MEN IN THE RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE

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HOW THE HARD WORK IS DONE THEIR COMPENSATION AND A WIDE MOVEMENT FOR BETTER CONDITIONS

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"THERE was an aged negro in Georgia who prayed and prayed that the Lord would send him a chicken," said P. J. Schardt in relating a story to his brother members of the Railway Mail Association, "but the chicken was not sent. Finally he changed his prayer: 'Lawd,' he said, 'Lawd, ef you can't send dat chicken, jes' please send me to whar dat chicken is.'"

And the Railway Mail Association is following the old negro's example. It has prayed Congress by many a memorial and by persistent petition to be placed on an equal footing with other civil service employes, but its prayer have been unheard. Now it is trying the other plan: it is taking the public into its confidence and hopes to be placed so near to Congressmen by popular support that it may take what has been denied through prayer.

Mr. Schardt is vice-president of the association, and is the field lieutenant of President Canfield. He attended the recent convention in Portland of the Eighth Division of the Railway Mail Association, and did so at his own expense. He might be called press agent of the association, which by combined and united effort is trying to arouse so much interest and sympathy on the part of the public with what is generally conceded to be its just demands that Congressmen will not dare deny what is asked.

But Mr. Schardt, one of whose duties is to conduct this publicity campaign, is like the other 14,999 members of the association—he is deeply interested in the success of the movement and pays his own expenses, losing time and salary from his regular work. In that respect only he differs from a real press agent.

Its One Grievance.

The grievance of the Railway Mail Association—it has only one—is a big one. It is directed against the Government's rule compelling railway mail clerks to pay their own expenses while on duty. Being on duty, be it remembered, is a very large part of a railway mail clerk's life, and he is the only civil service employe on the Government's payroll who is compelled to pay his own expenses.

Such discrimination is unfair and unjust, the clerk says, and it is his purpose to let the people know how he is being treated. For the people, according to textbooks on political economy, are the Government, and once they realize that discrimination exists, the clerk argues, it will cease. Consequently the clerks have organized themselves into the Railway Mail Association, an organization extending throughout the country, and, forgetting all minor or trivial matters, has centered its power and influence in accomplishing a remedy for this once evil of discrimination.

What a Mailclerk Must Know.

The Railway Mail Service of the United States is organized with general headquarters at Washington, D. C., and divisional headquarters at Boston, New York City, Atlanta, Washington, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, Cal.; Cleveland, St. Paul and Fort Worth, Texas. There are about 15,000 clerks and officers, 14,000 assigned to duty in railway mail cars and 1000 as transfer clerks and in supervisory capacities.

The occupation is included in the Civil Service, and to enter it is necessary to pass an examination requiring at least an academic education; there is also a strict physical examination, and the standard in this is higher than that required to enter our Army or Navy. When the appointment is received a clerk is given a scheme of distribution of all the postoffices of some state, meaning that he is to learn and remember the location of each postoffice, be it on a railroad or stage route, and at regular intervals he is called for examination on that state until he is able to give exactly such location of all offices. Then he is given another state to learn, and this process is continued until he acquires perfect knowledge of the location of from 3000 to 15,000 postoffices in different states, the knowledge and number of offices varying on account of location of his run or line of railroad upon which his assignment places him. He has to know, also, the railroad timetables or schedules of the states he distributes mail for; and as these are constantly changing, it is necessary to be eternally vigilant. There are frequent changes in his schemes of distribution which he receives weekly, new postoffices established, others discontinued, and still others have changes of supply, requiring the unlearning of things once learned as well as constant acquisition of new information.

The Element of Hazard.

It takes about four years of this kind of study, accompanied by steady work in the postal car, to make a good clerk out of the recruit, and as long as he remains in the service there is never a cessation of study or work. On all heavier lines the clerk is granted regular layoff periods for recuperation and study, but his time belongs wholly to the Government and he is liable to call for extra duty at any time.

There is a considerable element of hazard connected with the service, and this element of hazard should have appealed to the public mind long ago. But it hasn't.

You have never met with a railway mail clerk in a play, and indeed you likely have never encountered one in a novel. You have seen innumerable pictures depicting the "postman," but never have you seen a part taken by a man in a car. The conductor, the engineer, the baggageman, and almost everybody connected with the operation of a train has a place in art, current romance or in the play, but the railway postal has not.

