# Men with the Letter-Bag



MINDSIAN

MAIL

CAR

-C. A. Powell in the Postal Record. Those who receive mail-and who does not?-will be interested to learn something of the faithful band of letter-carriers of Portland. There are 44 of these who make their daily rounds. To their patient and uncomplaining devotion to their duties all are indebted. To their intelligence, too, is due the fact that, one by one, hundreds of thousands of missives are eventually placed in the right hands. How many wait, sorrowing, with that "hope deferred that maketh the heart sick," for the overdue letter. And, when it comes, with the glad tidings from the dear absent one that all is well -ah, then all will subscribe to the senti-

"Almost the degreet and hopefulest thing In the livelong day is the postman's ring."

For many there has been, alas! "the letter that never came." While to some, the postman brings "glad tiding of great joy," there are, for others, only letters that add to their grief; letters that add a little, and still a little more, to the load of bitterness and of human sorrow. Such always has been; such always will be.

#### Real Bugbears.

There is a curiosity among people to know something of these servitors of Uncle Sam, who, through rain and snow, cold and sleet-through parching heat, perform their duty so well. As one of these men said the other day:

"It is not so much the strain upon muscles of legs and arms and backthese we are fully prepared to expect; the rected, phorly spelled addresses of latters which we have to deliver to their rightful owners."

It is generally understood that any man, to become eligible to the position Political "pull" doesn't help; a man must be able to pass a creditable examination in the English branches of instruction. Of course, this includes the "three R's"-"readin", 'ritin' and 'rithmetic," These examinations are more practical and exacting than in former years. An applicant must be able to show an exact and definite knowledge of streets, the location of business houses; he must be able to tell where business men are to be found; how their names are spelled-in fact be must be an ambulating encyclopedia of local, as well as general geography, in addition to possessing the other requirements. He must also have an exact memory. Starting in with a fair faculty of recollection of names and localities, this is greatly strengthened by constant

Portland letter carriers to whom are assigned districts in the business quarter, report for duty at 7 A. M. daily, Sundays excepted. They make their rounds four or five times per day. Their districts are of varying size. Some have only two or three blocks; other 10 or 15 to cover. Carriers for the residence districts appear at 7:30 A. M., and generally finish their first rounds in time to go to dinner or luncheon, between 12 and 1 P.

## Ringing "In" and "Out."

When the carriers report for duty at the Postoffice, each man, with his key, "rings in," and on leaving "rings out." To the uninitiated it is as well to explain that, as each man turns his key, is rings a bell, registering his number. and that a "Bundy" clock-a heartless, but truthful, timekeeper thereupon-faithfully registers each carrier's exits or entrances. Should the postman forget this formality-well, once may bring a reprimand; a second offense would mean a day's lay-off with a corresponding loss of pay. If a man happens to forget to "ring" his comings-in or goings-out only once in a month, Uncle Sam, or rather the local official representing him, usually ignores the fact.

Once inside the Postoffice, the carriers begin to throw their mail into cases for distribution along their routes. By dint of practice, they become very expert and rapid in this work. The mail matter they thus handle has already been assorted by office clerks. Once in the cases, the carriers classfy it. For this they use the term "organize." Then the letters are "tied out," or formed into bundles, according to the streets and numbers. Then

the mail is ready for delivery. It is a little surprising to learn that the weight each footman carries is from 60 to 75 pounds. The larger packages the carriers are not expected to carry. These latter fall to the lot of the "mounted men," as they are called-those who have a horse and a cart that by a stretch of imagination, can be made somewhat to resemble one of the racing chariots of the old Romans. The mounted carriers cover the outlying districts. There are in Portland, 10 mounted men-two collectors of mail and eight city delivery men.

There is some difference of opinion as to which class of footmen does the hard-

est work. The preponderance of evidence appears to show that those who deliver mail in the business districts are the ones, When one considers the long stairs they must wearily climb with their burdens, day after day, especially in the business district of tall buildings, their task seems certainly a treadmill of toll. But the work is cheerfully performed, neverthless, and one seldom hears a complaint.

Letter carriers are divided into four different grades. First, there are the substitutes who act for "regulars" in case one of the latter is incapacitated for any When a man has served one year, he receives \$600; or \$50 per month. The second year he gets \$70 a month. For the third and succeeding years, his remuneration is \$80 per month.

A substitute begins service with a plain black band around either sleeve. After he gets a regular route and has served five years, his sleeves are decorated with a plain, five-pointed, black star. After 10 years of service he carries two black stars on either sleeve. When he has walked his daily rounds for 15 years, then comes the red-star decoration. As time goes on, the mail-carrier finally gets a silver star. Eventually, after he becomes a veteran, he is entitled to a gold star. Since the first adoption of their bluish gray uniforms-the same all over this country-there has been no change.

