

"Yes, if we can find a common."

"But if not, can't the owners turn us off for trespassing, and seize our house?"

"My dear Dolly, where have you been studying law? Who is your Gamaliel? You are quite right, though. Hurlingbame said the same. We shall manage it, though."

"Did he?" remarked Dorothy innocently. "What did he say about it?"

"I will explain when you go into the construction of my vans. Come here, and see how my carpenter fixed those little houses, which they virtually are."

The party then re-entered the sleeping-car, and the construction was explained by the adapter, as follows:—

"These travelling vans have been suggested by an invention called the 'Travelling Bungalow,' and a description of this invention will give you an idea as

to how we will travel on wheels. In the little bungalow to which I am indebted partly for my idea there are rows of small pillars which support the flooring. Grooves in this floor hold the wooden walls, which are strengthened by skirting-boards. The ceiling is laid lightly in the ordinary way, leaving space for ventilation by means of a tube under the roof, with openings at intervals into the van. We have used iron freely in the vans, which can be made much larger, and thus practically become dwelling-houses.

"If at any time we should build a large one, we will mount it on a truck, and transport it where we please," continued George. "We can live where we like. On this principle I have made my vans, only instead of having one portable house, I prefer to divide the 'mansion' and separate the apartments."

"I am sure the rooms will be most comfortable," said Dorothy; "and if the weather be only fair, we shall enjoy ourselves immensely."

THE POSTMEN OF THE WORLD.

BY C. F. GORDON CUMMING, AUTHOR OF "THE NEWSPAPERS OF THE WORLD."

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.



CHINESE DESPATCH-BEARER, FROM THE ISLAND OF FORMOSA (CALLED "THE THOUSAND-MILE HORSE").

HOW strange to think of the wonderful organisation which insures the regular transmission of every little letter, and its final safe delivery to its owner, at the remotest ends of the world, in crowded foreign city, or in the solitudes of the mountain or the forest! In my furthest wanderings, I have never yet reached any point so isolated as to be beyond the ministrations of the Post-office, but strangely varied have been its emissaries!

I had heard of a settler in a wholly uncivilised island, who, while building himself a boat, required some tool which he had left at home, so he selected a smooth chip of wood and thereon wrote a message, which he bade one of the by-standers carry to his wife. Of course the man, on seeing her look at the chip and then deliver to his care the needful tool, attributed the whole to magic. Nevertheless, he had unconsciously been a letter-carrier of the most primitive type.

Slightly in advance of this, is the system of writing with a sharply-pointed instrument, on long strips of the firm green palm-leaf—a substitute for paper—which is in common use in Ceylon and on the sea-

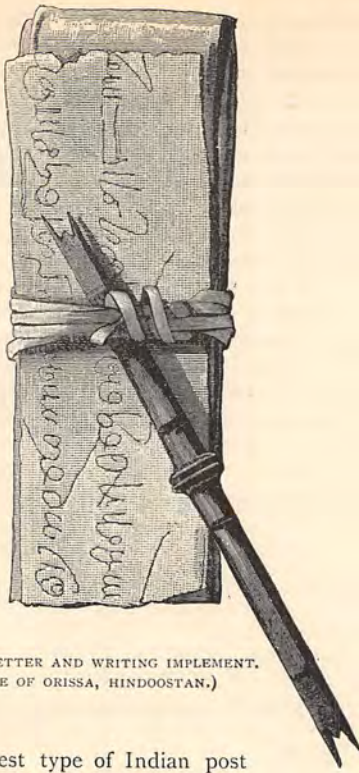
coast of Hindoostan, and wherever the cocoa-palm flourishes—or still better, the broad-leaved talipot or Palmyra palm. Whole books are thus inscribed, but for letter-writing it is particularly useful, and the missive is folded and tied up with a trail of natural string plucked in the forest, and is slung from a light stick and so carried to its destination.

In my travels in the Himalayas, we found a truly useful friend in the native post-master at Kotghur, which was the furthest limit of the great postal network. Thenceforward, as we journeyed in the wilds,



RURAL POST-RUNNERS, JAPAN.

he forwarded all our letters by a very lightly-garbed special runner, who carried them, as English village children carry sweet violets, in the end of a cleft stick. Thus the letter was perhaps carried for several days, and was at length delivered, as clean as when it started.



PALM-LEAF LETTER AND WRITING IMPLEMENT.
(PROVINCE OF ORISSA, HINDOOSTAN.)

