To be one of an army of 10,000; to travel by railroad 23,000 miles every year; to stand in a car forming part of a swaying, rushing train, surrounded by open-mouthed sacks and pigeon holes, shuffling letters and papers at the rate of 2,500 per hour; knowing that every error goes against your record; to work sometimes sixteen to twenty-four hours at a stretch, often sleepy and hungry—these are some of the daily experiences of the railway mail clerks. Then add to these the constant possibility of being knocked into eternity or crippled for life in a wreck.

Yet they are a contented lot, these railway mail clerks, happy only when "on the road." But it is not the environment for a domestic man, nor for him who has passed the top of the hill of life and is jogging down into the dark valley beyond. Thus a majority of the clerks are young men; these are preferred by the Post Office Department, for they have fewer cares, are more active, and can work faster and with greater accuracy.

Uncle Sam is proud of the personnel of this expert force and takes every precaution for their safety and comfort. Their hours are fixed, and overtime is required only in cases of absolute necessity.

A Traveling Postoffice.

A railway mail car is technically an "R. P. O." or Railway Post Office. It runs between stated points, receiving and distributing mail through post offices along the line. It is a government post office on wheels, and is United States territory, though owned by the railroad. It is as well built and as completely equipped for its purpose as a Pullman. Iron racks for mail sacks extend along each side. Above are tiers of open boxes and pigeon holes. "Work tables" sl' e on the racks. There is neither plush nor mahogany. It is built for work and is the abode of workers.

Let us imagine that this car is the "R. P. O." leaving Pittsburg, Pa., for Cleveland, Ohio, over the Pennsylvania road. The Pittsburg city post office delivers to the car mail for points east of Cleveland (called "local mail") and "through mail" for Cleveland and points west. The train rushes out of Pittsburg. The whistle blows for a station. No stop here. A "helper," opens a side door, swings out the mail "catcher" and picks up a mail sack from a crane by the track. Now the work begins. This sack contains mail from the station just passed. Some of it is for the next office, some for Cleveland, some for the for west. The mail is dumped on a table and a clerk pounces on it like a wolf on a lamb. He tosses letters in all directions. He throws papers and packages hither and yon, this way and that, as fast as an expert card player can distribute a deck. But every piece of mail finds its mark in a particular sack or box. The sacks and boxes are labeled; but the labels are unnecessary; his quick eye catches only the name of the office, ignoring that of the addressee. Though the work appears mechanical it calls for a high degree of training. Note the marvelous accuracy—less than two per cent. of errors in the work of the whole force for a given year.

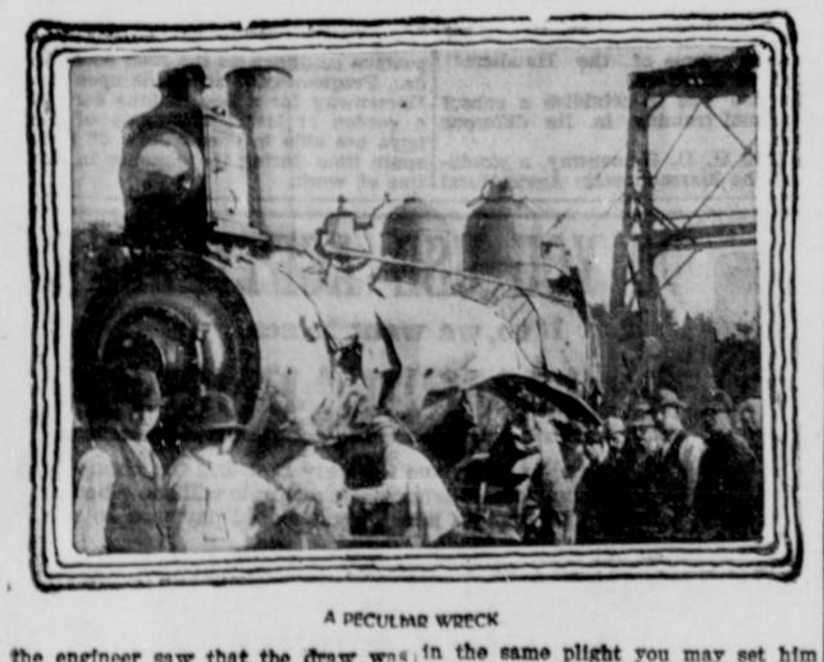
The whistle blows for another way station. The door is opened, a sack is thrown off, and the catcher yanks another sack about for distribution. And so it goes without cessation. The whole scheme is so arranged that there is just time, working with the utmost speed and accuracy, to make connections.