#### Letter-Carriers' Association.

There is an organization - the Nafional Letter-Carriers' Association - with branches all over the United States. The one here is known as Portland Branch, No. 21. As the initiation fee is only to As the initiation fee is only \$1. and the dues but 25 cents per month, it is not an expensive body to belong to, and, practically, every mail-carrier in this city is a member. Portland Branch, No. 82, meets once a month. It is an organizaof a letter-carrier, can only attain the tion for mutual helpfulness along the line sort of thing often happens from five to bers. If any member has a grievance, he makes it known, and steps are taken to redress it On all logal holidays, carriers are entitled to one-half of the day. The Mail-Carriers' Association meets with the hearty approval of the Postoffice Department at Washingtotn. The branch here sends a delegate to represent it at the annual conventions in the East.

One of Portland's oldest letter-carriers was asked as to the qualifications necessary for the position. He said:

"A letter-carrier should possess perfect integrity and amiability, and should never take offense. He must be strong, mentally, and physically. He must have a knack of deciphering illegible addresses and, of course, he should cultivate his memory. A printer soon becomes conversant with all ordinary and not a few extraordinary words, as well as the rules of grammar and punctuation. These remain practically unchanged. Letter-carriers must learn the names of from 2000 to 10,000 of the people on their respective routes. Then there are from 5 to 10 1000 to 5000 in the course of a year; in the lodging-house districts ther are even

## Difficulties Encountered.

"Some people on removing to a new number do not notify the postoffice authorities of their change of address. Occasionally mail is sent to business firms, located formerly on upper First or Front 23 different ways. street, 15 years ago, but now removed That the Portland letter-carriers are

which is self-explanatory.

to depend on his memory.

'Anything for me?

pocket, but no letter."

of removals kept-columns of them-

ands of names. The carrier cannot spend

the time to look them over, and he has

Sometimes a man will accost me:

"I reply: 'Yes, I have a circular in my

"This doesn't strike the questioner as

anything strange; but when you consider

that the carrier would probably be able

to instantly and correctly answer a simi-

inting up into thousands upon thous-

ous people on his route, it is somewhat remarkable.

"At the present season," continued the old postman, "a carrier sometimes meets a man, running for a car, who shouts: 'Send my mail to the office; Lucy's at the beach, and my wife's over at our son-inlaw's for two weeks.' Asked where his son-in-law resides, he is apt to somewhat indefinitely reply: 'Oh, I don't remember the number. It's that yellow house next to the Baptist Church, in Albina; you know where.

, "From the distributing postoffice clerk the carrier ascertains the man's office number, the whereabouts of 'Lucy,' and that of the carrier at Station B. This

## Wasted Sympathy.

"All this condoling with the postman over his long tramps," said another carrier, "and his performance of duty, rain and shine, is clearly wasted sympathy. Many another workingmen does as much walking as he. A quarter of his 8-hour day is passed in the postoffice, and fully one-half of the remaining six hours is spent under cover. The greatest burden is the responsibility."

Very few people realize how much money belonging to others a mall-carrier actually handles. This is in sums from a cent to thousands of dollars. One carrier of many years' experience, declares:

"We have actually handled packages of greenbacks where the wrapper was entirely worn off at the corners. In one instance. I delivered such a package that contained \$3000, all plainly exposed; yet, it reached its owner without a cent being missing. We also deliver, in a year, many packages of jewelry and other val-

Correcting the mistakes of other people removals a day, amounting often to from is a constant source of trouble to carriers. Foreign mail is the most bothersome in this respect. For example, a letter was addressed:

"Polon U. S. San Fran Amerika

This was finally tanslated to mean: "Portland, Or., 274 Baker street," Caruthers street, in Portland, has been spelled

that he has not once missed receiving all

his letters in 11 years. It is the carrier's

business to leave letters where they be-

long, no matter how difficult the under-

alarming degree, and it would constantly

require many columns in The Oregonian

Mali-carriers should be proud of the

confidence reposed in them. Not only in

to advertise them.

Not find maineton fort out

count find. Chinerice Origon

port find. Perticinal

motion-fourth

The above is an example of what is kno wn among mail carriers as a "Nixie," a term

or out of business, or the members of efficient, is beyond dispute. One man who

which are all dead. There are records does a large retail business here, says

"Law sakes!" said the woman; "we're strangers here, and I didn't s'pose it made any difference."

wouldn't do.

discreet and worthy men.

## Work of "Sunset" Cox.

ances into the mail-carrier's ear. It was

urged, in Congress, as the great objec-

tion to free rural delivery, that the car-

flers might be the means of spreading

gossip and scandal. It is strange that

no one ever thought of applying the same

objection to city carriers. But they are

and Hoyt streets, are of the fi atf fow

Letter carriers have many peculiar experiences. Not long since a little girl

gave a local postman a letter to mail.

