ; much of it shows that there

are ladies in the ranks of the Postal Order Branch who think for themselves, and who have distinct literary gifts. I wish them every success: I am quite sure they are working on right lines. One paragraph in an admirable editorial written by the editress I thought highly to be commended. Here it is. "As our space is limited, and it is not intended to raise interminable discussions on controversial subjects, henceforth no notice will be taken of passing events, unless of extraordinary importance." Happy Boomerang! Happy fair authoresses of the Postal Order Branch! Rome may be burning; your brother and sister officers in other departments may have all struck work; London itself may be in flames; but you, like Teufelsdröckh, "are above it all;" you are "alone with the stars." I should mention that in aid of this Magazine a concert was held at Anderton's Hotel some weeks back. An account of it appears on another page of *St. Martin's-le-Grand*. I was present on the occasion, and have to thank Miss Temple and Miss Westbrook for a very pleasant evening.

Some Short Stories.

I have lately been reading three volumes of short stories, entitled respectively, *A Group of Noble Dames*, by Thomas Hardy, *Noughts and Crosses*, by "Q," and *A New England Nun and other stories*, by Mary E. Wilkins. For holiday reading the short story is specially adapted, and I cannot do better than advise any holiday folk who want to put a readable volume into their portmanteaux before starting for the seaside or the Alps, to take one or other of the books I have mentioned. It is no slight on the other two volumes when I say that if I were limited in my choice I should select Miss Wilkins' collection. Mr. Hardy's stories are powerful, full of tragedy and knowledge of character, but they are studies in which sorrow and pain prevail, while his point of view is tinged with pessimism. Moreover, he calls a spade a spade. "Q" is the best short story-teller we have in this country; he can put a three volume novel into a few pages, and in doing so never uses a superfluous word. Every line tells, and the vividness with which he can lay bare a village tragedy or romance is sufficient to impress us with the fact that he possesses the hand of a master of the craft. I have seldom read anything more touching than "The Gifts of Feodor Himkoff." But even "Q" will not be such good holiday reading as Miss Wilkins. In the first place she is American, and there is therefore a certain amount of freshness in her subject-matter. Then she possesses in greater proportion than either Mr. Hardy or "Q" that delicate kind of humour which, in its effect, sometimes hesitates between a smile and a tear. There is hardly one of her stories which does not produce the proverbial lump in the throat, but the smile gets the upper hand in the end. She has a keen appreciation of that kind of humour which is best described in Charles Lamb's words as "the pun at the funeral." To give one instance, there is

something very sad and yet delightfully human about "A Village Singer." Candace, who has taken the leading part in the village choir for years, has been superseded by Alma, a younger and more powerful singer. Candace, by this treatment, becomes a kind of Hedda Gabler; she rages and storms and does her best to depreciate her rival's talents. She tries to sing her down, to injure her in the eyes of others, until her enfeebled body is exhausted with the unusual manifestation of passion, and she finds herself on a sick bed, in what seems to her the presence of death. The poor fevered soul becomes more tranquil; the reaction sets in, and she wishes to repair the injury she has committed. She will even ask Alma to come and sing to her.

"'What do you want me to sing?' Alma asked, in a trembling voice.

"'Jesus, lover of my soul.'

"Alma, standing there beside Wilson, began to sing. At first she could hardly control her voice; then she sang sweetly and clearly. Candace lay and listened. Her face had a holy and radiant expression. When Alma stopped singing it did not disappear, but she looked up and spoke, and it was like a secondary glimpse of the old shape of a forest-tree through the smoke and flame of the transfiguring fire the instant before it falls.

"'You flatted a little on——soul,' said Candace."

That is the end of the story, and to me at any rate a thing of this kind is a joy for ever. Not less delightful is the story "Amanda and Love." To a man who has read widely, and to whom, much as he may love them, the standard novels of our literature have lost the freshness which only accompanies a first reading, a book like that of Miss Wilkins is something to hug to one's breast. She is always delightful; she is never commonplace, and she possesses the rarest gift of womanhood—a sense of the ridiculous. Take "A New England Nun" away with you on your holiday, and you will come back better tempered and with a healthier love of your own kind. The publishers are James R. Osgood, McIlwaine & Co., 45, Albemarle Street, W.

THE EDITOR.

St. Martin's Letter-Bag.

Our Censor.

THERE is a good deal of curious etiquette about the dealings of members of parliament with current questions. If a member takes up a matter, however inefficiently, other members hold aloof from it and give him the whole ground to himself. Mr. Henniker-Heaton now assumes to occupy the Post Office Reform platform, and he gets very angry indeed if any other member dares to intrude on his domain as he considers it. For our own part we much regret that some man of ability, knowledge, and perseverance, does not fling etiquette to the winds and take the place which Mr. Henniker-Heaton in vain tries to fill. We of course recognise the necessity under which a member of parliament lies to make a name for himself somehow. A man of family connections and strong local influence can no doubt afford to do without brains, but those who are not blessed with these advantages must rely upon "self-help." If they have abilities and know how to use them they become famous; if their abilities are poor they try to become notorious.