But this element of hazard is recognized by insurance companies. During the last fiscal year one out of every 78 railway mail clerks was killed or injured. Congress makes some provision for this, however, in that the family of a clerk killed while on duty receives $1000; and a clerk injured on duty where his own carelessness is not responsible receives his regular salary during the continuation of the injury up to one year. The hazard, however, is incidental to the occupation, and is not considered in the acceptance or filling of a position in the service.

Few people out of the millions in this country who are beneficiaries of the railway mail clerk's service have any conception of the hardships undergone hourly and daily by the men in that department, or of the exacting and rigid requirements by which they qualify. There is a constant demand for good cars and appliances in order to reduce the mortality to as low a point as possible. Department officials are continually insisting upon strong cars, but only with a degree of success; but many railroads are slow in providing the best equipment, notwithstanding the fact that they receive in annual rental and mail pay about $4000 for each car.

Never in the Limelight.

And these mailcars are the homes for railway mail clerks during a big portion of their time. For long runs and long hours he is caged up in them with a mass of work, the slightest mistake in which might cause any amount of trouble. The public has practically no knowledge of the occupants of these cars.

At the station the inquisitive passenger will walk forward and inspect the engine and engineer, will watch the work of the baggage and expressmen, but he looks upon the mailcar as forbidden territory. It is therefore passed by. This, of course, arises from the necessary exclusion of the public from the car, which, to the passenger and the public, is merely a mysterious arrangement of racks, cases, iron frames, padlocks and sacks.

In this campaign of publicity that is being inaugurated special appeal is to be made to business men throughout the country. It is argued that business men pay most of the expense of the postal service for 78 per cent of the postal revenues of this country is paid by first-class postage, business men's postage. Consequently, it is urged, the business men who pay most of this should be intensely interested in the railway mail service which handles 90 per cent of their mail.

Appeal to Business Men.

But it is very likely a fact that business men are not interested at the present time, for their lack of information on the subject might be considered as conclusive proof. It is the object of the association to get them interested, because they pay the larger part of the clerks' salaries, though having little or nothing to do with their work, its order or its compensation. President J. T. Canfield, of Syracuse, N. Y., president of the association, has made a strong appeal for the interest of business men.

"There should be a strong bond of interest between business men and our association," he said. "It should exist so that we may understand each other better, that they may recognize the splendid service we are giving and will continue to give, and that they may insist on the efficiency of that service being maintained.

"Railway postal clerks are divided into nine classes with annual salaries ranging from $800 to $1600, and the average salary is at present $1152. We are required to pay out of this our expenses on the road, which, economize as we may, amounts to about $150 annually, leaving the net salary around $1000.

"We maintain that this amount is less, much less than we earn, and we have been trying for some time to have Congress make us an allowance for expenses while on duty. In all other departments of the Government and elsewhere in our own department expenses while away from domicile or headquarters are paid clerks and officers, and the principle is universally recognized in the business world. We seem to be the only exception and we ask to have it remedied. We ask for actual expenses rather than raise in salary, because there is much difference in expenses of clerks on different lines and in different parts of the country, that such an allowance will equalize salaries and give every one a square deal.

"Business men, individually, and through their strong commercial bodies can help us; we ask you to. You are interested in having the best railway mail service possible, and we will try to give it to you; but you realize that efficiency goes with square dealing, so help us to make our lot a comfortable one that we may cheerfully and gladly give you the best we have, realizing our efforts are recognized and appreciated."

Working Excess Hours.

The Eighth Division of the Railway Mail Service, a convention of which has just been held in this city, comprises Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. It has headquarters at San Francisco under the superintendency of A. H. Stephens. Chief clerks are located at various important centers. The chief clerk at Portland is F. E. Whitney and under his charge is the service in Oregon, Southern Idaho, the two northernmost counties in California, and the Columbia River counties in Washington.

There are about 125 men under his supervision. Forty-six of these are employed on the Pocatello run, 50 on the Dunsmuir run and the remainder on the various other shorter runs and transfer and office duty.

A clerk on the north division of the Portland and San Francisco Railway Postoffice, the run from Portland to Dunsmuir, gives interesting figures and data in connection with the work of the men on that run.

"For the purpose of comparison," he said, "I will show the amount of time required of a Government employe or other person working on the eight-hour basis. The eight-hour employe at six days a week is required to devote 48 hours per week and in the 52 weeks of the year must give 2496 hours of his time to service.

"The railway postal clerks on trains 13 and 14 of the north division of the Portland and San Francisco route are required to make 61 round trips a year and are in actual service at least 53 hours on each trip, or a total of 3224 hours a year. This is an average of 62 hours per week or 14 hours more than is required each week of the eight-hour employe. But this is not all the time required of these clerks.

