

Humours of the Post Office.

WITH FAC-SIMILES.



ANY a pictorial curiosity passes through the post; and the industrious letter - sorter is often bewildered as to where to despatch missives, the envelopes of which bear hieroglyphics which would positively out-Egypt Egypt. Through the courtesy of Sir Arthur Blackwood, we are in a position to reproduce in these pages—for the first time in any publication—a number of these postal puzzles and pictures—the pictures, in many instances, being as clever as they are humorous.

glanced over one or two specimens, they will unhesitatingly say that it is a big plume in the cap of the Post Office that they ever reached their destination at all.

All sorts and conditions of men are represented in the leaves of these scrap books. Her Majesty's Private Secretary finds himself addressed as—

“ Sur Genarell

Pansebe our Queens

Privet Pus Keeper

Bucom Palacs.”

A seafaring man evidently expected at the Sailors' Home is addressed, “Walstrets,

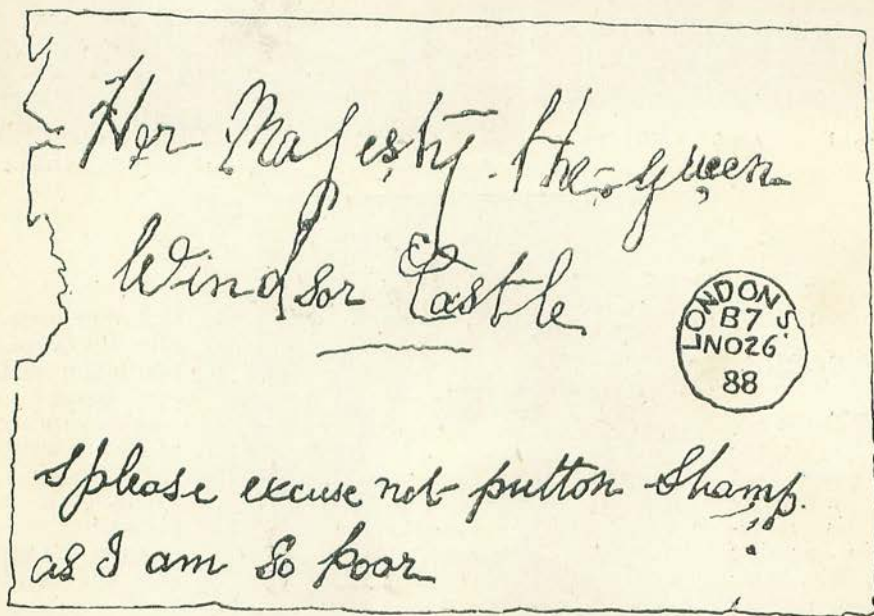


FIG. 1.

Immediately such curiosities reach St. Martin's-le-Grand, they are passed on to a number of young men talented in the use of pencil and brush, who make rapid copies of them, the fac-similes being pasted in one of the three great "Scrap Books" used entirely for this purpose. We are assured by the authorities that there is no delay occasioned by this, and in every instance the letters temporarily under the care of the Post Office artists catch the post for which they are intended. Some slight delay may possibly be occasioned by the "puzzles"; but, when our readers have

Selorshom Tebiekald for"; which, being interpreted, means, "Sailors' Home, Wells-street: To be called for." The School of Gunnery at Shoeburyness is set out on an envelope as "Scool of Goonery, Rile Hort Tilbrey, Shoevetry." "Bryracky" stands for Billericay, a small market town in Essex; Jarrow-on-Tyne is spelt "Jeripintine"; the Hanley Potteries are "Harley Potlerings"; whilst "Pambore near Beas and Stoke, Ence," is intended for Pamber, near Basingstoke, Hants. Fortunately for somebody at the Opera Comique Theatre, the "Hoppera cummick theatrer" found him; an eave-

lope addressed, "For the War Office London to the Master of it," also got into the bursts into verse, which constitutes the address:—

"To Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen :
Long may she live to wield a sway
The mightiest earth has seen ;
Long may her loyal people pray,
God bless our Empress Queen."

Whatever it lacks in poetic merit is atoned for by the poet's loyalty.

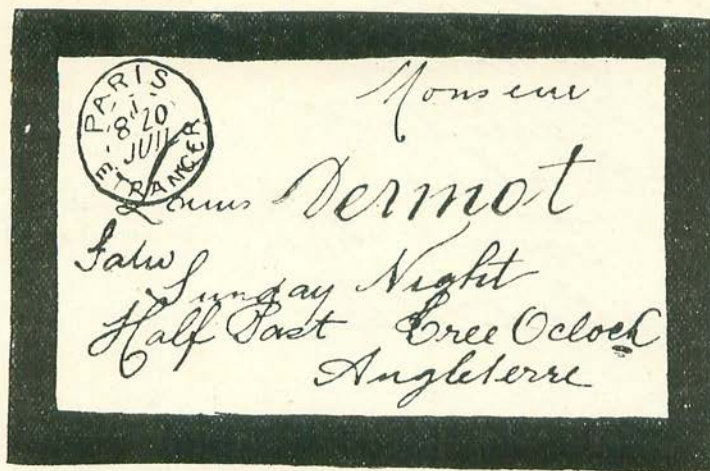


FIG. 2.

right channel. But we are rather in doubt as to whether a communication from the United States addressed to "John Smith, Esq., or any intelligent Smith, London, England," or possibly a proposal from some unknown admirer for "Miss Annie W—, London, address not known," ever reached their rightful owners.

