

Prisoners and Captives

By H. S. MERRIMAN

CHAPTER XVI.

There is no cloak for tears like laughter. He is a strong man who merely does nothing in the midst of tears. Most men either laugh or weep, but some there are who remain grave.

Matthew Mark Easton was not a strong man. The last meeting of the association he was pleased to call "Guy Fawkes" was looked forward to by him with positive dread. He did not hold himself responsible for Pavloski and his three companions, for he knew well enough that he himself was but a means to the end. If these four Russians had not met with him, they would still have gone to Siberia; for they were branded, their souls were seared by the hot iron—the three-headed iron of unquenchable vengeance.

Sergius Pavloski was the first to arrive. Immaculate, cold, and self-contained as usual; his old-fashioned dress clothes scrupulously brushed, his large amethyst shirt studiously polished. There was a steady glitter in his unpleasantly veiled eyes, but his manners were always suave and courtly.

"Ah, Smith!" cried Easton; "punctual as usual. We business men know its value, eh?—especially at meal times."

When the guests were assembled, Easton led the way to another room, where dinner was served. The usual silence upon the subject of their meeting was observed until the meal was over, and all chairs were drawn round the fire.

Then the informal proceedings commenced. Matthew Mark Easton was a trifle more restless than usual; his mobile features alternated between grave and gay, while his dancing eyes were never still.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we have done a vast deal of talking, and now at last some of us are going into action. Each one of you knows his part, and each one of you, of course, will do his best. The three gentlemen who leave to-night for Siberia take absolutely nothing with them except a little money. There are no maps, no letters, no instructions, nothing that an enemy can get hold of. We have, however, taken measures to supply them with money at various stages of the journey. We have also completed a method of communication, by means of which the safe progress of the travelers can from time to time be reported to St. Petersburg, and subsequently to the headquarters in London. But in case of partial failure, it is quite understood that the others go on. Mr. Tyars undertakes to get his ship round Cape Chelyuskin, and to wait for you at the meeting place arranged, namely, the westernmost mouth of the river Yana, not far from Oust Yansk, where we have a good friend. On the 10th of July he sails thence to complete the northeast passage, and reach the coast of Alaska. That date, gentlemen, is fixed. If no one comes to meet him, he goes on alone, but he hopes to see you all there, and each with a party not exceeding fifteen persons."

The three men turned their dull eyes toward the two Englishmen seated side by side. Unconsciously the seven men assembled had grouped themselves in order. The stout Russian and Easton were seated side by side with their backs to the table, and on their left were placed the three young Russians, while on the right the two sailors sat side by side—a big man and a small one—the lesser and the greater power.

"Of course," went on Easton, "the distances are enormous, but we have endeavored to equalize them as much as possible. The meeting point has been fixed with a view to this. It is the southernmost anchorage obtainable east of Cape Chelyuskin, though it is far within the Arctic Circle. We have succeeded, I surmise, in keeping our scheme completely secret. No one knows of it except ourselves; not even the Nihilist party in London. We must remember that we are not Nihilists, but merely seven men engaged upon a private enterprise. We have friends who have been unjustly exiled, many of them without a trial—upon mere suspicion. We are attempting to rescue those friends; that is all."

"Yes," echoed the stout man, speaking for the first time, "that is all. I seek my daughter."

"And I my sister," said one.

"And I my brother," said another.

"It is," added Pavloski, slowly, "a wife with me."

Tyars and Grace said nothing. They had not quite thought it out, and were unprepared with a reason. Easton was more at ease now. He consulted a little notebook hitherto concealed in his waistcoat pocket.

"I have endeavored," he continued, without taking his eyes from the pocket-book, "to make every department independent as far as possible. For instance, my own death would in no wise affect the expedition. The money and information would, after such an event, continue to filter through to Siberia by prearranged channels. In case of the death or imprisonment of our agent in St. Petersburg, the same communications would be kept open. We have each a substitute, and the arrangements are so simple that these substitutes will have no difficulty in carrying them out. I need scarcely tell you that heavy bribes have been sent to the right quarters in Siberia—high official quarters."

The stout man grunted in a knowing way, and signified by a little nod of the head that no further interruption need be feared.

