

Postmen of the World.

BY THOMAS LAKE.



OF all the world's postmen—and their name is legion—the native runner of Natal is probably the most interesting and curious. Accordingly, we give him a prominent position at the beginning of this article, where his dusky features, strong physique, and peculiar head-dress may attract deserved attention, and incidentally make us realize the grandeur of the world's postal system and its magnitude. The world would be lost without its post-bag, and its debt to the men who carry the mails is enormous.

But again to the postman of Natal. About 160 or 170 of these runners are employed in the Natal Department, and they carry the mails between offices where the employment of a mail-cart would not be warranted. When they perform short journeys they run at the rate of about four miles an hour; but when the journeys are long, extending, say, to thirty or forty miles, they do not do more than three miles an hour. The native carrier is supposed to carry a load of 60lb., but in the post-office the mail carrier is not ordinarily given a load weighing more than 40lb. He

does his work very well indeed, in a general way, evincing earnestness and strict honesty. His pay is £1 per month; and an allowance of 10s. per month is made additionally for his rations. If he provide these himself he receives the 10s.; but if the postmasters, or others, provide them, they receive the allowance. The native ordinarily lives on

what is called in Natal "Poop," a porridge of maize meal, which is practically a paste, and this is generally the fare of the post-runner except when on his journey, when he occasionally carries a bread load with him for refreshment.

The Postmaster-General of Natal, Mr. J. Chadwick, to whom we are indebted for this information, adds: "The Natal runner performs journeys extending to eighty or 100 miles per week, according as to whether his load may be moderately light or heavy. His clothing consists of a military great-coat and cape, which are supplied by the Department. At times he wears an



NATIVE POSTMAN OF NATAL.
From a Photo. by J. W. Coney, Pietermaritzburg.

improvised sandal, which is ordinarily a piece of raw hide laced to the foot. Underneath his overcoat he wears the Mncetu. I do not know that the spelling of this word will give a very clear idea of its pronunciation."



From a BARBADOS. [Photograph.]

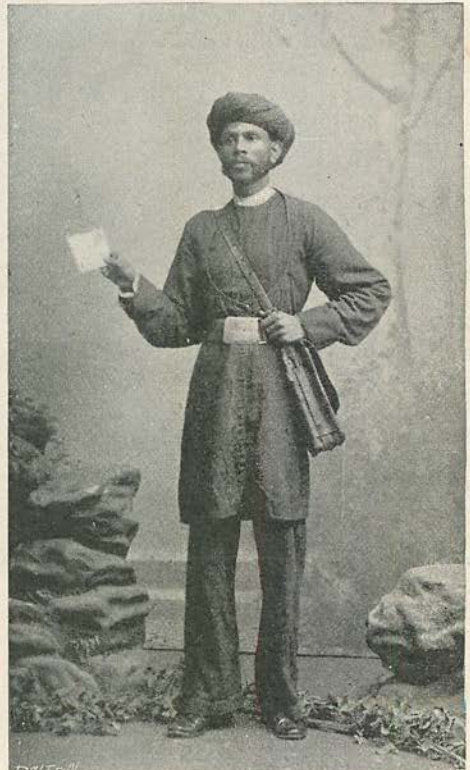
The postmen of Barbados, who are shown in the reproduction at the top of this page, have two uniforms—one for the hot weather in July, August, and September, and the other for the cooler months. Our picture shows both. The light-coloured uniform is of unbleached cotton drill, with red facings, and the other is made of blue serge. Mr. E. F. S. Bowen, of the Public Works Office in Barbados, who has sent the photograph, writes: "One never hears the old, familiar postman's knock in Barbados. The letters are always taken round to the back and given to servants, with an occasional cry of 'Post here!'"

Although the postal system has attained its greatest development in this century, the actual carrying of letters dates back even beyond 1544. In the postal system of Spain and the German Empire there is a record, in that year, of permission having been granted to Government couriers to carry letters for individuals, and the probabilities are that the custom had been in existence long before this permission was granted. Private letters of the fifteenth century now exist in Great Britain, showing by indorsements that they must have been conveyed by relays of men and horses under Government control, and it is known that in several Continental

States inland postal establishments had been established in connection with the Universities. Consequently, the men who are pictured in this article are the representatives of an aged institution which has been of inestimable benefit to mankind.