Her Majesty has been the recipient of some remarkably addressed envelopes. There is one which says that the writer of the communication is too poor to pay for a stamp (Fig. 1); whilst a loyal and poetically inclined subject enthusiastically

A black - edged envelope reveals a curious address on a letter intended for a Frenchman. All it has is the man's name, with "Sailing on Sunday night, Half-past three o'clock, Angleterre" (Fig. 2). This was a decidedly smart move on the part of the Frenchman's

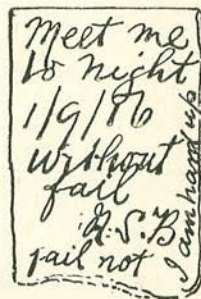


FIG. 4.

correspondent. The letter was faithfully delivered, the postal authorities going down to the boat which left this country at that hour, on board of which they found Monsieur. A well-known firm of music publishers were put down as living in "Cocks and Hens," otherwise the Poultry; whilst an enterprising grocer of Naples gave the Post Office a slight test of far-sightedness in discovering addresses, when, for a wager, he drew on the envelope a couple of pears,

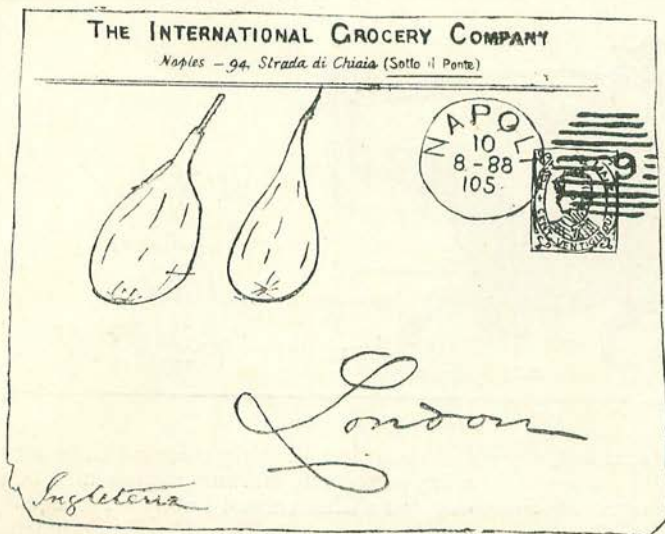


FIG. 3.

Mr J Charlonds
 Fishmonger
 Cantalants
 a set they
 town from
 hair to becu

FIG. 5.

adding the word London (Fig. 3). It is needless to say for whom this was intended.

The sending of a solitary postage stamp through the post with the name, address, and message written on the gummed side,

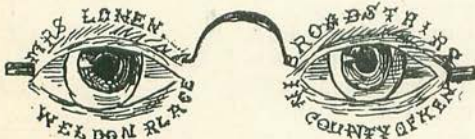


FIG. 6.

is of frequent occurrence. It is, however, a foolish practice, for not only is the stamp likely to be lost amongst the shoals of letters, but no small amount of inconvenience is caused to the sorters and other officials. If this should meet the eye of the gentleman who wrote on a postage stamp (Fig. 4) to a generously disposed friend, "Meet me to-night without fail. Fail not—I am hard up," will he remember that, though he probably parted with his last penny, considering the state of his exchequer, he ran a great risk of remaining still hard up, owing to non-delivery of his communication?

The missive for a fishmonger at St. Albans who lives "Opposite the town pump," found him (Fig. 5).

ment. He is trying to shelter his trembling form amongst the foliage of a tropical plant, and is suggestively labelled "Up a tree," for a small army of aggravating alligators are waiting for him below, and one more hungry than his companions has already commenced to sample Tommy Atkins' helmet. Another is addressed to a lance-corporal at Christmas-time. He is standing with his tongue out for inspection by an officer, and the sender has unkindly suggested that this is "the results of too much Christmas duff." These little postal humours are decidedly personal.

One to a naval man at South Africa has "Peace" typified by a blue-jacket hobbling along on a couple of crutches, minus his legs. Another from Cheltenham to Port

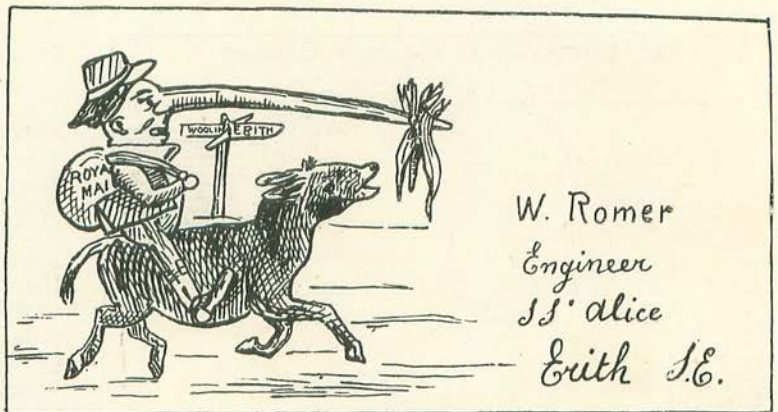


FIG. 7.