The commonest type of Indian post runner, or "Tappal wallah," wears a long white coat, very tight trousers enclose his lean legs, and his head-dress is a huge light blue turban. His letter-bag is slung on his side, and it is necessary that he should be a good linguist, and be able to read a great variety of strange, crabbed characters, for several of the multitudinous languages of Hindoostan are written in quite distinct characters, all of which are alike incomprehensible to our untutored eyes. The rural letter-carrier of Hindoostan carries a long stick with a sharp iron point, which can be used as a weapon in case of need. This stick is adorned with six little brass bells, which serve to frighten away reptiles and dangerous animals, and also to give notice of the approach of the post. The danger from wild beasts is, in some districts, a very real one, the "tappal" runners through the forest districts in the south of Ceylon having occasionally

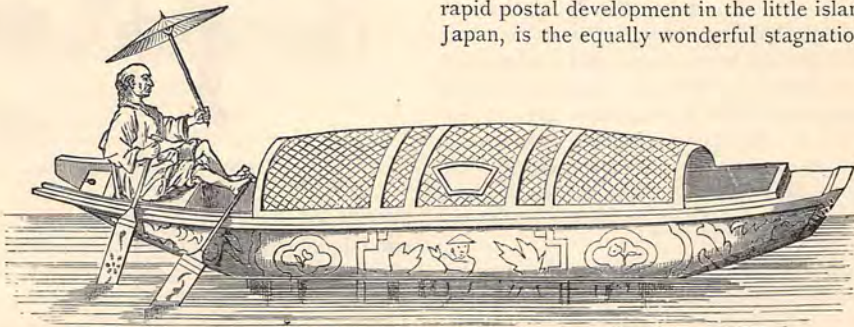
had very narrow escapes from the attacks of "rogue" elephants and other wild beasts.

Of all varieties of Indian letter-carriers, clothed or unclothed, none are so picturesque as the Camel Express Messengers. The men wear a serviceable red uniform, and large green turban embroidered with gold thread. From their girdle hangs a curved sabre in a red sheath. The camels are adorned with trappings of gay cloth and tassels, ornamented with blue beads and cowrie shells, and small brass bells round the neck to give notice of their swift approach. It is said that their rough and rapid trotting, sometimes at the rate of eighty miles a day, is so trying to the riders as to shorten their days. Two heavy mail-bags hang to right and left on each side of the camel, and the saddle is so arranged that a passenger can take a seat behind the postman.

In no country of the world is the postal organisation more wonderful than in Japan; the chief marvel being that, till about a dozen years ago, there was no regular Government institution of posts in the country. In 1871, when Japan awakened like a giant from her long sleep of exclusiveness, and set to work to accomplish changes of every sort, she resolved to establish the European postal system; and with such astonishing zeal has she done her work, that within ten years the British, American, and French post-offices, which had been established at all the open ports, were closed, foreign nations being satisfied with the thoroughness of the Japanese postal system. In that short period mail routes had been organised over 36,000 miles; mail-trains and steamers, post-vans, and runners were all enlisted; 3,927 post-offices and 7,439 letter-boxes had been established; money order offices and post-office savings-banks were in full operation; 7,500 persons were employed on the regular staff; stamps, stamped envelopes, post-cards, and newspaper wrappers were issued at the same rate as our own; letter postage to any part of the empire being at the rate of 1d., and post-cards ½d.; while within the limits of the city of Tokio these postages are respectively only half-price.

Where the Post-office had thus started at full swing, it is needless to say that the telegraph was not forgotten; and by 1880 it was in full working order over a distance of about 10,000 miles, and giving employment to about 15,000 persons.

In very strange contrast with this extraordinarily rapid postal development in the little island Empire of Japan, is the equally wonderful stagnation in the vast



A CHINESE MAIL PACKET.



RUSSIAN MAIL-SLEDGE.

Empire of China, where, even to this hour, there is actually no Government institution for the transmission of posts. As I had occasion to point out in a recent article,* whereas Japan has already developed such a wide-spread system of newspapers as would of itself require an elaborate method of distribution, China, that esteems itself the most literary of nations, is still practically without newspapers. Consequently these do not call for postal consideration.