On the southern slopes of the Caucasus, the dweller who awaits a letter from a friend on the plains sends his dog down in charge of a tax-collector or pedlar with instructions that the message shall be placed in a little pouch in the ring of the dog's collar. Doggie is then turned loose, and trots back to his home with the mail.

The difference in postal costume is, as might be expected, very clearly marked, and one is almost prepared from a glance at the picture to name the country which the postman serves. The Calcutta postman is unmistakable, the Sydney suburban letter-carrier virtually names himself, the "Jap" simply gives himself away, and the Finlander wears a costume that almost breathes of the north. It is most interesting to look at the pictures from this standpoint, and to see the variations in clothes as caused by climate or by differences in national taste.



CALCUTTA.

From a Photo. by Bourne & Shepherd, Calcutta.

The Trinidad postman is a neatly dressed, civil, and well-spoken negro. As a rule he is not a native of the island, but comes from Barbados or Tobago. His working hours are from 7 a.m. till 4 p.m., during which he makes three deliveries and covers an average of fourteen miles daily. His pay varies from £30 to £70 per annum. In Port of Spain, the capital of the island, the postmen who carry letters to the suburbs possess bicycles, furnished by the Government, which greatly facilitate their work, and of which they are very proud. The accompanying photo., sent to us by the Government of Trinidad, represents the oldest postman on the staff—a reliable man, named George Grosvenor, who makes few mistakes.

One of the strangest methods of carrying the mails is that in use amongst the natives of Coromandel. It is said that waterproof bags are there deposited in a species of catamaran-boat, which is so small that the postman "has to sit astride it like a floating log." Sometimes these postmen are washed off into the water, where they have to battle with the sharks, but in most cases the passage is made with safety, and



From a] TRINIDAD. [Photograph.



BRITISH GUIANA.

From a Photo. by Rowe & Da Costa, Georgetown, B.G.

the letters come to their destination safe and sound.

Most of the employés of the Post Office Department of British Guiana are negroes or of negro descent, although the administrative staff are Europeans or of European descent. Three of the British Guiana letter-carriers are shown herewith, the photograph having been sent by the Postmaster-General of that country. Mr. Collier says there are house-to-house deliveries in the towns and all the large villages; and, in addition, private "lock-box" deliveries at the two principal post-offices of the Colony. There are fourteen letter-carriers in Georgetown, the capital, and the number of post-offices in the Colony is sixty-two, besides six travelling offices. The whole charge of the Post Office in British Guiana was assumed by the Colonial Government in 1860, when slightly over 61,000 miles were then traversed by the mails. To-day they traverse a distance of 307,000 miles annually.

To Mr. V. E. Caldwell we are indebted for an excellent photograph of the San Salvador postman, who is appointed with reference to his honesty, temperance, and punc-



From a SALVADOR. [Photograph.

tuality. In the capital of Salvador there are seventeen postmen, two of whom are exclusively employed in the delivery of registered letters, although for this they get no more than the ordinary pay of \$40 a month. There are three monthly mails to Europe, and three to California and the United States, all of which are carried by the Pacific Steamship Company. Delays occasionally occur, however, owing to the want of punctuality of the mail steamers, which sometimes are several days behind time. It costs Salvador over £6,800 a year for a postal service, with a population officially estimated at over 800,000.

The mails of British India are intrusted to local express companies and their agents. South

of Bombay and in Nepal, contractors send peasants through the jungle with the bags. They journey through places where Europeans could not go without a guide, and when mountain torrents swell to such an extent that passage is barred, ropes are slung from bank to bank, and the bags are then pulled across by this means. The post between other parts of India and Nepal is part of the regular Bengal postal service, and the runners are dressed in similar clothing, the only articles issued by the Government being a red turban, a leather belt, and a stick with bells.

A very primitive method of carrying the mails is in vogue in Corea, where an obstinate adherence to old customs is very common. One of the relics of past ages is the ox-cart mail—about the slowest means of locomotion to be found. In China, which is also fairly unprogressive, there is more of an attempt at speed. Two methods of carrying the mails are in vogue. The letters of the mandarins are delivered by special couriers, frequently accompanied by military escort. Public letters are carried by two rival companies. The first company, called the "Local," has the cities for its seat of operations; and the other, called the "General," delivers letters to all parts of the empire, maintaining communication with the far-off frontier towns.