Elizabeth has a highly coloured drawing of a big policeman chasing a small and bony dog, "Ye Cheltenham Bobby sees a cheeky dog in the park." The animal's impudence lies in the fact that he had dared to wear

We now turn to the artistic creations. One of the scrap books is devoted to fac-similes of letters intended for distant parts of the world. Many most humorously addressed envelopes were received by our soldiers during the Egyptian War. There is one with a red-coat in a very awkward predicament.



FIG. 8.

the prescribed muzzle on his tail instead of on his head.

A visitor to Broadstairs finds the name of this seaside resort represented by a pair of immense optics remarkably wide open (Fig. 6).

An Irishman has adopted a good means of making the donkey he is riding go (Fig. 7). He is holding a bunch of carrots in front of the animal, which the energetic creature is frantically endeavouring to reach. Hence the pace. There rests a traveller, far from

home, on his hotel bed. Visions in the distance appear of a wife washing the children and putting them to bed. The traveller may be happy in his domestic dreams, but he does not know that the mice are seeking refuge for the night within his boots, which are thrown down at the foot of the bedstead (Fig. 8). A Mrs. Cook was the recipient of a wrapper on which a sportsman is seen "missing" a hare with his gun—the animal making a



FIG. 9



FIG. 10.

house-tops and chimney-pots, round which cats are raising their voices, and a note in the corner to the effect that "the opera season has commenced." Perhaps the cleverest of these animal studies is that of the method employed by a number of mice to secure the meat of a pet puppy. Whilst the dog was innocently sleeping against a small perch a mouse has heroically climbed to the summit of it, and being the fortunate possessor of a tail both strong and long, has wound it round the poor puppy's neck whilst its relations are feeding in perfect safety and contentment (Fig. 10).

Matrimonial squabbles are not missing. One is an Irish scene. Pat, to escape the wrath of his loving wife, has shut himself up in his hut, and appears at the window with a radiant smile, alas! only of a temporary kind, we fear. For at the door is standing a lady armed with a mighty shillelagh, over whose head is written the refrain of a popular ballad, "Waiting here to meet her

rapid retreat. Is this meant for "miss his cook?" (Fig. 9). Indeed, animals are well represented amongst the humours of the Post Office. An elephant is amusing itself on a euphonium, with its trunk to the mouthpiece, a crocodile is after a very diminutive boy wishing him "A Merry Christmas"; and a vocalist receives a view of

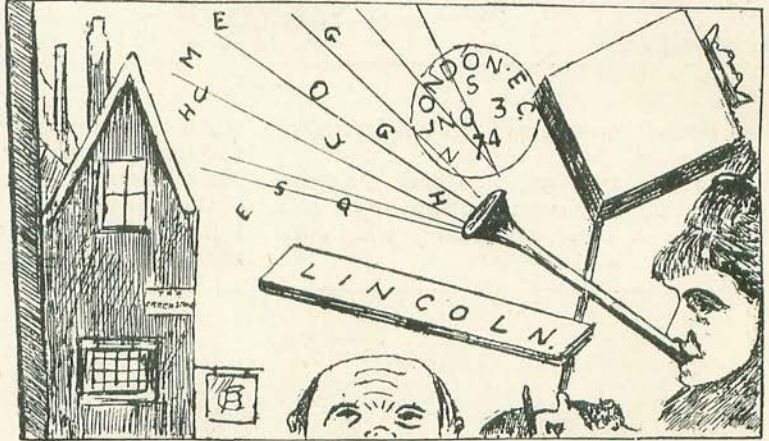


FIG. 11.

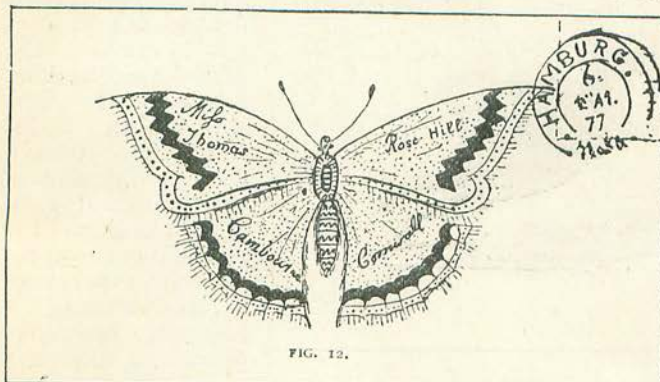


FIG. 12.

little darling!" Songs, it seems, are frequently quoted. Mephistopheles, in his traditional red, is eyeing a young lady, and declaring "I shall have her by and by." A banjoist is fingering his instrument whilst giving expression to his feelings with

"But whilst I listen to thy voice,
Thy face I never see."

The artist has correctly suggested the reason by writing over the musician's

countenance the words "No wonder!" "My love, she's but a lassie yet," says an ardent swain to his sweetheart, in full view of the postman, but one song seems to have been singled out for the purpose of adding

small and select party, she is obliging them with "My mother bids me bind my hair!"