If Canterbury likes to put up with Mr. Henniker-Heaton it is her own affair; but what has our great Department done that this Old Man of the Sea should sit on us also? There are many things he might have taken up. There is, for instance, the great Patent Medicine question, which has had no exponent in parliament since Mr. Warton departed; then there is the Pope, whom no one troubles much about since Mr. Newdegate died. He might have carved for himself a name out of the parish beadle, or the town pump, or the suicide of a duke, or in a thousand other ways eminently suited to his capacities and acquirements. The Post Office is quite alive to the beneficial effect of criticism, but then it has a right to expect that that criticism should be intelligent and consistent. Now nothing has been more remarkable in the deliverances of our present self-constituted Censor than their strange inequality. Most of his earlier letters and articles were fairly acute, logical, and to the point, but that was some time ago; and, as we pointed out in our last issue, his latest productions have been remarkable only for their personalities, their scrappiness, and their utter failure to grasp facts. How is this to be accounted for? Some time ago the public attention was called to sculptors' ghosts. Is it possible that members of parliament ever have ghosts? Perish the thought! But, however that may be, our Censor is now merely flabby and vituperative, like the Patriarch Casby when Mr. Pancks had cut off his locks and his hat-brim.

Signs are not wanting that other people are finding Mr. Henniker-Heaton out. If there was one proposal more than another which was, until recently, his private property, it was ocean penny postage. And yet the latest addition to the literature on the subject—a pamphlet put forward by the authority of the Imperial Federation League—is written, not by our special Censor, but by Mr. R. J. Beadon! To appreciate the full force of this, it should be remembered that Mr. Henniker-Heaton is (or was until recently) a prominent member of the League, and yet Mr. Beadon does not sit at Mr. Henniker-Heaton's feet as one would have expected. Mr. Beadon, in fact, seems to have no more awe of Mr. Henniker-Heaton than the Australians have—for, like other prophets (true and false), his abilities are not very highly esteemed in his own country. A curious revelation of his habit of mind is furnished by a letter which he addressed to *The Times* on the 9th April last. In it he proposed the establishment of an Agricultural Parcel Post, and then went on to say, "In order to give practical effect to this suggestion, I beg to say that I do not wish to hear from people who have long thought of or advocated the idea and believe it impossible to carry out, but I ask ladies and gentlemen in the country, and fellow members, to write to me expressing their willingness to form a deputation to wait on the Postmaster-General." This is beautiful! He is dimly conscious that there are many people who think that to multiply the number of different rates of postage is bad in principle, and that in practice it would be impossible to charge more for the carriage of a pound of potatoes than for a pound of tea. He recognises that people may long have pondered over this proposal, and may have rejected it in favour perhaps of a reduction of the parcel post rate for both tea and potatoes alike. But he does not want to hear from people who think; he wants to hear from persons in the country who read his letters and at once rush to the conclusion that it would be a splendid thing to be able to send flowers cheaply, persons who have no thought for the difficulties of the proposal, and who look to nothing but the little object on which they have for the time set their minds.

Very Disinterested.

A NEW publication called *Pearson's Weekly* is our only journalistic assailant this quarter. The issue of the 13th June contains an article on our Censor. He is the most charming man in the House, it seems, and the Postmaster-General even has in private life a warm affection for him. He has an "engaging personality," and no one living has such a knowledge of the history, geography, and resources of Australia. The writer then goes on to give the "elect of Canterbury" the credit of every improvement effected in the Post Office during the past ten years. Then all the old grievances are trotted out. The silly blunder about the cost of post-cards as compared with stamps, which we exposed in our last issue, again

does duty, and then we are told that "for gross stupidity and dunderheaded officialism there is no department in the public service to compare with St. Martin's-le-Grand."

Of course the author has an object in view in all this. An Act of Parliament provides, *inter alia*, that in order to obtain the benefit of the newspaper privilege a publication must consist "wholly or in great part of news." This definition is held not to include *Pearson's Weekly*, which cannot be said to contain any news at all. So Mr. Pearson has sent a circular to all newspaper proprietors to invite them to join him in a deputation to the Postmaster-General on the subject, but it would seem that those who have the privilege already are by no means anxious that Mr. Pearson should share it with them. The proposal which he sets forth in his circular is, that "all periodicals issued at intervals of at least (he means apparently "at most") three months should be carried at the newspaper rates." Of course, this merely shifts the ground. Now the difficulty is to define a newspaper; then the difficulty would be to define a periodical. Messrs. Cassell are issuing Sir John Lubbock's *Hundred Books* at less intervals than three months. Should they pass as newspapers? If not, how draw the line, and why should it be drawn in favour of Mr. Pearson's paper.

Another point which is worthy of the attention of fair-minded people is this: Why abuse the Post Office for carrying out the law? If it needs altering, Parliament should be applied to.

Mr. Henniker Heaton on the Telegraph Department.

MR. Henniker Heaton's knowledge of the Telegraph Department, if not extensive, is certainly peculiar. His utterances on this subject have almost as good a title as some of Lord Grimthorpe's utterances on other subjects to be placed under glass cases and exhibited in a museum of curiosities. Did he not say in his article in the *Contemporary Review* that "upstairs" is counted as one word and "downstairs" as two? How useful this discovery was to the writers of London letters for the provincial press! How smartly and humorously they criticized the anomaly! Certain evening newspapers of course rejoiced exceedingly over it. "How very absurd of the Post Office," they said, "to be sure!" When Mr. Henniker Heaton repeated the statement in Parliament, Homeric laughter rippled along the sparsely-occupied benches; and once more the joke went the round of the provincial press. It is not for us to say how the expressions in question ought to be counted. A case might even be made out for treating "downstairs" as one word and "upstairs" as two or three, on the principle that it is at least twice as difficult to kick a man upstairs as down. But Vero is a better horse than Ben Trovato, and in discharge of our function as chroniclers of hard facts it is our painful duty to say that "upstairs" and "downstairs" are counted in the Telegraph Department as one word each. Now by what process, we wonder, did

Mr. Henniker Heaton arrive at his discovery that "downstairs" was counted as two?