"They must devote at least seven hours per week in preparation for their runs, correcting schemes, checking up registered mail receipts, preparing for examinations, etc. This seven hours added to the 62 hours they put in on the road makes a total of 69 hours per week which is the minimum amount of time required of the clerks on these trains at this time. This is 21 hours a week more than is required of the eight-hour employes.

Service in Oregon.

"The clerks on trains 17, 15 and 16 of the same railway postoffice are required to make 61 round trips a year with a minimum of 49¼ hours' service per round trip or a total of 2996 hours per year. This is an average of 57½ hours per week, or nine and one-half hours more service than is required of the eight-hour employe. To this must be added at least seven hours per week required for clerical duty off the road which makes a total of 16½ hours which is the minimum service per week in excess of that required of the eight-hour employe.

"The Government recognizes the eight-hour law and will not permit contractors on Government work to require more than eight hours' service of their employes. I believe that any fair-minded person will agree that it is not right or just to compel us to put in from 16½ to 21 hours more each week than is required of the eight-hour employes. Clerks on the Dunsmuir division have petitioned for extra crews to be regularly assigned to their line in order that they may be put on the eight-hour basis and to relieve them of the strain of overwork to which they are now subjected. The holiday season is fast approaching when the mails are exceedingly heavy and the clerks will be required to undergo great hardships. It is my belief that unusual conditions prevail on this line and that there are few if any parallels in the United States at the present time."

Always on Duty to the Public.

Another clerk talked of the hazards and sudden demands that are made upon them at any moment. The hazards and personal experiences of each would make a story of itself.

"A railway postal clerk is often called upon to make an important decision in regard to the routing of the mail in his charge," he said. "Sometimes he has a chance to consult with his head officials, but more often he must act first and consult them afterwards. This is particularly true in cases of accidents or washouts. He sometimes has to send mail a good many hundreds of miles out of its way in order to get it to its destination in the shortest possible time.

"They work on the theory that each letter and each package entrusted to them is entitled to the quickest possible service and what is the quickest today may not be the quickest tomorrow. Several times in the last few years mail for Seattle from Portland has been sent by way of Spokane and that for San Francisco by way of Ogden. At the present time mail for Los Angeles is being sent by way of Ogden in the morning, owing to the fact that there is no through train on the Southern Pacific in the forenoon.

"Frequently letters for small towns will be carried through that town three or four times before it is finally put off. The question of which trains shall exchange mails with a town is left with the postmaster of that town to a large extent and all the clerks on the trains must know just what trains do business with each station on the different lines."

WHERE THE RULES OF POKER DIFFER

Lucky Baldwin's California Story of the Straight Flush That Lost the Pot.

A PARTY of Tammany men who at the conclusion of the Denver convention went out to have a look at the Pacific Coast met up with and had a great foregathering with Lucky Baldwin, a Democrat and sport of the olden time. He sat into a poker game with the party one night, and at the conclusion told the following story, says the New York Sun:

"A man who sits into a game of draw in a region that is new to him without first finding out the rules of the game as it is played in said region is liable to stack up against more bother than the Irish soldier who clomped into Mohammedan place of worship with his boots and spurs and cap on. I say this because you fellows have noticed of course how different our brand of poker is out here on the Coast from the game that is played back your way.

"Poker is a good deal like Indian talk. I can talk pretty fair Modoc Injun—learned it from Modocs in this state long before most of you boys were born. But I reckon if I'd talk Modoc to a bad Shoshone or an impetuous Sioux, why, he'd begin to figure on how what's left of my top hair would look for a tapeslining. And there are more mixed brands of draw poker played around the United States than there are Injun dialects.

"Now, I once saw a game of poker that resulted plumb seriously for both players on account of the lack of understanding between themselves before the game started as to just what the hands were worth. This happened in Benecia, a few miles up the bay from San Francisco, in '68.

"I was in Red O'Malley's big Benicia faro mill one Sunday afternoon trying to pump a little sense into the fool head of a friend of mine who had sloughed off nearly every dollar he had in the world against Benecia's brace games, when one of the lookouts came over to where I was standing, and said to me:

"'Red's got a hot game of draw on with a new man upstairs. Go on up and have a look?'

"Now in those days Red O'Malley was looked upon as about the keenest draw player on the Pacific Coast. He ran faro games in most of the sinsable towns in California for the coin there was in it, but he just played draw for fun.