The positions occupied by the postage stamps are many. Often a gentleman is sitting on it, other times carrying it on his back, but the favourite place seems to be as the sign of an inn—"The Queen's Head." One of such hostelries shows a person leaving the house in anything but a fit and proper state, over whose head may be seen the concluding portion of the familiar sign of many a country publichouse—"licensed to be drunk on the premises." An exceedingly original drawing is that of a corkscrew with a merry expression about it, in the shape of a young man proceeding to draw the cork of a bottle in

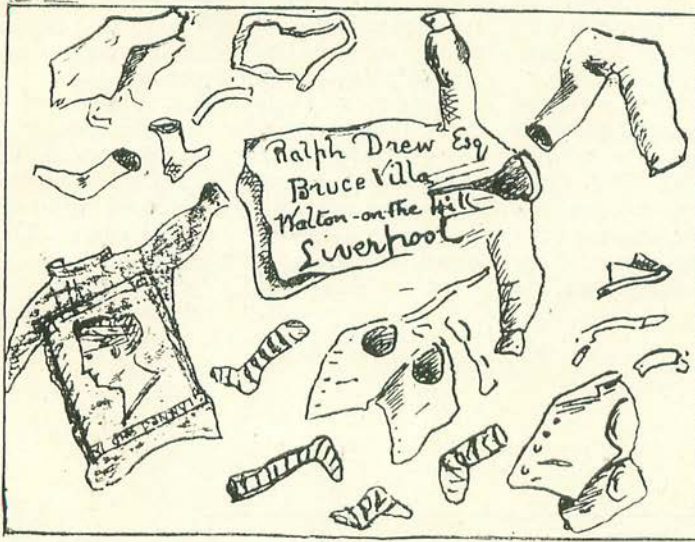


FIG. 13.

to the artistic beauty of many an envelope. The picture is usually that of a not altogether fascinating damsel sitting at a piano, or occupied on some other musical instru-

the form of a young lady, and drinking up the contents. This was addressed to a young lady, and suggests the affectionate disposition of the gentleman who sent it.

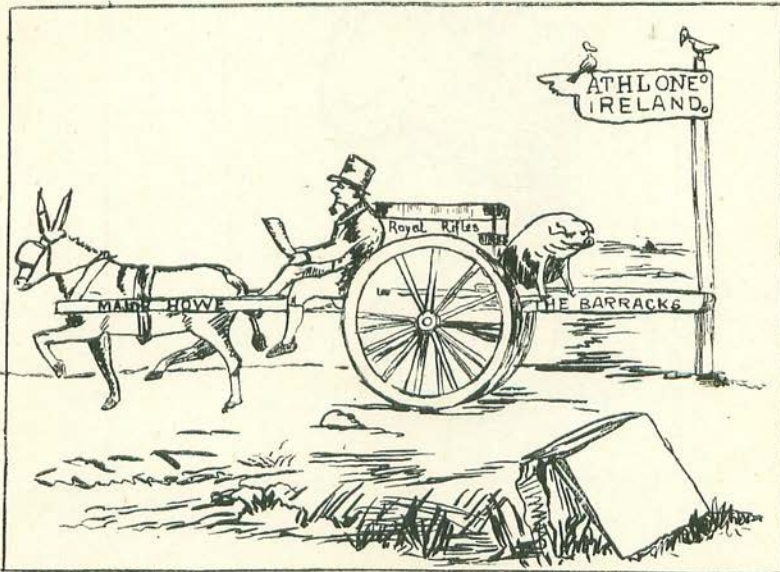


FIG. 14.

ment. The head is entirely destitute of what is generally to be seen growing in abundance there, and surrounded by a

Tokens of love, indeed, abound. One gouty being on crutches, and liberally bandaged, says, "I am going to be nursed

by Miss —," and here follows the address.

Amongst the miscellaneous items is a lady puffing from her mouth the name and address of the recipient (Fig. 11).

A lady's name is cleverly worked in amongst the wings of a butterfly (Fig. 12); whilst the owner of a certain envelope, presumably a bachelor, has all his articles of clothing, down to his stockings, scattered over the wrapper, with the postage-stamp on a red flannel shirt, and the address displayed on a white dress ditto (Fig. 13).

Not the least interesting sketches are those typical of the country wherever the person addressed is at that moment residing. The artist has in Fig. 14 cleverly utilised

Pat's cart and the shafts thereof as a means of drawing the postman's polite attention to the whereabouts of a representative of wars alarms. The sign-post, too, suggestively points to the town, and the milestone has a space for the stamp. We are inclined to admire the designer's ideas of a pig on paper, but his birds on the sign-post are somewhat wanting in figure and plumage.

Niggers are numerous. A diminutive, but courageous inhabitant of darkest Africa has converted an ostrich into a species of feathered postman (Fig. 15). The youthful darkey appears to be bidding his steed to "go on"—or words to that effect. The obedient ostrich, with straining neck, is hurrying along to "Hy. Jones, Esquire."

(To be continued.)

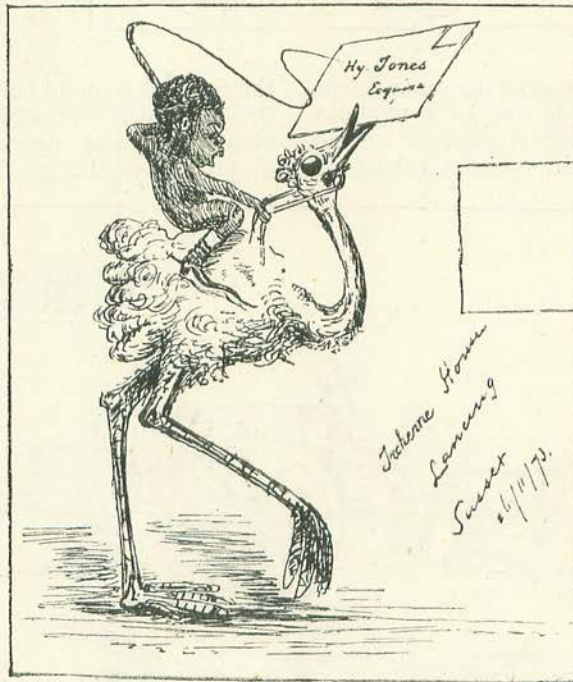


FIG. 15.