Skill Needed to Throw Sacks.

Throwing off sacks calls for another kind of skill. The expert knows from the weight of sack, speed of train and pressure of wind just when and how to let the sack go. He can drop it on a mark. If the platform be crowded or littered with baggage he must pick a clear spot lest his cannon ball of leather and mail team up against some unsuspecting traveler. I have seen a mail clerk drop a sixty pound sack from a train going a mile a minute, landing it lightly on a truck twenty feet from the track.

Of course there are accidents, and danger is always present. Yet in ten years past but 96 clerks have been killed on the road—an average of ten a year, with a force numbering up to 11,000. The legal representative of each clerk so killed receives $1,000 from the government. Arrangements are contemplated for payment of an annuity to every clerk permanently disabled in line of duty.

The mail car is usually next the tender and runs a greater risk in accidents than a passenger car. But the position is sometimes advantageous. An instance is cited of a peculiar wreck near Poughkeepsie, N. Y. The train was crossing a bridge when the engineer saw that the draw was open. His speed was such that he could not stop. But he was a quick thinker. Reversing the engine for a moment he suddenly threw the throttle wide. The comparatively light tender and mail car responded instantly, while the heavy baggage and passenger coaches constituted a drag that broke the coupling. Relieved of this burden the engine, tender and mail car shot ahead and leaped the twenty-foot draw, landing on the other side in safety. The engine careened and side-wiped the iron bridge work, tearing its jacket to tatters and knocking the cab into the river. The rest of the train, with brakes set automatically, came to a stop without a foot to spare.



A PECULIAR WRECK

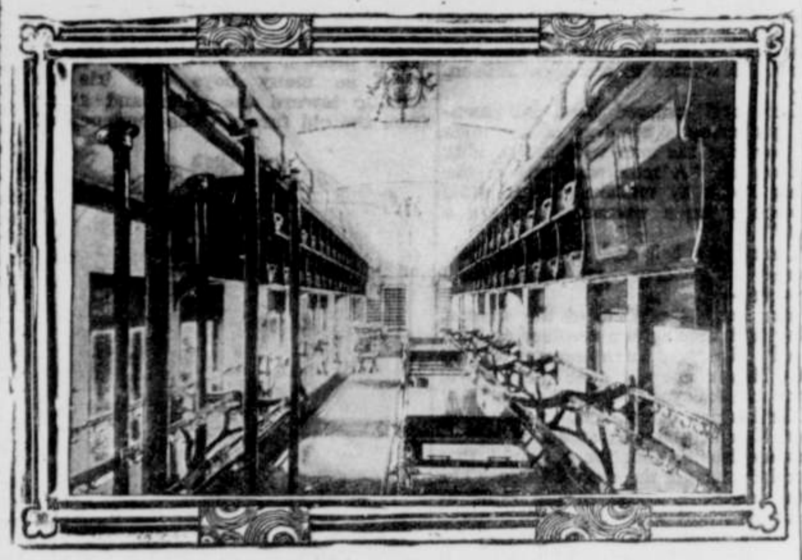
Bees Natural Spendthrifts.

The New York Times reprinted from a Montreal paper—which doubtless lifted it from one in London—a most amiable story to the effect that when bees are taken to Australia they learn in a single year the uselessness of storing honey for a winter that never comes and that they thereafter abandon their dear-bought fame as models of industry and hilariously devote to sport or idleness all of their time except just enough in each day to satisfy that day's hunger. No doubt this tale will shock and grieve a large number of estimable people, but for our own part, says the Times, it very considerably increases such little affection as we previously had for these tiresomely virtuous fowl and therefore will we do our best to believe it. There are some difficulties in the way of doing that. Bees, despite their reputation for intelligence, are evidently about the stupidest things with wings—merely animated acquisitiveness, indeed working as hard as an American millionaire to pile up wealth far beyond any possible needs, without a single talent except to get, get, get.