"When I went upstairs to the poker room O'Malley was sitting in his shirt sleeves opposite a solid looking man of 40 or thereabouts, dressed in the uniform of a steamship officer. When I was told that he was chief engineer of one of the big Panama steamers I didn't have much trouble in figuring out where he'd got hold of the huge stack of gold coin he had with him.

"In those days, you see, the chief engineers of the West Coast steamers used to have entire charge of the coaling of their vessels, and they considered it entirely legitimate to take a rakedown of several thousand dollars every time they coaled ship. Coal cost from $20 to $30 a ton, and the chief engineers had the making of their reports as to their bunker space and entered into the financial arrangements with the coal dealers on the West Coast. It was the custom of the day for the chief engineers of the Panama steamers to feather their nests in this way and nobody thought any evil of it.

"This chief engineer has just been transferred from the East to the West Coast, which accounts for the ignorance he showed of the rules of the California game of draw. When I turned up I found that he'd been jolting O'Malley pretty hard since the beginning of the two-handed session, but the two brands of poker played by the two men hadn't yet come into conflict.

"You see, nobody ever played straights out on the Slope. No old-time Sloper plays straights yet. And at that time the Sloper who hadn't traveled in the East or played draw with Eastern men didn't know what the word straight meant as applied to the game of draw.

"O'Malley of course knew all about straights, but he'd never played 'em with anybody, and I think he had a right to assume that any man who played draw with him in his own territory ought to 've known the rules of the game in that territory.

"There was a big jackpot heaped in the center of the table when I got into the room to look the game over. It had been sweetened probably half a dozen times and already contained something close to $1000 in double eagles. But neither man appeared to be able to catch openers. Between them it passed back and forth about a dozen times, and every time it passed both men sweetened it for a chunk. The chief engineer dealt the final mess.

"O'Malley was one of those cool players who peeked at the corner of his cards one by one as they lay face down on the table. When he'd finally got hold of his first three tickets he joggled $200 into the middle of the table and remarked that the pot was cracked—this before looking at his other two cards.

"'These papers of mine are worth $500 more,' said the chief engineer, who was a pretty self-contained chap himself, shoving the yellow stuff into the pot.

"'Oh, they are, are they?' said O'Malley with a half grin. 'Then you want to play 'em as high as the cat's back, pard,' merely standing the raise and discarding two papers.

"The chief engineer gave himself one. He picked it up gingerly, gazed at it for a second or two, and then carefully closed his mess of cards up like a fan and laid them on the table.

"'Do your bluffing, hombrey,' he said to O'Malley.

"'How about a thousand dollars' worth?' said O'Malley, flicking the gold into the pot.

"'Fine,' said the chief engineer. 'Thousand more, though.'

"'And a thousand,' said O'Malley, until the clink of the metal became almost incessant.

"Now I had been standing back of O'Malley, and I saw him catch a pair of nines to his three deuces, and I figured that it was all over, especially as the engineer had drawn one card, which made it look like three or two pairs for him, for flushes, you understand, couldn't be drawn to in California in those days and had to be held pat to be any good. So I figured that O'Malley was already under the wire, in a way of speaking.

"But the way the engineer kept hitting back at O'Malley finally got me to guessing, and by the time he had scooped nearly all of the coin out of his sack I'd almost begun to believe that he'd held fours from the beginning or had helped threes into fours.

"When there was about $10,000 in the pot the chief engineer, cool as a mountain trout in a shady pool, emptied out his coin sack and found that he had little more than $1000 left. He shoved the $1000 to the center and said, 'You're called.'

"O'Malley spread out his deuce full of nines.

"'N. G.,' said the engineer, spreading out his seven high straight flush of diamonds and reaching for the pot.

"'What's no good? Hands off thar money!' sang out O'Malley. 'What in the devil do you mean? Since when did a drawn-for flush beat a full house?'

"'A flush doesn't,' replied the chief engineer, 'but if you'll dig the shells out of your eyes you'll see that mine is a straight flush, which beats any mess of fours in the deck. Take your flippers off that coin.'

"'Straight flush be damned,' yelled O'Malley, springing to his feet. 'Not on this side of the Sierras does it beat any man's full house!'

"The words were hardly out of O'Malley's mouth before the chief engineer, who was a big, powerful man, had O'Malley by the throat. Then he did a cruel thing. Holding the gambler's throat in a vise-like clutch with his left hand and arm, he deliberately poked his strong, horny right index finger into O'Malley's right eye, jabbing it out.

"Wild with rage and pain, O'Malley pulled himself loose and whipped out a long knife, and in two minutes the chief engineer, cut to ribbons, lay dead on the floor.