Mr. Henniker Heaton makes a great point of the charges for compound words, but he says nothing of the real difficulty, which is the anomalies of the English language. When the charge for telegrams was fixed at $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a word, the elasticity of that language was very forcibly brought home to the Post Office. People began to put all sorts of unusual combinations of words into their telegrams, and wanted to count them as one word each. First they said that all names of post towns should be counted as one word each, because if people lived in a town which had several words in its name it was not their fault. This was allowed, and consequently such combinations as "Moreton-in-the-Marsh" were admitted as single words. The privilege was extended to the names of all post towns, but not to the names of sub-districts within those towns, such as Hampton Wick, or Charing Cross. But when a concession of this kind is made, an apparent anomaly is at once established. Some one is sure to say, "If you allow 'Moreton-in-the-Marsh' to pass as one word, why count 'fourpence in the pound' as four?" The next step was to claim that every name of a telegraph office should be counted as one word. This would bring in such expressions as "369, Strand, London, W.C.," and had it been allowed some one would soon have discovered another anomaly. He would surely have said, "If you allow '369, Strand, London, W.C.,' to pass as one word, why count '15 strand iron wire' as four?" And so the game goes on. Mr. Henniker Heaton contends that "all compound words or names" should be counted as single words. We think he will find that all *bonâ fide* compound words are so counted. He would no doubt be glad to see "never-to-be-forgotten," "sincerely-to-be-deprecated," and such like constellations included in the list. The obvious common-sense view is that the Post Office is bound to draw the line somewhere and stick to it. Evidently what Mr. Henniker Heaton should aim at reforming is not the counting of the Post Office but the anomalies of the English language and of town and street nomenclature.

This brings us to another of Mr. Henniker Heaton's grievances. He says: "A person can telegraph 100 words from Germany to this country for 14s. 8d.; whereas he must pay 16s. 8d. for telegraphing 100 words to Germany." Is it possible that he can have overlooked the fact that the charge for telegrams between England and Germany is not a charge per 100 words but per word. Both in England and in Germany the rate per word would have been 20 centimes if there had been coins of that value in the currencies of those countries. As it is, Germany collects her nearest equivalent, which is 15 pfennige; and England hers, which is twopence. Now 15 pfennige is rather less than 20 centimes; and at first sight it might be supposed that Germany made an "unfair" profit here. But although Germany only collects 15 pfennige, *she is assumed to have collected 20 centimes* when she settles her accounts with this country. Is there

then any grievance? If so, it would seem that Mr. Henniker Heaton has again been extracting the wrong patient's tooth. What he should aim at reforming is not the charge made by the Post Office, but the copper coinage of England and Germany. Unless he can do that, we fear his 'International Postage Stamp' must be relegated with some of his other inventions to the limbo of the dim and distant future.

Perhaps the most delightful of all Mr. Henniker Heaton's utterances is the following paragraph, which shall be given in full:—"WASTE PAPER ACCOUNT.—While the Telegraph Department is credited to the extent of £2,000 a year for the sale of waste paper, nothing at all is credited to the General Post Office for its waste paper, which is treated as a perquisite of the Stationery Office." We feel some little reluctance in expounding the beauties of this gem, because we fear we may be preventing its future reappearance, and we would fain see it arise, time after time, like a Phoenix from its own ashes. The facts are these. The proceeds of all waste paper, whether postal or telegraph, go to the Stationery Office. Whatever sum is made by the sale of waste paper is paid into the Treasury. Nothing is paid to the Telegraph Department. All payments received by that Department go to the Treasury. Different Government Departments do not pay money to each other, because it must all eventually go into the Treasury. Why should accounts be needlessly multiplied? But some years ago somebody asked that a fancy balance sheet of the Telegraph Department might be drawn up, and this appears to be the account in which Mr. Henniker Heaton finds the sum of £2,000 credited to the Telegraph Department. There is no similar account for the Post Office. If there were, the Post Office would no doubt be credited for its waste paper in like manner. But the idea of waste paper being "treated as a perquisite of the Stationery Office" reveals so much depth of practical insight on Mr. Henniker Heaton's part, and is in itself so fascinating, that, as we have already said, we feel no little reluctance in disturbing it.

Thackeray and the Post Office.

WE are indebted to Mr. G. A. Aitken for the following paragraph. "Some letters that were sold last April at Messrs. Sotheby's rooms, throw light on an unknown or forgotten episode in Thackeray's life. Between the appearance of the last number of *Vanity Fair*, in July, 1848, and the first number of *The History of Pendennis*, in November of the same year, Thackeray made some effort to obtain the position of Assistant Secretary at the Post Office. Mr. James Campbell, formerly Chief Clerk, had been Assistant Secretary for some four years, and in the summer of 1848 he seems to have been ill, and contemplating retirement. At this stage Thackeray wrote to Lady Blessington, in a letter without date—'Now comes the real and important part of this letter. *There will*

be a place vacant in the *Post Office* soon, that of Assistant Secretary, at present held by Mr. James Campbell. What a place for a man of letters! I think if Lord Clanricarde would give it to me, I would satisfy my employers, and that my profession would be pleased by hearing of the appointment of one of us. I wonder might I write to him, or is there any kind person who would advocate my cause?' "