But as regards letters, a considerable proportion of the 400,000,000 Chinamen do occasionally exchange letters—those who cannot write for themselves hiring scribes to do so. These letters are consigned to firms which have houses in all the large towns, where letters are forwarded to distant ports, to be there distributed by special agents, who generally collect the postage from the receiver. There was certainly something comic in the fact that when China was no longer able to exclude foreigners from Peking, our British postal arrangements were no sooner established than some of the Imperial officials came to ask Sir Frederick Bruce to forward certain State documents for them between Peking and Canton. On the death of the Emperor Hien-fung, which occurred just at that time, intimation thereof was sent from his country palace (a distance of 600 li, which is upwards of 200 miles) in twenty-four hours, which is the highest speed attainable in China. But the placid Celestials, to whom hurry appears a form of vulgar impatience, and to whom telegraphs are an abomination, are content that all ordinary communications should be conveyed either by slow paddling or poling boats, or else by foot-runners, whose high-sounding title of “the thousand-mile horse” does not quicken their pace beyond about twelve miles in twenty-four hours. They carry a paper lantern and a paper umbrella, and their letter-bag is secured on their back by a cloth knotted across the chest.

But though the rise and fall of nations in the outer world of barbarians are topics wholly without interest to these millions, there are some subjects which call forth enthusiasm and an eager desire for early information. Foremost among these is the

declaration of the list of sixty successful candidates for literary degrees in the Confucian classics at the great annual and triennial examinations. So great is the competition for this honour, that sometimes as many as 8,000 candidates present themselves in a single province! Then, when this long-looked-for list is published, the rivers and creeks in the neighbourhood are all astir, and swift, lightly-built boats, each manned by half a dozen strong rowers, start off at full speed to convey the news to anxious relations and fellow-citizens.

Others have made agreement with the owners of



CAMEL-MOUNTED LETTER-CARRIER, HINDOOSTAN.

carrier-pigeons, to whom the lists are immediately forwarded, and the messages, being inscribed on slips of thin stiff paper, are rolled up into the smallest possible compass and attached to the legs of these winged letter-carriers, who straightway start on their respective journeys at a rate of eighty miles in three hours.

Of vehicles we find every conceivable variety pressed in to aid the post-runner in his labour. In Natal the post-cart is a light four-horse vehicle—not much to

* See CASSELL'S FAMILY MAGAZINE, August, 1884.

look at, but capital as a means of getting over vile roads with very deep ruts. In the mountainous districts of Brazil, a two-wheeled waggon, drawn by oxen, is in use—the wheels being cut out of a solid block and fastened to the axle.

In some parts of Russia, buffaloes harnessed to two-wheeled vehicles convey the postmen on their road, but more frequently mail-sledges are drawn by horses, by reindeer, or, in the far north, by dogs.

The latter we find again in Canada—as, for instance, in the mail service between Selkirk and Lake Winnipeg, where the work is done by trains of letter-sleighs, each dragged by three dogs harnessed in single file.

Passing from Canada to the United States, we find the most gigantic postal system in the world, working with the regularity of first-class machinery, and nowhere has its wonderfully rapid development been more remarkable than in the establishment of communication between the capitals of the extreme East and West—New York and San Francisco.

Twenty years ago, settlers starting for the far West, with their heavily-laden waggons, knew that the journey would occupy six months of hard travel, and might involve many dangers of varied character—chiefly from hostile Indians, prairie fires, and rattlesnakes. Once started on that far journey, many a weary month must elapse ere any tidings could reach them from the home they had left.

Great was the excitement when a company of fearless, determined men, announced their resolution to carry letters from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific in fourteen days. The feat was deemed impossible. Nevertheless, the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express was duly organised, the vast expanse of country right across the Great Continent was divided into runs of sixty miles, and at each terminus rude log-huts were erected as stations and stables for men and beasts.

The latter were strong, swift ponies, selected for their hardiness and great powers of endurance, and the riders were all picked men, experienced scouts and trappers, noted—even in that region of keen, hard-riding men—for courage and good horsemanship; and many a time must both have been tried to the uttermost in the course of those terribly long and awfully lonesome rides across the trackless prairie, continually in danger of attack, by day or by night, by wild Indians or highway robbers.

Once a week an Express messenger started from either side of the Great Continent. From the first moment to the last, not a second must be lost. As long as the pony could gallop, gallop he must; and the eager beasts seemed as keen as their riders, and scarcely needed the cruel spur to urge them on. For sixty miles at a stretch they must keep up their utmost speed; and when at length the goal was reached, where the next messenger was waiting in the saddle, ready to start without one minute's delay, the precious letter-bag was tossed from one postman to the other, and, ere the wearied incomer had even dismounted, his successor had started on his onward way.