Humours of the Post Office.

WITH FAC-SIMILES.

II.



THE pages in the "Post Office Album," through which we were looking in our last number, are by no means exhausted. There is yet another curiously addressed missive to Her Majesty—"To the lady queen vicktorieha queens pallice London" (Fig. 1); the late

a somewhat remarkable envelope—sufficiently suggestive, however, to reach him (Fig. 3); whilst the Receiver and Accountant-General of the Post Office received a veritable puzzle in "Receive the county general Cheapy hall London" (Fig. 4). One remaining specimen (Fig. 5) here reproduced—which was actually delivered to the proper

persons for whom it was intended—we will leave to those of our readers who revel in the unravelling of the mysterious.

Turn over another leaf, and you are requested to make yourself acquainted with an interesting little Welsh town in Merionethshire, familiarly

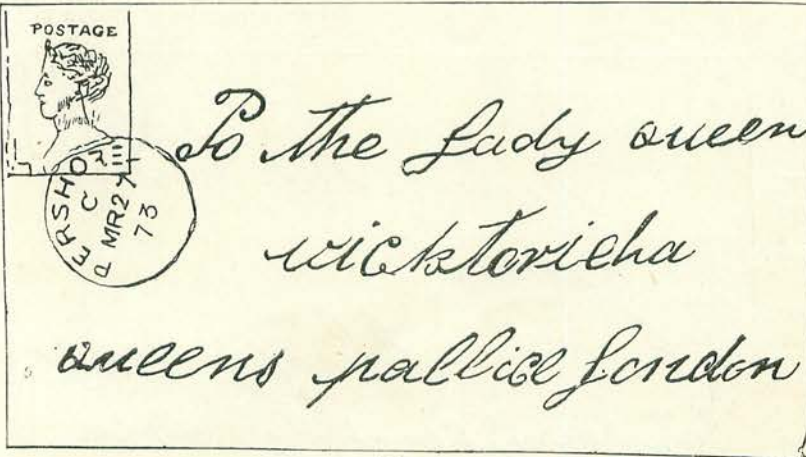


FIG. 1.

Earl of Beaconsfield was also signalled out for an hieroglyphic wrapper (Fig. 2); the gentleman occupying the civic chair at the Mansion House in 1886 was the recipient of

known as "Llanllanfairpyllghyllgheryogogoch"; and the next page gives rise to unbounded sympathy for the unfortunate postman who dutifully delivered a letter to—

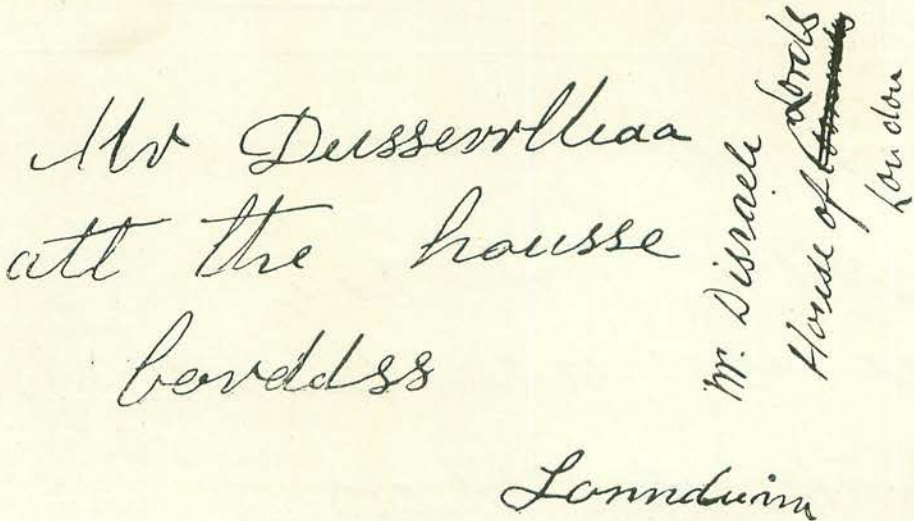


FIG. 2.

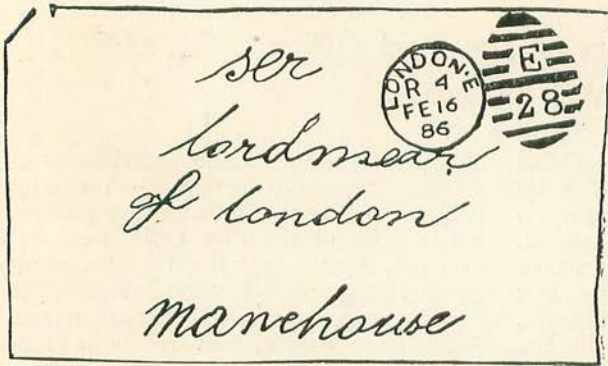


FIG. 3.

account by a foreign one. A minister, evidently just ordained, and residing in Jamaica, is depicted in the pulpit with his old college cap and boots in the distance, with the reminder to "Never forget old friends." One envelope strongly suggests that somebody has a weakness for anything but toast and water, for the gentleman is represented fast asleep, with a huge barrel of beer above him, and the tap still flowing freely into his opened mouth, which is waiting to receive it.