The Leeward Islands are among the possessions of Great Britain in the West Indies, and the picture at the bottom of this page shows one of the men who carry letters for the people of Antigua, one of that scattered group.

In the Principality of Montenegro, which forms part of the Postal Union, there are nine post-offices, and mails are delivered at Cattaro three or four times a week, and brought to Cettinje by the Montenegrin diligence. Letters take five to seven days from London to Cettinje. The accompanying reproduction from a photograph taken by the Hon. Mrs. Kennedy, of the British



ANTIGUA, LEEWARD ISLANDS.
From a Photo. by J. Anjo, Antigua.

Legation, shows a Montenegrin postman, clothed in a long coat, delivering letters at Cetinje.

In New South Wales the number of letters posted throughout the Colony exceeds

the suburban uniforms worn. The first man wears a helmet and a blouse very much like those of a London policeman, and is certainly very smart in appearance. The suburban postman is quite as handsome-look-



From a]

MONTENEGRO.

[Photograph.

62,000,000, and the number of letters delivered by carriers from the head office in Sydney is slightly less than 10,000,000. The carriers number 453, and two of these are shown on this page, in the city and

ing, and if all the members of the Sydney corps are up to the standard of these two, there is every reason why the people of Sydney should be proud of their postmen. It may be added that the number of miles travelled by mail



SYDNEY (N.S.W.) POSTMAN IN CITY UNIFORM.
From a Photograph.



SYDNEY (N.S.W.) POSTMAN IN SUBURBAN UNIFORM.
From a Photograph.

conveyance in New South Wales during 1896 was 9,773,500, and that although the revenue from all sources amounted in that year to £833,940, the expenditure amounted to £872,471. Such, we believe, is the usual story in connection with a modern post-office that attends to the growing wants of a large population.

In Holland the extent of the mail service routes is over 30,000 miles, and the number of letters, which in 1850 was about 7,000,000, is now over 60,000,000. The postmen in this cleanly and



the conditions under which they carry out their duties are sometimes of a very fatiguing nature, necessitating, as they do in Vienna, for example, the climbing of interminable steps when a letter has to be delivered. The postmen get fifty florins a month pension after forty years' service, while the yearly wage varies from 400 to 600 florins. The Government gives to the postmen every year one tunic, one pair of cloth trousers, one pair of linen trousers, one waistcoat, and a cap, while every second year a coat and a blouse are



VIENNA.

From a Photo. by S. Bloch, Vienna.

AMSTERDAM.
From a Photo-
graph.



ROME.

From a Photo. by I. B. Trewhella, Rome.

enterprising country are splendid specimens of manhood, although they are generally only of medium height. Our photograph shows one of the Amsterdam letter-carriers, taken while he was on his rounds.

Postmen in Austria are civil servants, and

given. Previous military service is considered as postal service, and in time of war each year counts double.

The Roman postman has to work eight hours a day for about £3 a month, and, work as hard as he can, he can get no more than



CONSTANTINOPLE.

From a Photo. by Baker & Edwards, Constantinople.

eighty lire per month. Therefore his occupation is not exactly a paying one. The Roman postmen are, however, as a rule, a hard-working and punctual class, and, like the Turkish letter-carriers, they are enabled to get the good things of life from tips given to them by the citizens at Christmas, Easter, and in August. The photograph of an Italian postman, which we are allowed to print through the kindness of Miss Isabel B. Trewhella, of Rome, shows an amiable face on the carrier, but the uniform is not so smart as those which we have just noticed.