Then pony and man might rest and feed, and rest

again, till the return of the messenger with a re-filled letter-bag, which was warranted to accomplish its journey of upwards of 2,000 miles in 240 hours. (The railway on the New York side being already constructed as far as St. Joseph, that station was the eastern point to which the Pony Express had to run.)

This Pony Express was continued for two years, accomplishing its work with amazing regularity, and involving many a feat of splendid riding and wild adventure. It proved, however, a ruinous failure from a commercial point of view, and the company collapsed with a deficit of 200,000 dollars.

The telegraph was by this time complete; so for awhile it was the sole bearer of all overland communication, and letters had to travel from New York to San Francisco *via* the Isthmus of Panama, which occupied just a month. In those days comparatively few steamers entered the Golden Gates (the entrance to the great harbour of San Francisco), so the fortnightly arrival of this steamer, with its precious cargo of letters and newspapers, was a signal for hours of intense anxiety and excitement. Not only were the merchants of the city eager for business letters, but crowds of miners came in from the mountains, in the (too often vain) hope that the mail might bring them some word from home.

Of the enormous amount of labour and thought which has now covered so vast a tract of country with an intricate network of postal arrangements, a faint idea may be gathered from the exceedingly bulky annual report of the Postmaster-General of the United States—a report which fills 800 pages of closely-printed matter, besides a supplementary volume of 454 pages of postal laws and regulations. Beside these imposing volumes, the modest 59-page Parliamentary report of the British Postmaster-General seems quite a small matter. Indeed, on looking over the statistics of postal facilities in the thirty-eight States and eleven Territories, we find that the three which head the list—Pennsylvania with its 3,716 post-offices, New York State with 3,082, and Ohio with 2,620—together possess nearly as many post-offices as Britain in A.D. 1854 could number, including all sorts of letter-boxes and offices, her grand total in that year having amounted to 9,973.

In the thirty years which have elapsed since that date, British facilities have been trebled: there are now 31,700 receptacles for the collection of letters, of which 15,951 are post-offices.

Of the postal statistics of the United States, I will only note that the total weight of mails despatched in 1883 to Postal Union countries amounted to 1,266 tons, and that "the number of pieces handled"—*i.e.*, letters, newspapers, and post-cards collected or delivered—was 1,324,637,701, the average handled by each letter-carrier being 359,955.

In systems so vast and so admirably organised as these, the work of the letter-carrier ceases to have any individuality. It is the work of a chronometer, as faultless as anything human can well be, and possessing as little picturesque interest as does a handsome, solidly-built street in a great new city.

*Miss Mitford presents her
compliments to Messrs Westly &*

FAC-SIMILE OF THE FIRST TWO LINES OF MISS MITFORD'S LETTER.

hoped for better things, and eagerly watched the post for a reply. One almost hears the buzz of this poor fire-fly as she was crushed thus ruthlessly against the window-pane of hope.

We have seen how Miss Austen in the early years of her life was satisfied to accept ten pounds for one of her best books. This is the dark side of the shield, but here we have a letter from a lady authoress who has passed the portal and now dictates her own terms:—

“Miss Mitford presents her compliments to Messrs. Westly & Davis, and begs them to accept her thanks for the present of their new periodical. She regrets that their terms, which are very much indeed below any that have ever been offered to her, will not allow her to be connected on this occasion with persons so respectable, and

an undertaking of which the tendency appears to be so excellent.

“*Three Mile Cross, February 18, 1826.*”

Miss Mitford was a contemporary of Lady Morgan, and a personal friend of almost all the great writers of the day. Her writings were, as a rule, descriptive of village life and the rural joys and sorrows of the humbler classes, but she had also her triumphs in another style, and her drama of *Rienzi* was considered one of the finest tragedies of the day. She was undeniably a great genius. She seems at home in every rank of life and in every phase of feeling. She was a friend of the Kembles and Kean. Her life and letters have been published within the last few years, and are most interesting, and she well deserves to be classed among the literary ladies of the old and the new century.

THE POSTMEN OF THE WORLD.

BY C. F. GORDON CUMMING, AUTHOR OF “THE NEWSPAPERS OF THE WORLD.”

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.