The volumes devoted to humours

"Mr. Paddy O'Rafferty O'Shaughnessy, 'The Beautiful Shamrock' Next door to Barney Flynn's Whiskey Store. Knock me down entirely street, Stratford on Avon In the County Cork if ye like Dublin."

One gentleman is evidently partial to boxing—all his envelopes are pugilistically illustrated, whilst another individual's wrappers always bear a request—in big capitals—to carry his communication by a British vessel, and on no

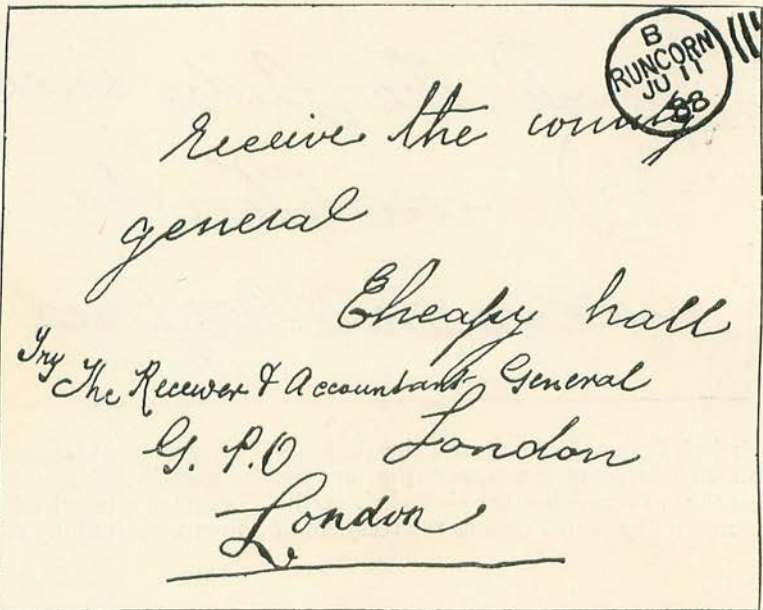


FIG. 4.

oh see well to
new it i by boy
we cer nre beany
be d as whes

FIG. 5.

nearer at home are brimming over with merriment, whilst not a few leaves contain somewhat serious impressions. Suggestions of holiday making form a prominent feature. Pretty and effective views of the sea and country lanes, picturesque valleys and mountains, are liberally displayed on the

various envelopes. One lady is at Margate, attired in such masculine clothing, with binocular under her arm, that the artist has added a flowing beard to her face. There is a landlady presenting a bill, whilst the next is really a very original idea of the various stages of matrimony. On a number of boards resting on an easel, is one marked "1883," with a pair of lovers drifting down a stream in a boat, whilst "1884" finds the same pair in wedding garments. Other "years" are waiting for their events in the lives of the young people.



FIG. 6.

Another envelope, bearing the Peckham post-mark, thus silently appeals :—

"To Exeter fair city, by Western Mail,
 Good postman, send me without fail;
 And when in Devonshire I arrive,
 Over Exe Bridge and through St.
 Thomas drive,
 Past the old turnpike, and up the hill
 Held sacred to Little John's \times still,
 Just where the road begins to turn,
 You'll find Rose Cottage and Mrs.
 Hearn.
 Ask her if there's a fair young lass
 Come down from London her holidays
 to pass;
 To her please deliver without delay,
 For I'm postage paid, and so you need
 not stay."

The poetry is not great, but it is suggestive.

An eminent maker of umbrellas received a most artistic wrapper, with numerous illustrations showing the position his umbrellas held amongst the community. Gentlemen are using them as a means of roaming the seas, whilst a more adventuresome spirit, remarking

that "Umbrellas make you rise in the world," is going up *à la* balloon with one. Finally, at the death of the worthy manufacturer his own umbrella is carried in state followed by an appreciative populace, and the head of his memorial stone is further decorated by a number of these very useful pro-

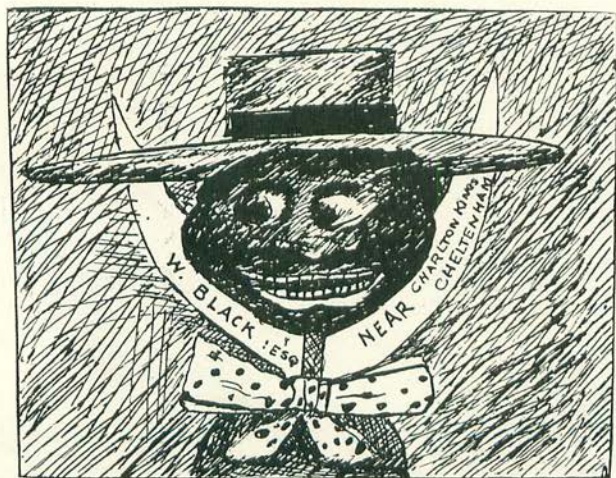


FIG. 7.

Poetical addresses are as numerous as they are varied. Here are one or two examples. A postman read the following instructions :—

"Near Bristol City may patience lead thee;
 At Totterdown Row—postman, heed me—
 Stands Gordon House, 'tis passing fair,
 And Mr. Brittain dwelleth there."