The illustration at the top of this page shows a postman who has been in the service of the Turkish Imperial Government for thirty-seven years, and is, therefore, quite an authority on postal delivery in Constantinople. Nowadays, this delivery is carried on with much more care than formerly, when it was a very frequent occurrence that letters were irrecoverably lost. The pay is very low, and most Turkish postmen make additional money by asking for "backsheesh." Consequently, those who are in the habit of receiving large mails backsheesh heavily, as that is a guarantee of quick delivery. Telegraph boys are also paid well by business men,

many giving as much as five piastres, or tenpence, on the delivery of each telegram, although the customary fee is only one piastre. Even this tip is unjustified, as the envelope on each telegram distinctly reads, "Il n'y a rien à payer au porteur." Therefore, writes Mr. W. G. Middleton Edwards, "we in Constantinople pay more than the postage on a letter or parcel," and more than the tariff on a telegram.

In Turkey, it is said, sacks containing the letters of the people often lie for weeks at a distribution office until the local Cadi finds it convenient to hand them over to the lowest bidder, who will undertake to deliver them within a specified time to the local Cadi of the town for which they are destined. The man who carries the mails is in most cases a mountaineer, and the mails are usually promised to be delivered at a certain time, "if Allah wills." Allah, of course, sometimes overlooks a postman's failings, and when the carrier stops to visit his relatives for two or three days while on the way, the people simply have to wait for their letters, and that is all. In cases where the addressee is gone, leaving no address, the letter is not sent back to the writer, as in Western



From a]

TURKEY—PROVINCIAL.

[Photo.



From a Photo. by] SWEDEN. [Rosen, Stockholm.

countries, but is taken to a sort of circuit court, where the name is cried out. Then, if the writer is found, a fine is demanded, and the letter is at once appropriated by the official! At least, so the report goes.

Without drawing any invidious comparisons, we make bold to say that our Swedish postman is the handsomest and finest figure in the lot. They must have a splendid set of men in Sweden, for, in our article some months ago on "Policemen of the World," the Swedish "Bobby" stood

out above all others for fine looks and military bearing, although the Roumanian policeman ran him hard. In the present case, the Swede turns up trumps again, and nothing we could say about him could give a better idea of the Swedish postal service than the photograph itself.

In Switzerland, candidates for the postal service are not required to pass a formal examination. The vacancies are advertised, and the man selected must be able to read and write the language of that part of the country which he is to serve, to know simple arithmetic, and, above all, to be a strong man and a good walker.

There are two categories of postmen proper in Switzerland: the ordinary letter-carriers whose business it is to deliver and collect articles of the letter post, and the other so-called "Geldbriefträger," who are intrusted with the delivery of money-orders, letters with value declared, and various other articles of the parcel post. The man whose photograph is presented herewith belongs to the latter class. He is represented in winter uniform—blue coat and light grey trousers. The summer uniform is a grey blouse with the same trousers. The photograph was kindly sent to us by Mr. G. de Muralt, Her Majesty's Consul at Berne.

From Mr. A. Stewart MacGregor, of Christiania, we have obtained a photograph showing a postman of Christiania, Norway. In an interesting letter, Mr. MacGregor says: "The short jacket has been recently introduced, many of the men still wearing a long kind of frock-coat. The colour in both cases is a dark green, but I am told the postmen are desirous to have it changed to blue. The wages are 1,000 kroner (over £55) to begin with, rising after fifteen years' service to 1,500 kroner. The uni-



From a] SWISS POSTMAN AT BERNE. [Photograph.

form costs 100 kroner per annum. One of the postmen told me the idea with regard to the substitution of a short jacket for the long coat is that in this way two pairs of trousers might be obtained yearly, instead of one, for the 100 kroner allowance. The braid is silvery (if not actually of silver), and there is a small cockade, in the Norwegian colours, on the band round the cap; also, as you will observe, post-horns on the cap and shoulder."

The climate of Finland is uniformly severe, and, as we show in the accompanying photograph, the postmen dress warmly. The costume is picturesque. Long boots of thick leather and a long coat, crowned by a close-fitting skull-cap, make up the details. Many of the postmen are linguists, since they talk Finnish,



NORWAY.

From a Photo. by H. Ingeberg, Christiania.

Swedish, and Russian. The common people talk Finnish, the upper classes use Swedish, and the study of Russian is compulsory in all the State schools.