"The end came for Mr. Campbell before he left the service. He died on the 21st of September, 1848, and his place was at once filled by the promotion of Mr. John Tilley, afterwards Secretary of the *Post Office*, and now Sir John Tilley, K.C.B. Thackeray learned that his attempt had been made in vain about a week after Mr. Campbell's death, and on the 1st of October he told Lady Blessington, 'Fate has decided against us, and we are not to have the pie. Another man has got it and deserves it too. But what matters? Can't I make a pie of my own? Let me begin Pendennis this instant and cram it with beef, pigeons, hard-boiled eggs, and the most delicious pepper and spice.'

"Sir John Tilley had married a daughter of Mr. Thomas Anthony Trollope, and Anthony Trollope, the novelist, was at this time himself in the service of the *Post Office*. It is interesting to find that the department narrowly missed the honour of having on its staff a writer greater than any of the not inconsiderable number of men of letters who have served it."

Two Octogenarians.

MR. J. G. UREN writes:—Miss Elizabeth Trembath, Sub-Postmistress of Mousehole, the old lady to whom I referred in my *Recollections*,* and who undoubtedly was the original of Trollope's Mrs. Crump, has just crossed the great divide at the ripe age of 87. Miss Trembath entered the Service in 1845, and at the time of Mr. Trollope's visit in 1850 had not been saturated with that morbid veneration for the person of a *Post Office* Surveyor which, forty years ago, raised him to the position of a demi-god. So when Mr. Trollope began to bluster in true Trollopiian style, Betsy gave him a piece of her mind. "Good woman am I? Report me, wusta? Thees't better report my tuppence farden a day." Miss Trembath was a worthy representative of a class, now, unhappily, getting rarer and rarer, who never allowed servility to outrun independence, and to the last she gave a Roland for an Oliver to any one who had the temerity to engage in a wordy warfare with her. A member of the Society of Friends, she wore the dress, and had the manners of that austere and now rapidly vanishing sect, though she did not "thee" and "thou" in the orthodox fashion. One of her red letter days was when she received a visit from the late John Bright. The Foxes, Tregelles', Backhouses' and other leading Quakers were also very kind to her. Mousehole will miss the familiar form of the old Post-

* *Blackfriars Magazine*, October, 1889.

mistress, and though her successor may, and doubtless will, conform more to modern ideas, and not be quite so sharp of tongue, or ready with repartee as Betsy, the Post Office will never have a more conscientious and upright servant.

Another character who not long passed away was John Graham, Sub-Postmaster of Woodburn, Carrickfergus, and Rural Postman from Woodburn to The Commons. He continued to perform his duty until within a day or two of his death. He was a great reader, and had a turn for versification. In the last volume of *Blackfriars*, p. 245, will be found a metrical reply which he addressed to the Surveyor in regard to certain trifling irregularities discovered on survey. Here is an application which he made to the Postmistress of Carrickfergus for an overcoat:—

“ I hear great-coats you're giving out,
If so, please send me a surtout,
As I require as much its aid
As any carrier in the trade.
So should my age give prior claim,
To head the list you'll place my name,
As I up to the hills must wend
Where storms and heavy rains descend ;
And sure, to keep the letters dry,
A coat to me you should supply ;
For parcels sometimes frail and tender,
A coat would prove a sure defender ;
And more, my days it might prolong,
If it were roomy, warm, and strong.
Thus I address you, true and fervent,
While I remain your humble servant.”

Stamps and Sliterature.

THE number of articles to be obtained by putting a penny in a slot is increasing day by day. The latest idea—to which the name “ sliterature ” has been applied—is to provide railway travellers with books to read from one of these machines, and experiments are now being made with a view of ascertaining whether postage stamps can be supplied in this way. The Stamp Distribution Syndicate has been allowed to affix its automatic machines to certain pillar boxes in London, with a view of testing the plan. You drop a penny into the slot ; then you pull out a handle, and if you afterwards push it back *slowly* you obtain a little pocket-book in an envelope with a postage stamp inside. If you push the knob back fast you will obtain nothing, and will probably throw the machine out of gear. That there is at present constant danger of this, is shown by the fact that an attendant stands by each machine to instruct customers and, when necessary, help the machine to perform its duty. So the system is by no means perfect at present, although no doubt improvements will be made by-and-by. There is of course nothing new in the automatic sale of stamps. Machines for the sale of stamped envelopes and post cards have been in use at our

railway stations for years; but they have never been extensively patronized, because people will not pay one penny for a post card or twopence for an envelope, stamp, and sheet of paper. The great feature of the present plan is, that the advertisements are to pay the expenses, and the public pays only one penny for a stamp, an envelope, and a little pocket-book, the leaves of which may, on an emergency, be used as writing paper.

Vires Acquirit Eundo.

IN November, 1888, a Mrs. Campbell started a Snowball Collection to aid the Bishop of Bedford in founding a Home for Destitute Women in Whitechapel. The system adopted will best be made clear by the following extract from the form of letter used:—

"Your help is earnestly requested on behalf of this good cause in the following manner:—Firstly, write two copies of this letter without delay, putting your name and address at the end of each, and the next number to mine on both copies until the number 14 is reached. Send your letters to two friends, so that the chain may not be broken. Secondly, send this letter to Mrs. Campbell, Brook Villa, Bedford, with 3d. in stamps enclosed. If unable to do this, return this letter to the address given below, as that is the only way to know where the chain is broken. Pray do not break it."