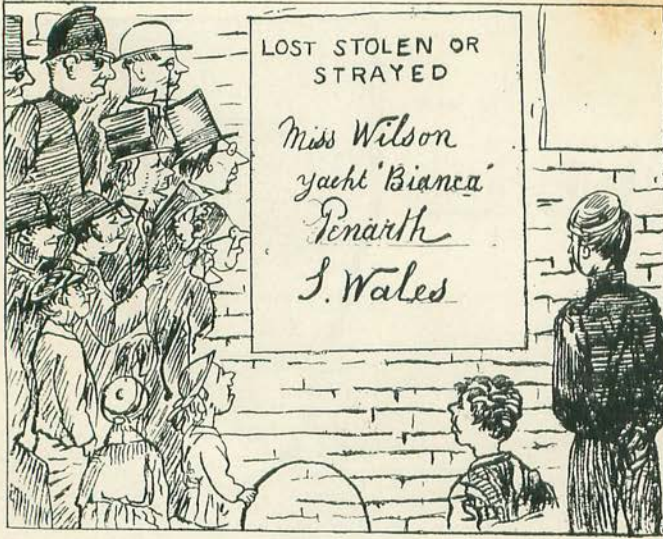


FIG. 8.

tectors. The uncertainty of our glorious climate is the subject for another wit, who has drawn a monumental stone over which a watering can is freely flowing with the words—

Sacred
to the
memory of the fine weather
which departed from this land
June, 1888.

Also
the sun of the above.

One envelope has an ingenious direction on it. It is intended for s.s. *Kaisow*, lying in the Red Sea. It shows a very intelligent-looking sow labelled K, with a belt round it in the form of the letter C painted red.

A somewhat similarly addressed wrapper is one despatched to Wales. Swansea is represented by a swan with a capital C in the immediate vicinity of its tail (Fig. 6); whilst following the word South is a representation of a num-

ber of enthusiastic fishermen making every effort to harpoon some whales. A stalwart Highlander, in all his glory, appears upon another, wishing "A guid New Year to ye," and as he holds out a palm almost as large as himself, he merrily exclaims, "And here's a hand, my trusty fren'!" An invalid is lying with a heavy box on him, labelled appropriately "A Chest Complaint." John Bull and Young Australia occupy two corners of the wrapper, shaking hands across the sea, whilst the next is a loving message to an ocean roamer, showing an energetic little nigger indulging in what is frankly admitted to be a "mangled version of an old song," to the effect of—

" Good bye, John,
Don't stop long,
Come back soon to your numberless chickabiddies ;
My heart is low,
The winds blow so,
And takes away my sailor."

Niggers seem strong favourites for illustrative purposes. A magnificent specimen of a black is that of a gentleman in a huge broad-brimmed straw hat, with the name and address written on an equally prodigious collar. The gentleman destined to

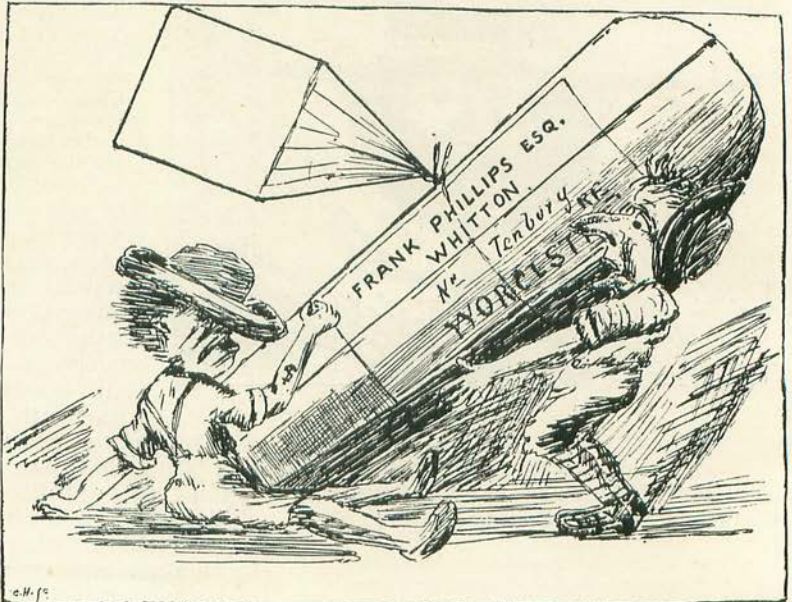


FIG. 9.

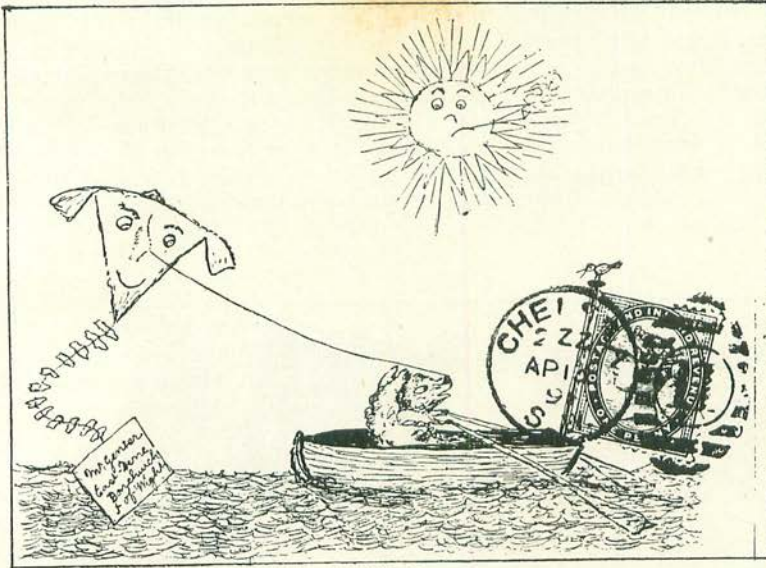


FIG. 10.

proved too heavy, and was allowed to fall to the ground, much to the evident hurt of one of those engaged in the job (Fig. 9).