On looking at it, he found it was di-

rected to a person in Vancouver. It had

for a stamp, one of the Canadian variety.

The carrier looked up the child's mother.

He showed her that there was no state

named and told her that "Canuck" stamps

All letter-carriers bless the memory of Hon. S. S. Cox, the famous New York Congressman. One writer, in the Postal Record, himself a carrier, tenderly describes a visit made to the grave of the dead statesman, at Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, N. Y. This was on the occasion of the anniversary of Mr. Cox's death,

"As we stood beside the flower-covered grave of our departed friend, our thoughts went back to a morning in the long ago, when, like a clap of thunder from a clear sky, came the notification telling us of a reduction of salaries of letter-carriers from \$1000 to \$800 a year. It was then we needed a friend, and we found him in "Sunset" Cox; and he never wavered in his friendship during the twenty-two years which intervened between that time and the day of his death. Through his efforts a bill passed both houses of Congress and was signed by President Hayes, fixing the maximum sal of a letter-carrier at \$1000 per year.

"A few years later, and under his leadership, an annual vacation of fifteen days was provided for. A few more years pass taking. Should be do otherwise, they by, and again he is battling for the welwould accumulate at the postoffice to an fare of the letter-carrier, and again he is successful, and it is decreed by law that eight hours shall constitute a day's work

was made at the Portland postoffice to postal affairs, is this true, but in do- Lyman Chittendon, there for 15 years, mestic matters, as well. It is amazing and whom the men long in service fondlar question from any one of the numer. how many people pour their private griev- ly term "the grand old man," by a woman

first of their kind in Europe-in 1470. The post system in Italy arose in 1560 at Pledmont. It is interesting to note that in France, during the reign of Louis XIV, postpaid envelopes were first used. One authority says that they originated in wanting a job for her son. She was told France with M. de Velayer, who estab-

tance of from 15 to 30 miles apart.

In Europe.

XI founded post-houses in France-the

lished, under royal authority, a private

penny-post in Paris, placing boxes at

the principal street corners to receive let-

ters. There is an express record of a

Thomas Randolph was England's chief

postmaster in 1581. The postal service

there, prior to Randolph, was in charge

of Sir Brian Tuke, In 1545, William

Paget and John Mason jointly succeeded

him, and, after them, Thomas Randolph,

in 1567, first assumed the office with the

title of Magister Cursorum sive Post-

ames I, created the office of Post-

ports, by letters patent, in 1619, appoint-

ing Matthew de Quester to the office.

under royal license. He paid the British

many, as early as April, 1544.

arum.

of sign writing.

he would be required to perform. The woman then asked: "What hours will my boy be required postal system in use in Spain and Gerto work?"

that a young man was needed, and what

wages he would get and the kind of work

"Oh," said Mr. Chittendon, drily, will be expected to get here at 9 A. M. and work until 9 A. M. next day." The woman departed, in supreme dis-

## Origin of Postal Service.

As to the exact time when the system of carrying messages, news or private letters from one person to another had its origin, there is no reliable ecord. The idea seems to belong to no one country. ners in several places. II Samuel xvili:19-23, is an instance in point.

Ovid, in his "Metamorphoses," makes post was established by the proclamation mention of carrier-pigeons being utilized , of Charles L, in 16%. In this, the King for the transmission of messages. He commanded his Postmaster of England cites the instance where Taurosthenes, for foreign parts, "to settle a running after staining a pigeon purple, allowed it post or two, to run night and day beto fly away to his father at Aegina, where tween Edinburgh and London, to go thithit arrived the sane day, proclaiming to er and come back again in six days." his father that he was victor at the During Queen Anne's reign-1710-the Olympian games. Ancient Assyrians had postoffice was remodeled by the act of relays of mounted couriers at stations, a settlement. One Ralph Allen, the Postday's journey apart, for the carrying of master of Bath, projected cross-posts

In China there has been a postal sys- Government £6000 per year, and annually tem for many centuries. The great cleared for himself a profit of £10,000. traveler. Marco Polo, who visited that After his death, the Government added country in the latter part of the 13th his cross-post scheme to the general post. century, reported that the "Great Khan" In 1839, England introduced the penny had 19,000 post stations established, with post, and in 1840, the postoffice order sys-300,000 horses. From 400 to 500 miles, he tem. stated, were covered in a day and night. James Chalmers, of Dundee, on May

5, 1840, invented the postage stamp. There is an inscription on his burial tablet. which reads as follows:

"To the memory of James Chaimers, Bookseller, Dundee, Born 1782, Died 1853. Originator of the Adhesive postage stamp, which saved the penny postage scheme of 1840 from collapse, rendering it an unqualified success, and which has since been adopted throughout the postal systems of the world. This memorial was erected by his son, Patrick Chalmers, Wimbledon, 1888."