If these instructions had been followed out, about £400 would have been collected, and the collection would have ceased; but early in its career some ingenuous lady, who knew that three times fourteen made forty-two, but whose studies in mathematics had not carried her as far as geometrical progression, changed the "14" to "140;" while later on it was actually changed to "1,400," and still later to "14,000." The appalling nature of the consequences may be judged by the fact that with the first alteration the sum proposed to be collected would be a trifle of a few trillions of quadrillions of pounds—a sum which it would take forty-three figures to express, while the imagination utterly fails to grasp the result which would have been achieved had the second or the last alteration been faithfully followed. The actual results, however, were sufficiently formidable. The name of the house got corrupted from "Brook" to "Rook," "Rock," and "Bronté," while thousands of letters were addressed to Bradford and Brighton instead of Bedford. Mrs. Campbell left Bedford for Scotland, but Nemesis pursued her, and as recently as April last was still pursuing her at the rate of 16,000 letters a week. For a time these letters were made dead, and in two months no less than 11,538 reached the Returned Letter Office.

As long ago as July, 1889, advertisements were inserted in the newspapers with the hope of stopping the flow, but in vain, and in October last *Truth* called attention to the matter with but small success. Then a new variant arose. The Bishop of Bangor was a Dr. Campbell; and some one, either by accident or design, diverted a portion of the funds from a collection made by Mrs. Campbell of

Bedford for the Bishop of Bedford into one by Mrs. Campbell of Bangor for the Bishop of Bangor. Meanwhile the Bishop of Bedford and Mrs. Campbell have been inundated with letters from people wanting to know whether the appeal was genuine, and hinting all sorts of suspicions on the promoters. So on the 20th of May last the Bishop made another effort to stop the collection by means of a letter to the newspapers. It remains to be seen whether he will succeed, or whether, like Lay Brother Peter, he knows how to make the broomstick work by calling out "Abracadabra," but has not discovered the mystic word which alone can stop its course. He may well exclaim with Horace, "Jam satis terris nivis."

Philately.

STAMP collectors—or philatelists, as they call themselves—are in a flutter just now. They have sent in a petition to the Postmaster-General asking that the British representatives at the Postal Union Congress at Vienna should be empowered to propose the rescission of the clause in the regulations which forbids the transmission of postage stamps by book post. The *Stamp Collectors' Journal*, in recording this fact, hopes, but hardly expects, that the request will be acceded to by that "autocratic institution the British Post Office." The journal looks at the matter confessedly from a dealer's point of view, but has it ever struck the editor that the book post is not a very safe way of sending articles of little bulk and large value?—that not only would stamps easily drop out and be lost in transit, but that they would offer very great temptation to sorters and others? As it is, letters from the East frequently reach this country without stamps, these having evidently been removed in transit.

But a far more serious matter for our philatelic friends is the proposal to adopt an international postage stamp. If that were carried, "timbromanie" would soon become a thing of the past. It will come to this no doubt some day, and then all that will be left for philatelists will be to collect post marks.

Its rather up to rumminess is Art—in many ways,
And a dead hand at starting what people call "a craze;"
A sort of flock-togethery fad, that seizes men in lots—
It may be foreign postage stamps, it may be chaney pots.

Stamp collecting has indeed attained gigantic proportions. A collection which gained the gold medal last year at Vienna is now being advertised for sale at £3,000; while Mr. T. K. Tapling, M.P., who died a short time ago, left a collection which is valued at £5,000! The journal above alluded to devotes four pages of its May issue to the official statutes of the International Philatelic Union. They are quite as matter of fact as might be expected, and at the head of them appears the opening stanza of "In Memoriam," with only three mistakes. Eleven years ago, it seems, the world was dead, for organised philately was unknown. Then some one said,

"Here are postage stamps. Let us stick them in a book ;" and so the dead men rose, and the Philatelic Union was formed. Then younger philatelists used the older philatelists as "stepping stones," and so rose to "better" things in the way of postage stamps. Lord Tennyson says "higher," but the Philatelic Union knows "better" is the word, and prints it so in its statutes. After that we are not at all surprised to see the announcement that "the Secretary has a number of forgeries in hand." As De Quincey would have said, many a man owes his ruin to a misquotation which at the time he thought little of!

Christmas Boxes in the Transvaal.

THE Transvaal post offices seem to be conducted on free and easy principles, if we may judge by the proceedings at Johannesburg at Christmas. In 1889 the staff of the office issued a poetical appeal to the box holders to send them champagne and other drinks.

"Old Lockshun, the staff doctor, recommends candy,
But I believe in the prescription he spells candy 'brandy.'"

The poet then winds up as follows, in lines worthy of Poet Close :—

"We'll then drink your health and good it will do ye,
For we'll sharpen our optics when letters come to ye,
Then beyond this again, for know it you must,
You'll have counteracted the effects of post office dust."