"O'Malley jumped to Tucson, where, in the mid-'70s, he was shot to death by Billy the Kid while dealing faro bank for that indiscriminate young killer."

How the Little Tots Are Prepared for School Work

Lilian Tingle Makes Visit to Miss Zell McCartney's Irvington Kindergarten and Tells of What Is Being Done.

CHILDREN ATTENDING KINDERGARTEN AT IRVINGTON TENNIS CLUB

BY LILIAN TINGLE.

THERE are parents and teachers who look a little dubious when you mention the word "kindergarten." There are others who express emphatic opinions that kindergarten work is "a lot of play and nonsense"; and there are again others who will tell you enthusiastically of what the kindergarten has done for their children.

That is because there are kindergartens and kindergartens. There is the "play" kind, with perhaps a young and imperfectly trained teacher with no very clear ideas as to either purpose or methods; and there is the "work" kindergarten, with a well-planned carefully-developed course, which correlates with the primary work of the schools and does much more for the little people than simply keeping them amused and out of their parents' way.

The Irvington Tennis Club Kindergarten is the latter kind. Its teacher, Miss Zell McCartney, has not only a deep and genuine understanding and love of children, but has had the training which enables her to direct their activities in a way that brings excellent results. The children are definitely prepared for primary work, and when the first day of "real school" comes, they have a comprehension of discipline, can follow instructions, think a little for themselves, and have ideas of color, form, writing, phonics and number work, and something of general knowledge and cultivated memory for the new teacher to build upon; so that she may truthfully send to inquiring parents the gratifying report: "Your child is one of the brightest and best behaved in my room."

If you want to know just how these things are accomplished you must visit the kindergarten and try to think back to the time when you were a wriggling, giggling bunch of mischief in curls and diminutive skirts, or in all the masculine dignity of cropped hair and your first "reel cloth pants, wiv pockets." First comes the collection of their small pupils by Miss McCartney and her two assistants. You march, 30 of you, in a two by two "crocodile" from your home to the pleasant club room, with its big fireplace, its tiny tables and chairs, and its fascinating pictures and sand-table. It's most fun in rainy weather when there are small umbrellas to manage and puddles to endiven the line of march, and rubbers to squabble over joyously when it's time to go home and miss McCartney looks you over to see that you are all properly wrapped and buttoned, and shod.

On arrival you show each other your new shoes (you don't mean to be vain, but you can't help saying, "Mine's nicer 'n yours!" Didn't your own mamma choose them for you?) or you introduce to each other dolls and Teddy bears that have come to visit; or you help arrange chairs or water plants or do other pleasant things, until a chord on the piano brings you to attention with your small toes on the big circle in the middle of the room.

You shake hands all around (good manners is one of the things you learn in kindergarten) and sing a good-morning song. Then there is some quiet music which somehow settles you down a little, and you are ready for the stories and songs that introduce the "leading thought" of the day.

"Leading thoughts" are excellent things; but you don't always follow them in the conventional way. You are having a little talk on the days of the week, and the teacher asks how you know when it is Sunday. Did she expect an answer about church bells or Sunday school? Quick as a flash one small maiden pipes up: "Sunday's the day when my poppa stays home an' fixes his automobill."

How you enjoy the "dramatizing work (you call it "let's pretend" in your own mind) and how eager you are to play father or mother-bird or to flutter as an open-mouthed fledgling from the nest.

Then you go to the tables for your "gift lesson" and number work, with nice colored balls and cubes and beads and things. Just about the time when "the fidgets" are likely to attack you, you find yourself marching or playing lively games. If the weather is fine these take place outdoors in the play-yard.

Next you have painting or clay modeling, or sewing, or you go on "journeys" on the sand table. And before you know it, here it is half past eleven, and time for the good-bye circle and song.

You are far from being a little angel; but somehow you haven't had time or opportunity to be naughty; or if you did nearly succeed in being so, you now have acute spasms of repentance, and, hugging your teacher, you promise to be "awful good tomorrow."

Wheels.

1808.

See Grandma, sweet in linsey gown.
In the long living room she stands,
And patient spins her daily stent;
Guides the big wheel with slim white hands.

1888.

Lo! this is Mother's busy day.
She's stitching dainty lawn and lace.
Swift turns the wheel of her machine.
While she the treadle works apace.

1908.

Hi! Mab's gloved hand is on the wheel.
Through perils darts she in and out.
Skills scorches, speeds and spins and whirls.
She's trying a new runabout.

—New York Times.