"In Russia," continued Easton, turning the pages of his notebook, "we all know that every official has his price. The only difficulty lies in the discovery of that price. The only parts that have not been doubled are those of the three gentlemen who go out to Siberia to organize the escape of the prisoners and exiles. I surmise that it is unnecessary to point out that these parts cannot be doubled. There are not three other such men to be found. As to our ship, she was built, above and below, under the personal supervision of Mr. Tyars and myself. In Mr. Tyars and Lieutenant Grace we have two sailors eminently calculated to bear the strain that will be put upon them. Humanly speaking, they may be trusted to do all that man can do to get the Argo around Cape Chelyuskin to the rendezvous by the date named. This is our last meeting in Lon-

don. Some of us may see each other again. I trust to God we shall. I trust that He who knows no nationalities will bring five of you together again next summer."

There was a pause. Matthew Mark Easton turned the pages of his notebook in a vague, aimless way. Then in that same position, without looking around, he spoke in a low tone of voice:

"Gentlemen," he said, "my report is finished."

CHAPTER XVII.

On the evening of the Admirals' Club dinner, early in December, Helen had been in the habit of dining at the Winters'. Although Agnes Winter was now alone, she seemed singularly anxious to keep up this custom, and Helen acceded to her proposal readily enough. Oswin was easily disposed of. A sailor returning to London after an absence of some years can usually employ his evenings satisfactorily.

It happened that Miss Winter was absent from town during the three days preceding the anniversary, and Helen was, therefore, left in ignorance as to the nature of the entertainment to which she was invited. As she drove through the fog and gloom of December streets the thought came to her, however, that had there been other guests her brother Oswin would, in the ordinary course of events, have been invited. This thought generated others, and before the little brougham drew up smoothly, the young girl was verging upon a conviction that the course of events had diverged already from the commonplace. She was not, therefore, surprised to see Miss Winter standing at the head of the brightly lighted, softly carpeted stairs to greet her. Before she spoke Helen had guessed that they were to pass the evening alone together, and as she mounted the stairs she did her best to quell an indefinite feeling of discomfort.

The drawing room looked intensely cozy. Two armchairs, and two only, small and low, were drawn forward to the fire, and between them a small table, promising coffee. In response to a little gesture of the hand, Helen took possession of one of the chairs. Miss Winter took up an evening newspaper, of which the careful cutting betrayed no tampering on the part of a literary cook, and slowly unfolded it.

"I want," she said, "to see who is acting in that new piece at the Epic. I had a note from Oswin to-day, proposing to make up a party for next Wednesday."

"Yes; he spoke to me about it. I should like to go."

Miss Winter continued to unfold the paper with a considerable bustle. She was not looking at it, but at Helen, who seemed interested in the texture of an absurd little lace handkerchief.

"Who is going?"

The girl raised her head and frowned slightly, as if making a mental effort.

"Let me see—papa, Oswin, you, myself, and—oh, yes, Mr. Tyars."

Miss Winter was not an impulsive woman. There was a graceful finish and sense of leisure about her movements, but before Helen could move, her friend was kneeling on the white fur hearth rug, drawing her toward her, forcing her to face the light.

"Helen, let me see your face."

It was almost a command, and the girl obeyed, slowly turning. Her eyes were dull, as if with physical agony. Miss Winter relinquished the warm, soft fingers. She half turned, and sat with her hands clasped in her lap, gazing into the fire.

"When," she asked, "was it? Long ago at Oxford, or only just lately?"

"I suppose," Helen answered, quietly, "that it was long ago at Oxford; but—but I think I did not know it."

This daughter of a sailor race was not given to tears, but now her lashes were glistening softly. It is not the bitterest tear that falls.

"My poor, poor Helen!" murmured Miss Winter, stroking her friend's hand gently. "And he—Claud Tyars—he has said nothing?"

"Of course not."

Miss Winter's eyes fell on the newspaper lying open at her feet. Mechanically she read the heading of a long article on the "New Arctic Expedition." Her heart sank within her.

"But, Helen," she whispered, "do you think he—"

"Hush, dear," interrupted the girl. "Don't ask me that."

"Helen, will you tell me one thing?"

The girl moved uneasily, keeping her eyes averted.

"I think not," she answered, "you can ask it, but I do not think I will answer it."

"Long ago," murmured the low voice of the elder woman, "long ago at Oxford did you think—Helen, forgive my asking—did you think that he loved you?"

There was a long silence, broken only by the officious little clock upon the mantel piece, and the heated creak of the glowing cinders. Then at last the answer came:

"No—no, certainly not. But he was different from the others—quite different. It seems ridiculous, but at the time I thought that it was because he was a Cambridge man."

"Then if you had not met again this would not have happened?"

"No," answered Helen, gravely; "it would not. I wonder why Oswin should have saved him, of all men, in the middle of the Atlantic ocean."