The result of this effusion, and especially perhaps of the veiled threat in the last lines, was a large supply of drink, the disposal of which led to a good deal of friction between the Postmaster and the staff. So in the following year (1890) they resolved to ask for money instead, and here are some of the least botchy of the resulting verses :—

"The general public, too, we thank for their kind gifts last year,
Though being in a liquid form the end thereof was queer.
Now well locked-up overdrafts, and the collapse of shares
With banks that break and time bargains on us, hath left some cares.
Therefore we trust the *Standard's* hint will not have been in vain,
And through their very timely words have spared to us much pain,
By suggesting rather mildly a cheque or small bank note,
For on such liquid documents all post officials dote.
We fear we are dictating, but do not take it ill,
Send anything that's useful, but pray don't send a bill."

Teignmouth.

MR. W. H. WALTON, who has been the Postmaster of this town since 1877, has just received a substantial testimony of the esteem in which he is held by his fellow townsmen in the shape of an illuminated address and a purse containing £85. The presentation took place at the Town Hall, in the presence of a large number of the subscribers.

To Welshmen.

BY permission of the Secretary, we publish the following letter, not only to show our readers what strange requests are often addressed to the Department, but also with the hope that its appearance in our columns may possibly be the means of accomplishing the object which the writer has in view. If any of our readers should be able to throw any light on Mrs. Davis' antecedents, we shall be glad if they will communicate with her directly.

"MACEDONIA,

"HAMILTON CO., ILLINOIS,

"May 23, 1891."

"DEAR SIR,

"I wish to ask you a favour, and it is this: would you be so kind and see for me, how much it would cost to publish this Notice, that I will send you in this letter, for two or three weeks. I was a very little girl when I was taken from my native land—Wales. My mother died there. I was brought over the ocean by some of my connections; then my father came and got me, so I was taken from all of my connections. I stayed with him awhile, then he bound me out and went off, and I have never seen him but once since. I think that it was in 1855. Then I moved off: if he ever came back they never told me. I don't know whether he went back or not, that is, to Wales. They may have advertised for me and I never saw it. I would love to find some of my connections, and it bears on my mind that I will if I will only try. I lost my language, not hearing it talked; so I don't know none of my friends' names nor the name of the town that I lived at, but I can remember how it looked. I will describe it as near as I can remember it. There was a high hill, then a river by it; then a row of houses, then a railroad for the coal cars to run; then another row of houses, then a steep hill again. Maybe that you know the place. I have not seen a Welshman since my father left me. I had often wished that I could, so that I could try to find out some of my friends; so I have fallen on this plan, to see if it will do any good. If you will help me I will pay you for all of your trouble and expense, and pray to God to give you success. If my father is alive he must be very old by this time, for I am about forty-seven; but I would love to know what has become of him, and find some of my friends; if you would, oh! I would be so thankful to you.

Yours respectfully,

MARGARET DAVIS."

NOTICE.

"Information is wanted of one, David Evans, who left his little daughter Margaret with Upton Duffield, of Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1854, and has not been seen or heard of but once since. Any information of him will be thankfully received by his daughter, now Mrs. Margaret Davis, of Macedonia, Hamilton County, Illinois."

Parliamentary.

ALTHOUGH it does not fall within our plan to discuss the internal politics of the Department, yet we are bound as a matter of record to mention the debate which took place in the House on the 17th April on the motion of Earl Compton, "That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the administration of the Post Office." The debate, which turned almost entirely on the grievances of various classes of officers, was sustained by Mr. Lockwood, Sir E. Reed, and others, and the motion was in the end negatived by 163 to 93.

Surveyors and their Districts.

DURING the past month great changes have been made both in the Surveyor's districts and in the mode of carrying out the surveying duties. Hitherto England and Wales (excluding London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham) have been divided into ten districts, each with a Surveyor, an Assistant-Surveyor, and four clerks. In future there will be eight such districts only, and the staff will be reduced by one-fifth. The new regulations, under which all officers retire at the age of sixty-five, will, it is hoped, enable this change to be carried out without interfering with the prospects of the various officers. Already we have recorded a number of promotions, and by the end of the year there will probably be several more.

No changes have been made in the Irish or Scotch districts, there being still three in each country. The following table will show how different are the conditions of work in England and Wales as compared with the other kingdoms. The figures are those of the year 1886.

	Average area of each district in square miles.	Population (in thousands).	Letters delivered weekly (in thousands).	No. of Post Offices in each district.	Average number of established Officers in each district.
England ...	7,400 ...	2,500 ...	1,660 ...	1,931 ...	1,806
Scotland ...	9,900 ...	1,000 ...	458 ...	561 ...	531
Ireland ...	10,600 ...	1,660 ...	434 ...	830 ...	541

It would, of course, not be fair to conclude from this table that Surveying Officers work less hard in Scotland and Ireland than in England. In the first place, railways are much fewer in the former countries, and thus much more time is occupied in travelling. Then in Scotland and Ireland the number of Postmasters who can be entrusted with surveying duties is much smaller than in England. Lastly, there are in Scotland only two clerks, and in Ireland only three, in each district, as against four in England. In Ireland certainly, and presumably in Scotland also, the work is very laborious; but, on the other hand, with such a small number of clerks to each Surveyor there is far better prospect of promotion than in England.

Post Office Chess Club.

THE annual meeting of this Society was held on the 1st of June, the chair being occupied by Mr. Freeling Lawrence. The report was the subject of considerable adverse discussion, chiefly on account of the clause which stated that the committee had decided that it was advisable that the meetings should henceforward be held at the Zoedone Café, 42, Newgate Street; and eventually this paragraph was deleted. The subsequent proposal, that the meetings should continue to be held at the Ludgate Circus Café, was carried by a small majority. Twenty-six matches have been played during the season, ten of which were won by the Club and four drawn.