NUREMBERG POST-RUNNER OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

WE have recently glanced at a few of the very varied letter-carriers of Asia and America; but without looking further afield than our own shores, we may well find matter for wonder and admiration in the postal system which enfolds us in a network so perfect, that we have learnt to look on its regularity with the same indifference as we breathe the air of heaven, and are only conscious of its existence when some momentary irregularity calls forth our instant blame.

Of the amount of care and mental anxiety whereby our postal punctuality is purchased, we may form some estimate by noting the agreements concerning the contract time allowed for the transport of the mails

between the most distant countries, and the penalties exacted for delay. Thus, in the case of the mails from India and China to Brindisi, there is a fine of £200 for every twelve hours in excess of contract time. On the voyage to or from the West Indies, the penalty for over-time is £25 for every twenty-four hours, while between London and Calais it is £5 for fifteen minutes. By another contract, which comes into force this autumn, the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company undertakes thenceforward to convey the mails between Holyhead and Kingstown in fifteen minutes less than the time hitherto allowed; a fine of £1 14s. to be exacted for each minute in excess of contract time. Such details as these give us a very practical notion of the literal value of time.

Like that of all mighty institutions, the growth of the Post Office has been slow and gradual; and we, in the enjoyment of all our postal privileges, find it hard to realise how our ancestors could have endured their total privation of all such.

The establishment of a commercial postal service seems to have originated in the thirteenth century, to insure facility of communication between the eighty-five cities of Prussia, Livonia, Westphalia, Saxony, the Baltic, and the Netherlands, included in the Hanseatic League.

After this beginning, regular letter posts for the public convenience were established between Austria and Lombardy, and between Vienna and Brussels.

Judging from such old engravings as we here reproduce, these early postmen do not appear to have been very heavily burdened.

Hardly picturesque, but doubtless comfortable, is the solid-looking postman of Nuremberg, whose portrait, as sketched a hundred years ago, we here reproduce. The spear which he carries is his symbol of official dignity.

Our own admirable postal service represents the steady development of two and a half centuries. Prior to the sixteenth century, all letters in Britain were sent by messengers who wore the royal livery, but only hired post-horses as they happened to require them. In the fifteenth century a company of foreign merchants made arrangements for the conveyance of letters between London and the Continent. This private enterprise was, however, made over to the Crown, and James I. established a Post Office for foreign letters.

Another century, however, elapsed ere any postal arrangements were made to facilitate intercourse within the kingdom. In 1635 Charles I. authorised Thomas Witherings to run a post night and day between London and Edinburgh, to go thither and back again in six days, carrying all such letters as were directed to towns near the road. Eight main postal lines were established at the same time, and the bearers were authorised to carry letters on a graduated scale of from twopence to sixpence to any part of England. If across the Border the charge was eightpence, and to Dublin by packet sixpence.

To cross the Border in those days was a serious matter, for its wild glens were the refuge of the wildest spirits of both lands, and the Borderers were ever noted robbers. But even in the more settled districts, the letter-carriers were so frequently attacked by highwaymen that, so late as A.D. 1700, it became necessary for both the Scottish and English Parliaments to pass Acts making robbery of the post an offence punishable by death and confiscation.

While the "post-boys" (as they were called, without respect to the grey hairs of many) were thus subject to perils from land robbers, equal danger awaited their brethren in charge of the mails for Ireland or foreign countries. Every mail packet had to be armed as a ship of war, ready to hold her own against any privateer which might see fit to attack her; and, indeed, such pirates might chance to capture many things besides letters, for these marine posts were charged with all manner of articles—such as "fifteen couple of hounds, for the King of the Romans;" "a deal case with four fitches of bacon, for Mr. Pennington of Rotterdam;" "two servant-maids going as laundresses to my Lord Ambassador Methuen;" and even "a doctor, with his cow and other necessaries."

In 1783, it was suggested to the great Mr. Pitt, by Mr. John Palmer, manager of the Bath and Bristol theatres, that, instead of employing horsemen, mail-coaches should be established, and escorted by trustworthy and well-armed guards. This innovation was strongly opposed by the Post Office authorities, but was eventually carried, and Mr. Palmer installed as

Controller-General of the Post Office, to the immense advantage of all concerned, and the great acceleration of the mail service.*

Hence originated the mail-coaches, which so many of us can still remember as one of the cheeriest features of rural life some thirty or forty years ago,



POSTMAN OF BRESLAU OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

when the coming and the going of the coaches, with their first-class teams, and the cheery drivers and guards arrayed in scarlet, and the sound of the brass horn, were the daily great events of our villages and remote countrytowns—the bringers of good or evil tidings in days when telegraphs were as yet undreamt of.