CHAPTER XVIII.

On this same day Oswin Grace died with Claud Tyars at his club. It was in this manner that he disposed of his unoccupied evening.

During the actual meal, served in a tall, hushed, and rather lonesome room, by a portentious gentleman in red plush breeches and pink stockings, there was not much opportunity for private conversation. The elder man was the first to break the silence. He watched the fire burn while he spoke.

"You have not," he said, interrogatively, "got leave from the Admiralty yet?"

"Not yet," was the answer, returned confidently. Grace evidently anticipated no difficulty.

"Then don't do it."

The little square-shouldered man sat up, but Tyars bore with perfect equanimity the glance of a remarkably direct pair of eyes.

"Why," he asked, "do you want to get rid of me?"

"I don't want to get rid of you. There is no man about whom I would put in your place. But I must be consistent. I have refused many good men for the same reason. You have too many—home ties."

"What do you mean?"

It was an awkward question, for Tyars had been assured by this man's sister that there existed a distinct understanding between him and Miss Winter.

"You see," said Tyars, awkwardly, "I am quite alone in the world. I have no one to sit at home and worry over my absence or my silence. I should like all the fellows who go with me to be in the same circumstances."

A somewhat prolonged silence followed—the stately silence of a club room, with padded doors and double windows. The two men smoked meditatively.

"I suppose," said Grace, at length, "that Helen has been getting at you."

"I merely told her that you were going. She did not say in what way it would affect her; only suppose we are away two years—suppose we don't come back at all. Your father is an old man—she will be alone in the world."

Oswin Grace stroked his neatly cropped beard thoughtfully.

"Helen," he said at length, "will marry. Like most big men, Tyars possessed the faculty of sitting very still. During the silence that followed this remark he might have been hewn of solid stone, so motionless was he as to limbs, features and even nerves. At length he moistened his lips and turned his slow gaze to meet that of his companion, who was sitting forward in his chair awaiting the effect of this argument.

"Yes," he said, "that is probable, and she always has her friend—Miss Winter."

Oswin Grace relapsed suddenly into the chair.

"Yes," he said, "she will always have Agnes Winter, and if she married, her friendship would be only the more useful."

That settled it. Claud Tyars gave a little sigh of relief, and helped himself to coffee.

"Of course," he said, "if you feel quite free from the slightest moral obligation, I have nothing more to say."

"Thank you," said Oswin Grace, with relieved cheerfulness; "that is exactly how I feel. But, old fellow, I wish you would give me notice when you feel a fit like that coming on. It gave me a beastly fright. Quite a turn, as my washerwoman said, when she saw my shirt-cuff covered with red paint."

(To be continued.)

DOOMED MEN STILL LIVE.

No Legal Execution Has Taken Place in Kansas for Thirty Years.

"Although men are condemned to the death penalty in Kansas, there hasn't been a legal execution in our State for thirty years or more," said W. I. Bidle, a prominent citizen of Leavenworth and a director of the State penitentiary at that place, to a Post-Examiner at the Raleigh.

"The reason is the law directs the imprisonment of those doomed to the gallows for a year following their conviction, after which it is incumbent on the governor to affix his signature to the death warrant, a thing that none of our chief executives in the time mentioned has done, and as a consequence the condemned men remain in prison year after year, getting what may be a life term in lieu of hanging. There are over fifty convicts of this class now within the walls of the Leavenworth prison, and among them some of the most celebrated criminals of this generation.

"Of these the most notorious, perhaps, is Emmett Dalton, whose three brothers were slain in the famous fight that they raged on the Coffeyville bank brought on, in which Emmett himself received fearful wounds, the marks of which he still carries. He is almost a model prisoner, his conduct being at all times exemplary. For many years he has been employed as a cutter in the prison tailor shop and does first-rate work.

"Another star inmate is Willie Sells, who in 1880, at the age of 35, in Neosho County, murdered his father, mother and sister. Still another is John Collins, convicted of the murder of his father on circumstantial evidence. Collins was one of the brightest students at the State University and his arrest for paricide created an immense sensation throughout the State. There are a few women also in the list, most noted of whom is Jessie Morrison, who killed a woman for marrying her sweetheart.

"One of the hardest things to get out of the average convict is his true name. Occasionally this is due to the unwillingness to bring disgrace on his family, but in the majority of cases it arises from a fear that such a revelation will cause the sheriff's of other localities to locate a man wanted for some prior infraction of the law. I have known men serve an extra year in prison rather than tell their right names, for it is an iron-clad law that a refusal on this point is a barrier to parole.