"The lion is a noble animal, and to his keeper he appears to possess no small degree of attachment." So says an envelope with the king of beasts taking his unwary keeper into his paws.

It is needless to say that married people receive a fair share of attention from the envelope

receive the letter rejoiced in the name of Black, hence the presence of our dark friend (Fig. 7). Here (Fig. 11) is a merry little drummer boy, whose face is hidden by the paper he is reading, which bears the postage stamp.

A young lady residing at Port Elizabeth probably felt a shock when she found on an envelope from "home," a gentlemanly but gluttonous cannibal making a small lunch out of a venturesome white man, whom he is swallowing at a single bite. "A Native Swallowing a Settler" is the comforting inscription on it. Equally startled, too, probably, was the lady who found that she had been singled out as "Lost, Stolen, or Strayed," with a crowd of interested on-lookers—including representatives of the military and police—eagerly scanning the bill on which was set forth her name and address (Fig. 8).

What looks like a sly hint at matrimony was sent by an amorous swain to a young damsel at Cape Town. A gentleman's head, labelled "An unfurnished flat," surely suggests house furnishing. Page after page of the postal scrap-book is replete with illustrations: artists, sculptors, eminent politicians, all classes of the community, all have their own particular "skit"—a musician, probably, and a violinist to wit, receiving his envelope with a pictorial representation suggesting the weight of his instrument, so much so that it took a couple of men to carry it between them, and even then the fiddle and case

artist. The "delighted parent" is in strong evidence, whilst the nurse approaches with gladdened step and joyfully exclaims "Twins, sir!"

And a wit winds the series up with a request on his missive addressed to the care of a post-office to the effect:—"Don't give him this unless he calls for it."

We append a couple of illustrations

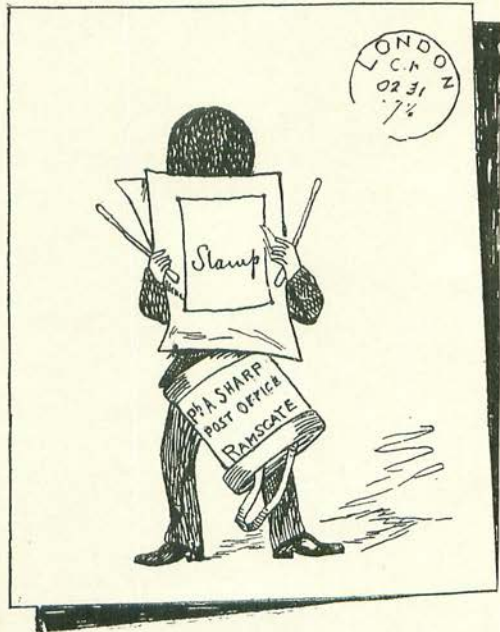


FIG. 11.

which seem to have escaped the usually keen eye of those at the Post Office, always on the look-out for these little curiosities in envelopes. One is kindly forwarded by a gentleman interested in these "Postal Humours," and shows a boar partial to boating playfully flying a kite, on the tail of which is the name and address. The

sun looks on somewhat dubiously from above (Fig. 10). The second is a specimen of many similar ones which arrive at the office of *Tit-Bits*, and depicts the various stages through which a letter passes whilst on its way to compete for the weekly "Vigilance Prize," until it is finally handed in at its proper destination (Fig. 12).

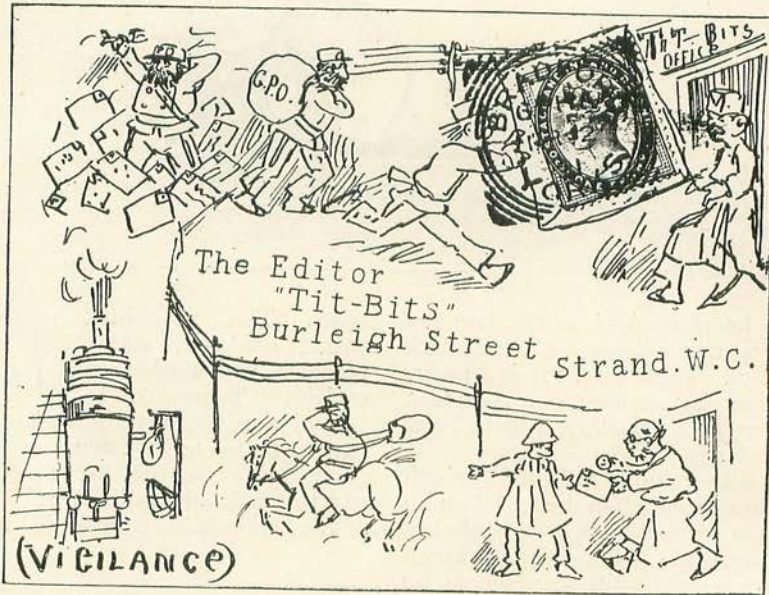


FIG. 12.