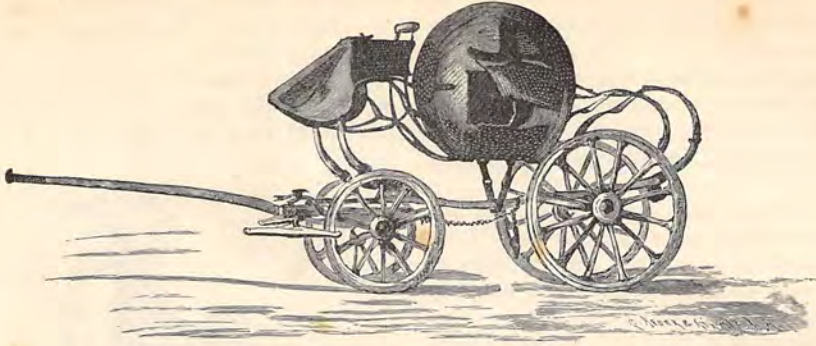
When the system was in full working order, there were 94 four-horse mail-coaches running regularly in Great Britain, besides 49 two-horse coaches in England.

Very quaint and picturesque, but certainly not so suggestive of mirth and good company as the old English mail-coach, is the essentially solitary vehicle which was devised in Denmark for the safe and swift conveyance of letters, and which continued in use till the year 1842: a bullet-shaped receptacle, into which the mail-bags were thrust, and secured by a leathern flap, the whole being lightly poised on strong springs. No place is here provided for the armed guard, and should any accident occur, the solitary driver must manage for himself as best he could.

While the British postal system was gradually developing improved methods of conveyance, the grandest change of all was brought about when, in 1837, Sir Rowland Hill first suggested the advantages of a reduced and uniform rate of postage to all parts of the kingdom. After considerable opposition he carried his point, and in 1840 the penny post for half-ounce letters was established throughout Britain, and postage stamps were invented to facilitate pre-payment.

A penny post for the delivery of letters within the limits of London and its suburbs (which then formed a comparatively small radius) had been established in A.D. 1685; and in 1776 Edinburgh had followed suit, with four letter-carriers, whose business it was to walk

* Apparently the pace had not improved since Charles I. had established his post to run between London and Edinburgh and back in six days and nights.



GLOBULAR-SHAPED MAIL-COACH. DENMARK, FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

daily through what we now know as "the old town," collecting letters, and ringing bells to attract attention.

The establishment of Rowland Hill's uniform penny post led to an immediate increase of letters which was positively amazing, being due not only to increased correspondence, but to the cessation of the illegal despatch of letters by private hands. That such were numerous can scarcely be a matter of wonder, when we consider how very small a letter could be received north of the Border for 8d., and, either from excess of weight or some other cause, the sum charged was liable to a considerable increase. Thus, an old resident in the Green Isle of Lismore, just off the coast of Argyleshire, tells us that in his young days he had to pay 1s. 2d. for every letter he received, and when the postage was reduced to 1s. it was considered a great step forward; but when, about 1835, it was further reduced to 8d., the rejoicing was great indeed.

A very considerable improvement in the regulations for the delivery of letters in rural districts in the South-west of England and Wales was effected in

1851, when Anthony Trollope (who had already been employed on similar work in Ireland) was deputed to go over every nook and corner of Cornwall, Devon, the Channel Islands, Worcester, &c. &c., in order to define the beat of every individual letter-carrier. Of this work he has left us a very interesting account in his Autobiography. He tells us that, knowing that the postal regulations of France require that every letter shall be actually delivered by an official letter-carrier to the person to whom it is addressed, he aimed at the nearest possible approach to this standard, and it became the ambition of his life to cover the country with rural letter-carriers. Their beats were apportioned on the understanding that no man should be required to walk more than sixteen miles a day. Trollope took good care to find out all the short cuts, so as to insure the including of the largest possible number of houses in the distance.