As fighters, while bees are brave enough, they are unable to strike more than a single blow against any of their more dangerous foes, dying themselves as a result of it, while the foes, after howling with pain for a bit, calm down and hunt more honey. It is almost incredible, therefore, that a creature incapable of seeing the futility of work carried to an absurd extreme only for the profit of human robbers should be able so quickly to draw an inference from the failure of winter to appear when expected. "Almost" is not "quite," however, and we, too, can believe what we want to believe. So we will not question the story from Australia—where everything is possible, anyhow—and we hope that somebody will take a few of our ants down there and prove that they, also, are industrious only because they have to be—that they are not a bit fonder of industry than are the butterflies or any of the sluggards who have always had the sense to see that between toil to-day and hunger to-morrow there is so little to choose that differences of opinion on the subject are entirely permissible.

Famous for Artificial Noses.

The city of Indore is modern and ugly and uninteresting. Apart from being the prosperous capital of a rich native state, its chief claim to notoriety rests upon its hospital, which has won universal fame by the manufacture of artificial noses. That may seem a very limited industry on which to build a name. But in India there are several ways of promoting this industry. When a woman comes to the hospital carrying her nose in a napkin you may fairly assume that her husband suspects a breach of the Seventh Commandment. When a man appears in the same plight you may set him down as a usurer who has fallen into the hands of his clients, and has had no Portia to plead his cause. Indore is the Mecca of these unfortunates.



INTERIOR OF A MAIL CAR.

OUR SUGAR CONSUMPTION.

Beet Sugar Now More Than Half the World's Total Production.

Of the more than 1,200 million dollar's worth of merchandise brought into the United States during the last year more than 150 million dollar's worth was sugar. Sugar formed by far the largest single item in this largest importation which the United States has ever made in any single year.

The United States is increasing steadily and rapidly its consumption of sugar. The sugar producers at home are increasing their output of both cane and beet sugar, but even their rapid increase in production is not keeping pace with the increasing home demand, and as a consequence the quantity of sugar brought into the country increases from year to year. It has doubled in the last twenty years, while population meantime increased but 50 per cent. The annual average importation during the five-year period ending with 1885 was 1,031,149 tons, and during the five-year period ending with 1905 the annual average was 2,106,043 tons, despite the fact that the sugar production at home had grown from 176,035 tons in 1885 to approximately 600,000 tons in 1905.

The United States is the largest sugar-consuming country in the world, though the per capita consumption in this country is not as great as in the United Kingdom. The total consumption in 1904 aggregated 2,767,000 tons, making an average consumption for each individual for the year of about 75 pounds.

During the half century prior to 1890 beet sugar formed a small proportion, of the world's sugar production, the percentage which beets supplied of the world's sugar product being in 1840 but 4.3 per cent, in 1850 14.3 per cent, in 1890 63.7 per cent, while 1900 showed for beets the highest proportion in the world's production of sugar, 67.7 per cent.

Ghostly Ashes.

They had just moved in the house and, as is usually the case, the former tenants had left much rubbish behind them.

"Just look," complained the little woman, "here are three horrid pails of ashes in the yard."

"Ah," laughed the big husband, "speak of them with more reverence."

"Reverence. Why should I?

"Why, they are the ashes of the departed."

"TOO MUCH LAW-MAKING."

REPRESENTATIVE BOWERSOCK, OF KANSAS CITY, CRITICISES BILL MAKERS.

Says Selfishness and Ambition Lead them through a Wilderness of Folly and Buncomb and Valuable Time is Wasted.

"I have long criticised and seriously objected to the making of so many laws, and I have long contended that men are not made good and honest by statute," remarked Representative Justin D. Bowersock, of Kansas, recently.

"The comparatively indiscriminate enactment of legislation on all subjects—general, special and personal—is a great evil and a greater folly. I have insisted that selfishness and prejudice are at the basis of too many enactments, and that human nature and the settled principles of business and commerce, honorable competition, and the results of supply and demand can hardly be changed by law to any beneficial extent.