The Club Handicap Tournament last winter was supported by twenty-one members, and the prizes were awarded to Messrs. Waterhouse, Anderson, and Beevor. Prizes have also been won by Messrs. Waterhouse, Taylor, and Bloomfield for the best aggregate scores in the nine matches in the Metropolitan Competition, the six matches with the Senior Clubs, and the eight Second Team matches respectively. The Club finances are, we are glad to note, in a satisfactory condition, and the Club has increased largely in numbers, while its playing strength has also increased.

Mr. E. G. Richardson (R. & A. G. O.) was elected hon. treasurer in place of Mr. W. M. Gattie, who has resigned through ill health, and Messrs. W. Hamilton (Savings Bank) and A. W. Pritchard (R. & A. G. O.) were re-elected as honorary secretaries.

Mr. C. L. Lewes again.

WE have much pleasure in giving our readers the following letter from Mr. E. Crabb. We are only too glad to come across a man who has a genuine and disinterested admiration for a chief under whom he has served, and we agree with Mr. Crabb that the notice of Mr. Lewes which appeared in our last issue was a very inadequate one.

"It seems a pity," Mr. Crabb writes, "that the special organ of the Post Office can find nothing to say of the late Mr. C. L. Lewes, except a quotation from George Eliot, referring to his character as a boy. The chief of a large section in the Department has something else to do than to be 'loveable,' and the quotation in point is insufficient to grotesqueness in describing Mr. Lewes to those who knew him only in a position of control. He showed other qualities more valuable, officially, during his stay at the office. He had the task of reducing to order the Telegraph Correspondence of the Department, which he took over whilst it was still in the semi-chaotic state in which the transfer had left it. It was not work which every one could have done so well. His energy in grappling with huge masses of work, and the acuteness which he brought to the consideration of the intricate questions he frequently had to deal with, were astonishing. His faculty of getting hold of the 'charging parts' of a case

was something to be envied by any junior who watched him at work ; and he had in each instance the very clearest idea of what he wanted to get, and how he meant to get it. Irresolution, indecision, and sentimentality, were strangers to him. The directness of his character was reflected even in the style of his English, which he himself called rough and unkempt, but which was always strong, clear, and to the point.

"In his relations to the men under him, he was intolerant of inefficiency, shiftiness, or pretentiousness ; and as he was unable to persuade himself that it was not always prudent to say 'Raca !' to a fool, he here and there incurred unpopularity, officialism being a fine rich soil in which hardy perennials, such as foolishness and incapacity, root easily and flower well. At the same time I believe no man ever went to him and candidly admitted a mistake, however bad, without finding all his anger turned into a kindly eagerness to suggest how such a slip might be avoided in future. His curiously shy generosity, the readiness with which he—in many ways a singularly accomplished man—would admit inferiority in knowledge, his keen sense of justice and utter want of vindictiveness, all went to make him well fitted for the post he held. I served under him for ten years with constantly increasing liking and respect for him, and this, with the persuasion, common to many others besides myself, that the Department lost one of its ablest officers when he retired, emboldens me, in default of a better man, to trouble you with these remarks."

Mr. W. D. Herbert.

MR. W. D. HERBERT, the new Postmaster of the Western Central District Office, on leaving the Savings Bank Department, was presented with a testimonial subscribed to by a large number of the officers with whom he has worked for so many years. In the letter to him which accompanied the testimonial, the subscribers say, "We feel we cannot allow you to go from amongst us without in some way showing our appreciation of your unvaried kindness and courtesy during the many years we have served together, and we therefore ask your acceptance of the accompanying souvenir. Although we are deeply sensible of the loss we sustain by your departure, we most warmly congratulate you on your well-earned promotion, and we trust that it may be a stepping stone to a still higher position, where those qualities which have endeared you to us may have a wider sphere of action and usefulness."

We endorse these words heartily, and we also congratulate the W. C. D. O. on having secured Mr. Herbert as Postmaster. No one within our official experience has earned more fully for himself the title of "gentleman." Independent, true to the backbone, and full of sympathy for his juniors, the Savings Bank will not easily replace him.

Old Tipton Days.

THE *Dudley Herald*, in an article on the history of Tipton, thus refers to its post-office.

"The building in which the work is at present carried on was erected about 1840, and shortly afterwards the office was removed into it, the staff at that time consisting of the postmistress and two letter carriers. At first the post office consisted of a lobby, which is now used as the postmen's entrance, with an arrangement somewhat similar to a booking office at a railway station, through which the public were attended to. The letter carriers used to sort the letters for delivery in an outhouse attached to the office. They were allowed to make a charge of 1d. for each letter for places beyond one mile from the office—in some cases 2d. was charged—and it was no uncommon sight to see them sitting and snarling over their correspondence like a couple of dogs over a heap of bones, and it was not an unfrequent occurrence, when a difference arose as to which should deliver a particular letter, for them to adjourn to the yard, and in true Tipton style, 'fight it out.'"

The increase of business at this office of late years has been very large, and a Crown office is about to be erected.

The Ladies of the Postal Order Branch.