"Not very long ago a parole was given a prisoner who had been behind the bars for twenty-one years. Curiously enough, he could have had his liberty long ago but for the stern and unyielding opposition of his wife, and when at last his release came it was in the face of her vigorous protest."—Washington Post.

His Mistake.

"It's no use talking," said his wife, firmly, "my mind is made up and—"

"Oh, it is, eh?" interrupted her husband. "I knew your face was, but I thought your mind was the real thing."

When a man is wrong and won't admit it, he always gets angry.—Halliburton.

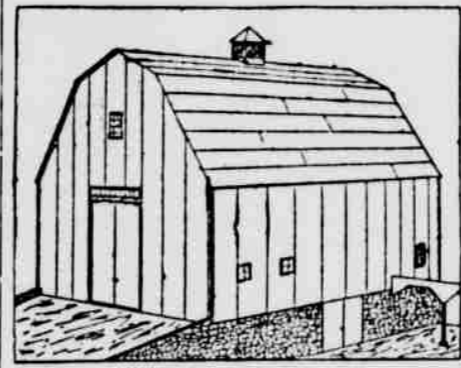


The Farm Labor Question.

Much is being said just now about labor on the farm. The farmers complain that labor is both scarce and inefficient, while the farm hands grumble about their poor pay and long hours. As to the matter of wages, I believe the hired man is right; while the farmer is often correct as to the poor quality of the help to be had. The reason for this is not far to seek. Other occupations have offered greater inducements to the man without capital, and the best men have left the farm and gone to them. There is, it must be confessed, little inducement for a strong, willing, energetic young man to work on a farm at \$12 or \$15 per month and board. He can usually do better elsewhere, and elsewhere he goes. This is true of all grades of service; and not until the farm can offer the man of muscle and the man of brain as much for their services as they can get elsewhere can the farm hold them. Higher wages for farm hands are, to my mind, inevitable; and this means that many farmers will have to learn how to better handle their men. What is needed is not cheap labor, and lots of it, but good labor and skillful management for it. While this is true of the labor problem as a whole, it is equally true that the main question is that of individuality. A farmer who treats his hired man as he would wish to be treated if he were the wage earner can usually get men, and the laborer who looks after his employer's interests as his own can always find employment. You can no more leave out the individuality in considering the "servant question." What is in greatest demand is mutual confidence and a mutual desire to do the best that can be done. A difference in wages of a dollar or two a month is a small thing to the difference between a good man and a poor one, or between a good place and a bad one.—E. E. Miller, in Agricultural Epitomist.

Plank-Frame Barn.

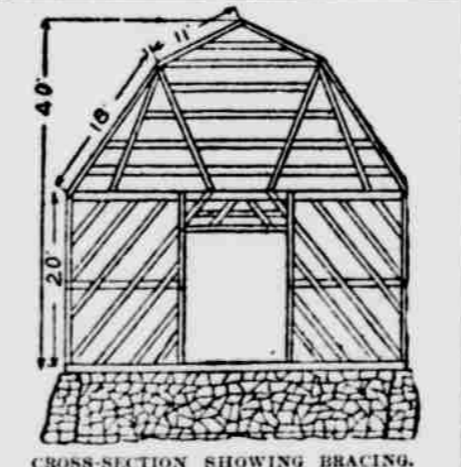
The evolution of the plank-frame barn is the natural result of the scarcity of timber for building. A considerable saving in lumber and ease of building is effected in the plank frame. Less time and fewer men are required in the erection, and there is little or nothing sacrificed in strength through the excellent method of bracing enables them to stand the pressure of hay and grain within or strong winds without. A solid frame foundation



PLANK-FRAME BARN.

may be used or the entire structure may be of plank. A good, firmly built stone and cement foundation is advisable. With this to rest the plank upon the frame is raised.

No sills are used and the upright studs take the place of posts. Two for each post are set on the foundation on each side. Between these the cross-plank is placed and spiked so that it will extend the width of the barn and tie the two sides together. The scantlings on each side of the barn floor, forming center posts, are then raised and spiked in place. Upon the outside of each upright is spiked a plank of the same size as and parallel with the first cross plank. This gives three 2x8 inches for cross sills through the center of the barn, each joint or bar being fixed in this way. End joints, using boards instead of plank on outside, give the bedwork of the barn. At the sides, between uprights in place of sill, a plank is firmly spiked; this holds the uprights firmly in place and prevents working sideways while the thoroughly spiked cross planks prevent all movement in other directions. Throughout



CROSS-SECTION SHOWING BRACING.

there should be no sparing of spike nails, as these are an essential feature to secure solidity.