"Corporate greed, cupidity, and corruption can be, ought to be, and will be modified, curtailed, and brought within decent limits, to say the least. No man desires this more earnestly than I do; no man will go further along any reasonable lines in any legitimate and practicable effort to bring this about, whether it be in connection with railroad rates, Standard Oil rebates, beef trust, unlawful combination, watered stocks, or whatever or whoever may burden the consumer or producer, unduly or unjustly, for extortionate gain.

"'Equal rights to all, special privileges to none' will not come through impracticable, non-enforceable laws drawn on the theory that we have reached the millennium.

"The ordinary legislator, and his name is legion, has a legal panacea for every ill. If he had as much honesty as assurance, the title of his bills would be:

"'An act to make men do business on earth as it is done in heaven,' a consummation devoutly to be wished; but let us not forget the effect of the Pope's bull against a comet and the beating of tom-toms by the aborigines on an eclipse."

A Two-Foot Rat.

A warehouseman at the Oriental dock, in Baltimore, had the distinction the other day of killing the largest rat ever seen along the local water front. The rodent weighed nearly seven pounds, and from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail he measured two feet.

It was only after a desperate fight, lasting twenty minutes, that the immense rat was killed. For some time scraps of paper and wood in the toolroom of the warehouse indicated that a swarm of rodents was at work. Then one morning the warehouseman encountered the big fellow. With a broom handle he attempted to put an end to the rodent's life, but the rat showed fight. Back and forth he scampered, and when cornered he rushed at his assailant. Once he hid behind a coil of rope overhead, and then he dashed at the man's head. The latter dodged but the rodent's sharp teeth grazed his face. At last the rat was killed and measurements proved that he was the biggest ever seen in port.

The animal is supposed to be a species found in South America and it is believed he came here in a ship, all of which carry many rodents.

Washington Post.

SENATOR LODGE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE HIS AMENDED BILL.

IN IRONICAL VEIN.

Senator Lodge's bill providing for the reorganization of the consular service has been shorn by the Committee on Foreign Relations of its most incendiary and detestable features—the provision for examining candidates for appointment, and this still more objectionable section:

"That whenever a vacancy shall occur in the office of consul general, or consul above the sixth ($4,000) class members of the two classes next below that in which the vacancy occurred shall be deemed eligible to be selected to fill such vacancy."

This was a palpable attempt to engraft the merit and promotion system upon the consular service, and thereby to deprive national lawmakers of their ancient sacred right to assist the President in selecting consuls general and high-salaried consuls. A majority of the committee regard it as the sordid injection of commercialism into a purely political matter, on the flimsy pretence that the consular service is a business institution.

If the Committee on Foreign Relations had permitted this section to stand, it would have been an abject capitulation to the force that are surreptitiously robbing Congress of its patronage powers. The idea that young consuls that have made good records should be promoted and that prominent citizens recommended by legislators should accept paltry places at the foot of the list was intensely repugnant to the Senatorial sense. As statesmen representing watchful and expectant constituents, many of whom exercise valuable influence in behalf of their party, they could not consent to closing the door of hope. Every Congressional district has its share of elderly and highminded students of the world's affairs, men who may have been rudely buffeted by fortune and who cherish the hope of dodging further cruel strokes by landing in a pleasant consulate. They are men who have done yeoman service for their party, and often they retain connections that can not be ignored. Are these to be superseded and thrust aside by popinjays? Are the oxen that tread out the corn to be muzzled? Is the accursed thirst for gold to commercialize the honorable office of consul, so long the haven of ancient mariners tempest-tossed on chartless political seas, the asylum of indigence, the badge of decayed gentility?

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations will not have it so. That committee, consulting its bowels of compassion, insists that Congress shall share with the President the pleasures of rewarding the faithful with the fattest consular places.

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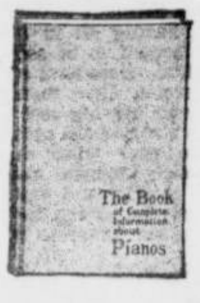

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