IN another portion of the Magazine we have incidentally referred to a concert given at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, on Saturday, April 18th, by the ladies of the Postal Order Branch. The concert was in aid of the funds of a manuscript magazine which the officers in that branch are starting. It only remains for us to congratulate the ladies on the very successful programme they provided. They clearly showed that musical talent, at any rate, is sufficiently abundant in the ranks of the ladies of the Post Office; and we must congratulate them on the capacity they have shown for working together for a common object. We understand that, since the date of the concert, another entertainment consisting of "tableaux vivants" was given by the Postal Order ladies, and with very successful results. We hope that one result of the public spirit they are displaying will be seen in the increase of the subscribers to *St. Martin's* in that branch.

A Somnolent Fowl.

VERY early one morning, not long since, the driver of the Box mail was making preparations for the return journey, when his attention was arrested by a strange sound which seemed to proceed from beneath the cart. Taking down one of the lamps to investigate, he was greatly surprised to see, perched on the axle, a fine black Spanish fowl, which he immediately recognized as one of the mail cart contractor's at Box. It had evidently gone to roost there

before the cart started, and had ridden eight miles across country, with attendant stoppages, without its composure being in the least disturbed. A bag was found and it was conveyed home in a somewhat less dignified manner, though how many times previously the wily bird may have enjoyed a ride at the expense of the department is not possible to say.

Civil Service Cycling Club.

THE Ten Miles Championship Race of this Club was held at the Grounds of the Richmond Athletic Association on Wednesday evening the 1st July. There were four starters and, after a capital race, Mr. W. Johnson beat Mr. W. J. Warren by a yard for first place. Time, 36 mins. 39 secs. The time was not good, but a high wind prevailed throughout the contest. Mr. E. Bennett, the editor of *St. Martin's* acted as a clerk of the course, but was not visible on the ground.

Changes and Chances.

WE regret to record the death of Mr. W. J. Page. Entering the service in 1832, he was made Assistant Under Secretary in 1868, and had charge of the Foreign Branch until 1880, when he retired from the service.

Mr. Godby, whose retirement we announced last year, has not long survived that event. He died on the 24th June last, which, by a curious coincidence, was the day on which the altered system of surveying came into operation.

In connection with the scheme for reducing the number of Surveyors' districts in England from ten to eight, Mr. F. H. Freeling has been appointed Postmaster of Jersey and Surveyor for the Channel Islands. Mr. Freeling, who entered the service in 1855, was for many years a Surveyor, but retired on a pension in 1888. In the following year he was appointed Postmaster of Colchester. Mr. Blakaney, of Jersey, goes to Bath.

The appointment of Mr. J. F. Wight to the Postmastership of Birmingham has caused some surprise. He entered the service in 1862, and became Postmaster of the W.C. district of London in 1888.

The retirement of Mr. J. Fletcher, of the Postal Stores, has led to the appointment of his assistant, Mr. C. S. Hooley, to the vacancy; while Mr. C. E. S. Poole, of the R. & A. G. O., succeeds Mr. Hooley as Assistant Controller.

The last appointed Surveyor, Mr. W. J. Roe, takes over the Southern district of Ireland—a district in which he worked many years ago under the late Mr. James; while Mr. Seton comes over to England. There are at present ten Surveyors in England and only eight districts. Mr. Salisbury takes the North Western district, while Mr. Seton and Mr. Rushton will act as coadjutors to two Surveyors

who will retire at the end of the year. Mr. Hetherington, whose appointment to a Surveyorship we recorded in our last issue, is now Postmaster of Brighton, but is no longer a Surveyor.

In the Savings Bank, Mr. C. D. Lang, of the R. & A. G. O., has been appointed as Acting Controller, Mr. Compton having obtained several months' leave of absence previous to retirement. Mr. A. H. Bateman has been made Chief Clerk ; Mr. W. D. Herbert has been appointed Postmaster of the Western Central District of London ; Mr. Leal and Mr. Copeland have been made Principal Clerks, vice Mr. Bateman and Mr. Herbert.

We have not space to record all the recent promotions among Postmasters, but we may mention that Mr. T. Stevenson, of York, has been transferred to Sheffield ; while Mr. G. E. S. Noble, of Salisbury, succeeds him at York. Mr. Noble was for many years in the R. L. O.

TO OUR READERS.

THE success of *St. Martin's-le-Grand* during the past year has exceeded our expectations. In addition to a large number of London friends, we have now subscribers in some seven hundred towns of the United Kingdom; and we are endeavouring to secure a circulation among postmasters in all English-speaking countries. Financially our position is satisfactory, and we confidently expect to have a small balance in hand when the accounts are made up.

The whole of the proceeds of the Magazine are devoted to its improvement and enlargement, as, with the exception of some small payments for clerical assistance, the staff receives no remuneration for its services, neither is any payment made for articles inserted.

We can confidently appeal to our readers to support us, now that we are about to enter on our second year, by filling up the subscription form which is sent herewith, and returning it together with the money.

There are still many Head Post Offices where the magazine is not taken in, and we ask our readers to do what they can to increase our circulation and thereby enable us to enlarge and improve *St. Martin's-le-Grand*.

One more point. If this magazine is to be kept up, and to maintain its interest, something more than money is required. Every Subscriber should feel it his duty to send the Honorary Secretaries anything of interest to the postal or telegraphic world which may meet his (or her) eye. When our Subscribers have got into the habit of sending us from all quarters of the world cuttings from newspapers or magazines, drawings, accounts of postal events, &c., as well as original articles, it will not be their fault if the magazine is not interesting.

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Secretaries.*

EDWARD BENNETT,
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