The people of Denmark are fortunate in their postmen, for these public servants are not only fine appearing men, but are unusually civil and punctual. Their wages vary from 800 kroner to 1,400 kroner a year, there being four classes,—each with the same number of men; and they get additional pay according to the number of years they have served—50 kroner a year for each five years, with a maximum of 200 kroner for twenty years. This system

works satisfactorily, and the service is uniformly excellent. Our thanks are due to Mr. C. H. Funch, the British Vice-Consul at Copenhagen, for the photograph here reproduced.



FINLAND.

From a Photo. by D. Nyblin.



DENMARK.

From a Photo. by H. Paetz, Copenhagen



ROUMANIA.
From a Photo. by S. Korn, Bucharest.

On this page we show two officials, one an ordinary Roumanian postman with a bagful of letters and other documents, and the other a Bulgarian telegraph messenger. In 1895 there were 3,216 post-offices in Roumania, through which passed 12,169,815 letters, 7,742,215 post-cards, and 23,438,805 newspapers, samples, and parcels. These seem big figures for a population of 5,800,000; but the United States, in 1896, with a population of nearly 70,000,000, passed 11,182,759,410 pieces through the mail. An appreciation of these figures

will give some idea of how deep-seated the habit of letter-writing is in the people. And it grows more noticeable every year.

From Miss Tina Elliot, the daughter of Mr. F. Elliot, of the British Agency in Sofia, we have received the photograph of the Bulgarian postman, and in an interesting letter Miss Elliot says: "The uniform of the postmen is made of dark blue cloth with gilt buttons, and green collar and cuffs. The men who carry the telegrams have yellow collars and cuffs. They wear round astrakhan caps with cloth tops. I have seen several postmen going about on bicycles."

In nearly all countries, postmen get wages which seem ridiculously small in proportion to the amount of work that they have to do, and the number of hours they labour. Many of the figures which are incidentally given in this article show how true this is. An American postman once told the writer that, on an average, he wore out twelve pairs of boots a year, whereas under ordinary circumstances he would wear out two, yet the Government took no account of these trifles, and looked upon them as the penalties of the trade. Much of the labour, however, has recently been reduced in the United States by the establishment in large business buildings of small "post-offices" on the ground floor, which do away with the necessity of a delivery by the postman from room to room.

One of the most noted postmen in England was the so-called "Postman-Poet of Bideford," who died about three years ago. When Edward Capern was first appointed rural letter-carrier, he had to cover a district thirteen miles in extent, and received the munificent sum of half a guinea for seven days' work. Some of his poetical efforts attracted the attention of Lord Palmerston, who granted him a Civil List pension of £40, while the Post Office authorities increased his wages to 13s. a week, and relieved him of Sunday duty.



BULGARIAN TELEGRAPH MESSENGER.
From a Photograph.

He made the acquaintance of many of the best-known literary men and women of the day, and his first volume of verses was subscribed to by such men as Tennyson, Landor, Dickens, Kingsley, and Froude. When he died, Capern expressed a wish that his old postman's bell should be buried with him, but, unfortunately, on the day of the funeral, the bell could not be found.



From a

JAPAN.

[Photograph.]

In Japan, burdens of moderate weight are usually carried by coolies, who bear long poles on their shoulders, one package being fastened at each end of the pole. In remote districts the Government mails are forwarded by this method, as shown in the accompanying illustration. Statistics, it may be added, show that the total number of letters, post-cards, books, parcels, etc., carried through the Japanese mails in 1895-96 exceeded 448,000,000, so that the men who carry even a part of this on poles have no easy time of it. The photograph which we reproduce was kindly lent to us by Sir Benjamin Stone.

A good many of the readers of this article will expect to find an English postman amongst the lot, but we must disappoint them.

ing as school-master. Soon after the introduction of the penny post, Mrs. Brown was appointed first post-mistress in the town, which position she still holds, and, as she says, "I widna like tae want it as lang as I'm able tae toddle about." Her memory is still good, and besides being

able to keep her house clean and tidy, she attends regularly to the post-office work, and is able to read and write without the aid of spectacles. Remarkable, too, that the postal system, which is now one of the most important things in the life of the world, and one of the wonders of modern progress, should have attained its greatest development since England's oldest post-mistress first saw the light of day.



MRS. BROWN, POST-MISTRESS, AGED 92.
From a Photo. by John R. McLean, Arbroath, N.B.