Wormy Plums.

The plums that have been stung by the curculio, and the wormy fruit of the early summer, should be picked off. It isn't much trouble, and it doesn't cost any more to do it now than later. The fruit that brings high prices will grow much larger if these parasites are removed.

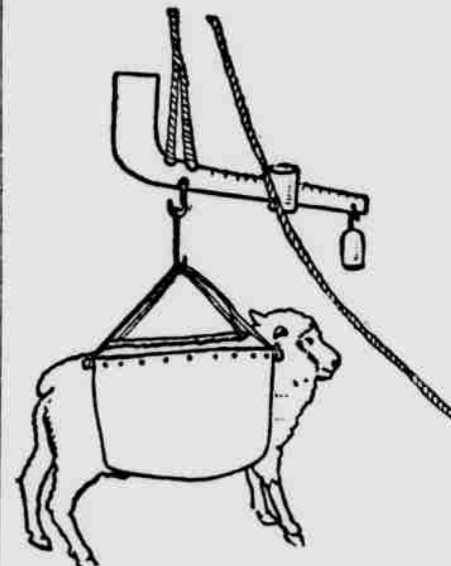
Crop-Bound Fowls.

Every farmer is familiar with what is called "crop-bound" in fowls. The crop becomes packed with food that has ceased to pass into the gizzard of the bird. If the contents of the crop consist of grain only, the fowl should be kept from food for some days. In addition, the crop should be manipulated with the hands. This will tend to loosen the grain and start its passage into the gizzard.

Sometimes the condition is caused by feeding cut hay, dried alfalfa or clover, which have packed at the point where the food should pass out of the crop. One poultry raiser in cases of this kind pours sweet oil down the throat of the bird, and this loosens up the mass. In bad cases he opens the crop by cutting and removes the collected food, afterward sewing up the crop. He says that this does appear to cause the bird much pain. After this is done the bird should be fed only milk or other light food for some days.

For Weighing Lambs.

Mr. John Spears, of British Columbia, sends to the Montreal Star a sketch of a contrivance for weighing live lambs. Farmers who have lambs to sell are in need of some such method of ascertaining their weight. It consists



HOW TO WEIGH THE LAMB.

of an ordinary wheat sack, having two suitable sticks attached to top and bottom. A stout piece of rope is attached to the ends of each of these sticks. The whole forms a sling. By this method the lambs do not wriggle and they can't get out when once in, and it is very quick, humane and effective.

Reviving Old Fruit Trees.

A Maryland fruit grower has after several years of experimenting discovered a way to revive old fruit trees and keep them in bearing condition long after their supposed stage of usefulness has passed. As the cause of decay in a tree is its inability to carry the sap to all of its branches, heading the tree lessens the area to be traversed, the amount of top to be removed, varying according to the farmer's judgment. Bone-dust and ashes must then be administered as a fertilizer, the latter in the autumn and the other in the spring. This treatment will revive old trees, the cutting off the branches, tending to increase the number of fruit buds formed, and the ashes and bone-dust tending to stimulate the tree growth.

The Farm Garden.

No farmer can afford to do without a good garden. It is not to be expected that every one will be a fancy gardener, but every one should give sufficient attention to the subject so as to produce all staple vegetables earlier than can be produced in the field. It is not only essential to the health and proper enjoyment of the family, but it is actually a matter of profit. Could your whole farm be made as smooth, dry, rich and as well cultivated as a good garden, the increased product would pay a large per cent of profit upon the outlay. In the garden, or in a separate compartment, may be cultivated strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, currants, grapes and dwarf pears. They can all be had at a very small cost of money or labor, and will add immensely to the enjoyment of the household.

Tarred Paper Injures Trees.

In a newly set orchard the trees were wrapped with tarred building paper as a protection against the rabbits. The paper was not removed early in the spring, and as the hot weather came on the tar melted and adhered to the bark and destroyed the live bark and cambium layer wherever it came in contact. As a result, many of the trees were entirely killed. However, a good grade of coal tar is very efficient in preventing decay of exposed wood in recently trimmed trees.

Collar and Saddle Galls.