Bicycles and tricycles now help many of our rural postmen to "make good time," as they say in America, provided their beats lie in fairly level country, with tolerable roads. But I am not aware that the letter-carriers of the Fen districts have profited by the wisdom of their French brethren in the Department of Landes, that desert region of reedy marshes, and ever-shifting sands, only traversed by muddy uncertain roads. Year by year, owing to the prevalence of westerly winds, the *dunes* (as these sand-hills are called) encroach more and more on the fertile tracts, actually overwhelming houses and vineyards. Here and there, on the marshy heath, or in the forests of cork-trees, are scattered the wretched huts of the people, who are mostly shepherds, cork-cutters, and charcoal-burners. One of their chief industries is the manufacture of *sabots*, or wooden shoes, clumsy indeed, but warranted to stand any amount of wear-and-tear.

But even these active peasants find it exhausting work alternately to trudge ankle-deep in light dry sand, or through oozy peat-moss, so they have borrowed a hint from the long-legged water-birds that stalk among the marshes, and have adopted the plan of walking on very lengthy stilts. Thus they get over the ground at double pace, and being well raised above the world, they can keep a better out-look for their stray sheep or swine, or for the position of such game as may be worth stalking at leisure.



LETTER-CARRIER OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, BEARING THE PRUSSIAN EAGLE.

(From the Ambrose Collection in Vienna.)

This, then, is the mode of travel adopted by the postmen on the southernmost seaboard of France, while going their rounds among the remote villages, conveying the rare letters, which must be such doubly precious prizes in those lonely districts.

Toilsome as were the sixteen-mile beats apportioned by Trollope to his rural letter-carriers, their task was less severe than that imposed on some of our Scottish post-runners—those, for instance, who carried the mails between Fort William and Inverness, a distance of about sixty miles. The men started simultaneously from either point, and met at Fort Augustus, where they exchanged bags, and on the following day returned to their starting-point. Thus each man did his sixty miles on foot in two days, and was allowed the third day for rest ere recommencing his weary tramp. The distance was often seriously increased by accidents of weather, deep snow-drifts or swollen rivers sometimes compelling long circuits.

It is pleasing to turn to the report of the Postmaster-General, and to learn that, notwithstanding the severe strain of extra work at Christmas, NOT A SINGLE CASE OF INTOXICATION WAS REPORTED AMONG THE POSTMEN EMPLOYED IN THE METROPOLIS, and that there was a gratifying diminution in the number so reported in other parts of the country.

Of the extra pressure here referred to, we can form some notion on learning that during that Christmas week there passed through the Central Office 2,000,000, and through the district offices 4,000,000 letters above the weekly average of 13,500,000 (this Christmas return including 208,400 registered letters). To meet this heavy work 1,200 additional persons were temporarily employed, making the total number on duty in the Central Sorting Office over 3,000. To provide for the distribution of so vast an increase of postal matter, special mail-trains were despatched from London to the provinces, in advance of the usual night trains, and special arrangements were made in all provincial towns.

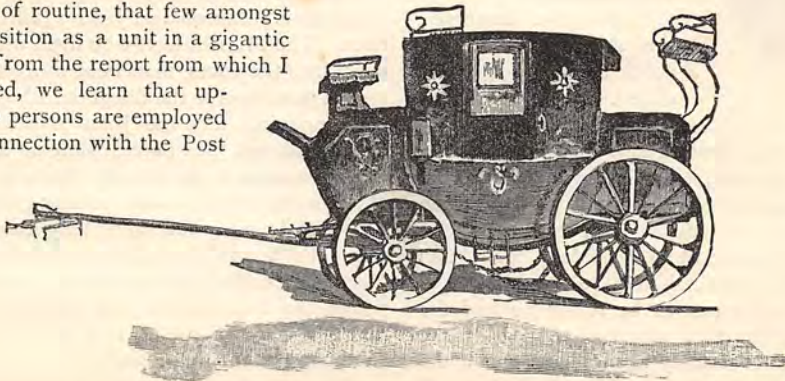
To most of us, the coming and going of the familiar postman of our own district is so entirely a matter of routine, that few amongst us realise his position as a unit in a gigantic organisation. From the report from which I have just quoted, we learn that upwards of 91,000 persons are employed in Britain in connection with the Post



FRENCH RURAL POSTMAN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LANDES, ON STILTS.

Office. Of these, about 46,000 are on the permanent establishment of the Department, and about 45,000 more combine postal duties with private occupations. No less than 2,731 women are employed on the permanent staff, ranging from the regiment of well-educated young ladies at St. Martin's-le-Grand, to the good old-wives whom we find in charge of some of our country post-offices (possibly the active representatives of their husbands), but whose acuteness in mastering the mysteries of the telegraph has often filled me with wonder and admiration.