The adhesive postage stamp was adopt-

In Peru, in 1527, at the time of the ed in America in 1847. Spanish invasion, Pisarro found estab-Since the earliest settlement of the lished a regular system of posts between United tSates, there has been some sort Quito and Cuzoo. The runner carried, of a postal system in use. The general wound about their bodies, the "quipu"court of Massachusetts, in 1639, passed the a cord tied in knots, which was a species first legislation on the subject. Virginia followed, in 1657. One authority says the There is a distinct record of riding postoffice originally consisted in the coloposts in Persia, established by King Cynies of "a receptacle in a coffee-house, rus, 509 B. C. The first recorded postal where letters arriving from abroad were service among the Romans was that deposited, to be taken by those to whom founded by Emperor Augustus, Il B. C. they were addressed, or carried to them by their neighbors." New York Coloney founded "a post to goe monthly from New York to Boston," in 1672. In 1688, The first letter-post system in Europe was that adopted by the cities compris-William Penn established a postoffice in ing the Hanseatic League, in the early Pennsylvania. Benjamin Franklin, the part of the 13th century. Charlemagne Postmaster-General in this country organised a postal system 807 A. B. Louis

#### -1753-74-Instituted numerous reforms. Postal System Organised.

The first organized postal system in the United States was that established by the English Parliament in 1710, referred to herinbefore. A general letter office was opened in London, one in New York and others in each of the colonies. The postage was 1 shilling for a letter from London to New York, and if destined beyond, for a distance of 60 miles, or less, there was a charge of 4 pence additional. In 1790 there were but 75 postoffices in this country, and only 1975 miles of mail routes. In 1891-one hundred years later -there were 64,329 postoffices and the miles of mail routes had reached 439,027. Germany was the first country to intro duce postal cards. They were first proposed by Prussta, in 1865.

The postoffice business was formally assumed by the United States Government as a regular department in 1789. Bouvier's Law Dictionary states that, by the act of March 3, 1851, as shown by the United master-General of England, for foreign States statute-at-large, [81, the appointment of letter-carriers in cities and towns is provided for. Chapter 21, paragraph 1, The first regular system of an internal of the same act, provides for the appointment of letter-carirers in Oregon and California.

## First Free Delivery.

Free delivery in the United States became generally established about 1861-63. and in Portland, October, 1879. The names of the original carriers in this city were John R. Coker, J. N. Bristol, J. R. Duff, F. Mathews and J. E. Courtney. Of these, two are dead, and three living. Up to the Fall of 1883, Portland received mail by steamer every three days. Carriers and clerks were compelled to work during those early years from 10 to 19 hours per day.

A worthy clergyman once said: "The postman is the most looked-for, most longed-for person in the city. He is admired by all business and professional men, kind-of-loved by all young women, all married women and all old women, and the quicker he makes his rounds the more he is respected."

## QUEERED BY HIS COLORS.

#### Princeton Runner Excites the Ire of Hibernians.

John Cregan, captain of the Princeton track team and holder of the intercollegiate record for the mile run, started in his athletic work at Princeton, and the first time that he ran under Princeton colors was on August 5, 1897, in the Ancient Order of Hibernian games at Albany. Johnny was very proud of the Princeton colors, and the band of orange ribbon across his athletic chest was a wonder in width. This in itself would have been enough to make him an object of suspicion to the members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, but it was not a marker to the rest of his decoration The Princeton Athletic Association had just bought new caps, and on the front of them was embroidered the monogram of the association. To the person who viewed the cap the monogram looked like

this: "A. P. A."

When that monogram was discovered it confirmed the suspicion that Johnny was full-bred Orangeman. The crowd greeted him with insulting remarks when he lined up for the start of the mile run. At first Johnny lay back and took things easy. The crowd howled with gles when they saw the supposed Orangeman fully 100 feet in the rear, and shouted and yelled to their champions to distance the interloper. The result was that every other man in the race ran his legs off, and just as Johnny put on his spure, when they started on the last lap and began to forge ahead, the trouble broke

Johnny came down the track like whirlwind at least 50 feet shead of his nearest competitor. The crowd hung over the fence; and such cries as "Kill "T'll with the Orangethe Sassenach!" man!" and "Throw him off the track!" were hurled at him as be sped across the tape a winner. Men were shaking their fists at him and cursing him, and Johnny discreetly made a retreat to the dressing-room. There he innocently asked what was wrong and why the crowd had it in for him.—New York Sun.



HIS WAY OF LCOKING AT IT.

Miss Horder-I've just received a letter from my sister, who is in Lendon. She says she pects to be presented at court next week.

gi Hayrake-Wal, I do hope ther jury will acquit her,

and the writer says:

for letter-carriers." In ante divil-service days, application