Galls on horses are due to several causes, but frequently to saddles and harness that press unevenly on the body. The collar should fit the horse perfectly, and it cannot be too good. A loose girth to a saddle may allow it to shift. When a gall is noticed there is something wrong with the saddle or harness, and no remedy will be available until the cause of the gall is removed. An examination of the harness should be made whenever the horse is brought up from work at night, and it should be kept in good condition or the horse will suffer.

Bean Poles.

As soon as the lima beans start up the pole, be sure to tie them up with raffia. If you are trying to use last year's white birch poles, you are going to have them rot off and fall down and cause no end of trouble. There is nothing better than cedar bean poles.

OUR ARMY IN GRAY.

UNCLE SAM'S LETTER CARRIER'S NUMBER 22,000.

They Work in 1,200 Cities and Towns—Present System Due to Sunset Cox's Efforts—Carrying the Mail in Skyscrapers.

The most rapidly increasing army the United States government has is an army in gray. It started with hardly



SAMUEL S. COX.

a handful of men over forty years ago. Its ranks have grown steadily, never thinning in times of profound peace. Now these men in gray are quite a third as many as the government's regular military establishment on land.

They are the letter carriers in almost 1,200 cities and large towns of the United States. Their number is now approximately 22,000. To be exact, according to the last official count, they were 21,778. They have doubled numerically in the last fifteen years. In the very last year—which in postoffice parlance means the last fiscal year—they increased almost 5 per cent, which is a very large increase. Could they all be marshalled on Boston Common from their 1,200 towns and cities they would be as imposing a force, perhaps, as ever assembled on that historic ground.

"Sunset" Cox, lawyer, editor and legislator, a graduate of Brown University, who served several terms in Congress, first from Ohio and then from New York, was known as the father of the carrier service. It is, in considerable part, due to his efforts that the free delivery of mail was developed. It was during the Fifth Congress, covering the latter half of the first Cleveland administration, that the letter carrier service began its modern growth, jumping 19.3 per cent in one year and 30.1 per cent the following year, till it comprised 8,257 men in 401 towns and cities on June 30, 1889. Just after Benjamin Harrison had entered the White House.

But while those proportions seemed large for those days, they were small as compared with the present day. For the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1889, the carrier service was costing the treasury \$6,957,042. The cost has grown by leaps and bounds till last year it was \$20,919,678. The cost per carrier then was \$843; last year at was \$961.

Ex-Representative Eugene F. Loud, of California, who was long chairman of the House Committee on Postoffices and Post Roads, told recently how he remembered the penny post in Boston when a young man before the Civil War. Individuals delivered letters for a penny each, the recipients paying for the service. There was a similar service elsewhere. It led eventually to the Postoffice Department taking over the work. At first postmasters hired the carriers and made the arrangements for their salary. The present civil service examinations for admission, and the grading of salaries and the prescribing of the strict eight-hour law, for which Representative Cox was chiefly responsible, and other latter-day laws and regulations for the discipline and maintenance of the big force were unknown.

It is a frequent saying that postoffice receipts form a good gauge of local prosperity. The gross receipts of free delivery offices have been climbing very steadily. With few exceptions, the total has been larger every year, which means that the carriers have had more mail matter to collect and also to deliver. The gross receipts of \$109,801,335 in the 1,114 free delivery offices last year were by far the largest ever known. The number of carriers was increased by 1,020 and the number of free delivery offices that year increased by 44.

The estimated population of the cities and towns having free delivery was 36,432,353, almost half of the entire population of the United States. Each of these 21,778 carriers served an average of 1,675 people, who had their mail put down at the door from two to nine times every weekday, according as they resided in a small or large city and in the business or residence section.

The consolidation of service and the taking of towns adjacent to large centers of population have helped swell the army of carriers in gray to a degree. Thus the area covered by the carriers from a given office is generally larger now than it was ten years ago.

The largest area is that in Chicago, where the carriers, numbering 1,619, traverse 100 square miles. Before Belmont and Waverly were added, the free delivery area in Boston was 95 square miles, covered by 1,622 carriers, almost a twentieth of the entire free delivery carrier force. The addition of Belmont and Waverly gives the free delivery district of Boston, comprising 38 stations, an area of approximately 100 square miles. New York City's 1,983 letter carriers cover a district of only 62.35 square miles.

Personal Proof.

The visitor to Mr. Nutritch—Your floors are beautiful. This is hardwood, isn't it?

Mr. Nutritch—Guess it must be. I slipped down on it seven times. It seemed hard.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Any man who sticks up for his friends only when they are present is a sneak.

More often than not the inside tip fails to win out.