Truly amazing are the statistics of the stupendous mass of postal matter which annually passes through the hands of these 91,000 persons. Here is the return



OLD ENGLISH MAIL-COACH, "THE FLYING COACH," WHICH RAN BETWEEN LONDON AND OXFORD IN SIX HOURS.

of letters and papers delivered in the United Kingdom in the course of twelve months :—

Letters	1,322,086,900
Post-Cards	153,586,100
Book Packets	294,594,500
Newspapers	142,702,300
Total	1,912,969,800

These figures do not include the number of letters despatched to foreign countries, nor the enormous number of parcels conveyed by the parcels post.

The number of letters registered in 1884 was 11,545,072.

Out of this vast multitude of letters, 5,732,310 were so addressed as to fail to reach their destination, and, after causing an immense amount of extra trouble in returning them to the senders, there remained 561,736 which could not even be thus dealt with. The most remarkable thing concerning letters of this class is that 25,628 were posted without any address, and of these no less than 1,536 contained money and cheques amounting to the value of £5,158.

A very interesting detail in our postal statistics shows the immense increase of correspondence which has resulted from increased facilities. Thus, whereas in A.D. 1839 the average of letters per annum for each person in the United Kingdom was only 3; by

1854, under the influence of reduced postage, it had increased to 15; while we find that the average per head is now 37 letters, and 4 post-cards.

It is interesting to note in this respect how we compare with other countries. To do so, we must take the year 1882, which is the latest of which statistics can be obtained. We find that the average per head was: Great Britain, 35; United States, 21; Germany, 17; France, 16; Italy, 7; Spain, 5.

Truly a wonderful centre of busy life is our great City Post Office—great in all its details. Here upwards of 1,200 telegraph workers, male and female, are engaged in flashing messages all over Britain, by the electric currents engendered by no less than 22,000 electric battery jars, which are ranged along shelves so numerous that, were they placed in line, they would extend three miles. And with regard to other postal matter, the General Post Office daily receives about 6,000 mail-bags, weighing about 50 tons, and despatches about the same amount.

But I must bring this paper to a close, and cannot do so more fitly than in the words of the good old Scotch proverb which notes how “Mony a pickle mak’s a mickle,” a trite truth of which it would be difficult to find a more startling illustration than this accumulation of half-ounces.

MY NAMESAKE MARJORIE.

By the Author of “Who is Sylvia?” &c. &c.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

MISS ASSHETON MAKES HER DÉBUT IN BRIDGEHAM SOCIETY.



MRS. BURROUGHS was as much secretly delighted as openly amused at her brother's droll manner of introduction to Miss Assheton recounted by him at the breakfast-table.

“You have improved the shining hour admirably, Stephen,” she declared. “Miss Marjorie is so prompt in her own

actions and opinions, that this early visit to the scene of your work is sure to be a step in her favour.”

“I fervently trust the works are not to depend on either her favour or fancy,” returned Mr. Legh rather ungallantly, scared at so unstable a foundation for an undertaking he desired to have fixed and well defined. “Not that I mean to be rude,” he had the grace to add, laughing, “but a freak of young-lady-like caprice would be uncommonly awkward in the midst of business like this. So I hope Miss Assheton will make up her mind and abide by it.”

“Not much fear about that,” put in Doctor Burroughes. “She’s as determined a young lady as ever I’ve had the luck to meet; Assheton to the backbone! She has said the thing is to be done, and done it will be! I believe she vastly enjoys casting her life in the imperative mood.”

“How came it she had the property, and not her father?” asked Stephen Legh, more interested, as his sister observed, in general than personal details of the heiress.

“Her father and his mother,” explained the doctor, “had some bitter quarrel years ago that never healed over. The Miss Bassett who lived with Mr. Assheton ever since the young man went away first, I fancy as sort of governess to the daughter who died, and then as companion, tells me John Assheton’s name was utterly tabooed. Unnatural state of things, wasn’t it? but the mother never forgave the son. It’s a marvel she softened enough to let the next generation inherit.”

“Well, however the young lady came by her position, she seems thoroughly to appreciate it,” said Stephen, recalling the fine air of proprietorship with which she had warned him off her estate at first. “But how is it no one is with her? She’s full young to take up residence alone.”

“Oh, as for that,” returned Mrs. Burroughes, “people born to Australian society don’t trouble themselves