OLD POSTAL USAGES.

CURIOUS PHASES OF THE MAIL SERVICE SIXTY YEARS AGO.

Rates on Ordinary Letters In England Were Almost Prohibitive—Adoption of the Penny Post and the Queer Arguments Against It.

When Queen Victoria ascended the throne, there were no telegraphs in this country and few railways. The mails were forwarded by coach, and the postage rates were to all but the well to do prohibitive. It cost from 4d. to 1s. 8d. to send a "single" letter under an ounce in weight from one part of the kingdom to another. There were some 40 charges, varying according to distance, the average rate being 9d., or half the day's wage of a laborer. A "single" letter meant a single piece of paper (adhesive envelopes had not been invented), and the addition of a second scrap of paper made the letter a "double" one. The postage was paid on delivery by the recipient, and as no credit was given the incursion of a postman into a poor neighborhood was watched on all sides with fear rather than hope.

Coleridge, the poet, saw a poor woman declining to accept a letter on the score of inability to pay. The good natured bard (doubtless with some difficulty) found the required ninepence, despite the woman's remonstrances. When the postman had gone away, she showed Coleridge that the letter was but a blank sheet of paper. Her brother had arranged to send her at intervals such a sheet, addressed in a certain fashion, as evidence that all was well with him, and she as regularly, after inspecting the address, refused to accept it. Some humorist on one occasion sent out large numbers of letters, each on a sheet as large as a tablecloth, all of which had to be delivered as "single" missives.

This system practically stifled written intercourse among the working class and pressed with severity upon the middle class, but the rich and highly placed entirely escaped postal taxation. The privilege of franking covered the correspondence not only of ministers, peers and members of parliament, but of their relatives, friends and acquaintances. While in one year early in the queen's reign no less than 7,400,000 letters were franked, a single London firm paid annually £11,000 for postage and a writer in The Quarterly referred flippantly to "so slight and rare an incident in a laborer's life as the receipt of a letter." Among the "packets" franked was a grand piano. An army of clerks was employed to fix the charges to be collected, and the postal revenue remained stationary between 1815 and 1835, although in the same period the population increased from 19,500,000 to 25,600,000.

Moved by this state of things, parliament in 1839 adopted Rowland Hill's proposal of uniform inland penny postage, which came into operation on Jan. 10, 1840. The writer possesses a copy of The Quarterly Review of 1839, in which a contributor (believed to be Croker) fiercely denounces the scheme. "Will clerks," he says, "write only to their fathers and girls to their mothers? Will not letters of romance or love, intrigue or mischief, increase in at least equal proportions? We doubt whether social and domestic correspondence will be more than doubled. A gigantic exemplification of the old proverb—Penny wise and pound foolish," etc.

Macaulay says that the penny post, when first established, was the object of violent invective, as a manifest contrivance of the pope to enslave the souls of Englishmen. It was described as "sedition made easy." The postal authorities, who is 1784 had opposed the institution of mail coaches, were implacable enemies of penny postage. The postmaster general of 1839, Lord Lichfield, based his objections on the curious ground that the building at St. Martin's-le-Grand would not be large enough. The secretary, Colonel Maberly, constantly repeated, "This plan we know will fail."

As we know, it succeeded, and the penny rate has been generally adopted in Europe as well as in the United States. The number of letters rose from 80,000,000 in 1837 to 299,000,000 in 1847, and for the year ending on March 31, 1897, about 1,900,000,000. The postal surplus was in 1839 £1,659,510 and in 1896-7 £3,632,133. The number of letters, which was in 1837 about 2 per head and in 1854 15 per head, is now 77 per head.—Fortnightly Review.

High Titles Without Cost.

English folk are copying the American custom of conferring titles upon their children in baptism by using such names as Lord, Earl, Baron, etc. This will mean more to the English child than it has to the American.

One parent in the midlands bestowed on his progeny military as well as social rank. One of his children is christened Baron, another Captain, another Colonel and another Major General. London Truth has this statement from one who knows this titled family, and they are to be found at the present time in the neighborhood of Birmingham. At this rate every Tommy Atkins in the next generation may be a field marshal.

Every Time.

Master—Tombs, this is an example in subtraction. Seven boys went down to a pond to bathe, but two of them had been told not to go in the water. Now, can you tell me how many went in?

Tombs—Yes, sir. Seven. — London Tit-Bits.

Justin McCarthy is quite gray haired. His beard is bushy, and his gold rimmed spectacles impart a benign air to his face, which indeed well suits his mild manner. As for his energy, one would say that it was inexhaustible. He is a politician, a journalist, a novelist and a historian.

THE ENGLISH METROPOLIS.

No Comparison Between the London of Today and of Elizabeth's Time.

It is usual to compare the glories of Victoria's reign with those of Elizabeth, but between the London of today and that of "good Queen Bess" there is really no comparison. London was still girt around by the walls built by the Romans and was largely inclosed within them. The mansions of the great lay outside the city walls, chiefly on the way from the Strand to Westminster. There were few stone houses, and none tiled or slated, being mostly built of wood and thatched with straw. Beyond the royal palace at Westminster was open country, and marsh lands formed the sole feature of the landscape across the river. On the other side of the city was open country, with "merrie Islington," a village, in the distance. Where St. Sepulchre's church now stands were slums. In Golden lane was a row of curious old houses which had been used as a nursery for the children of Henry VIII. Roundabout the Moor gate were large houses, and farther out a watery tract which abounded with wild fowl. The citizens used to exercise themselves here with archery practice and sport. In Bishopsgate the earls of Devonshire had their palace. Houndsditch was a foul ditch, the receptacle for sewage, and there was a similar ditch on the western side of the city. Sanitary science was unknown. The paving of the streets was in its infancy. Except with regard to a few of the principal thoroughfares, each inhabitant paved as much as he liked before his own door with the materials that his pride, poverty or caprice might suggest.

The streets were obstructed with stalls, sheds, signposts and projections of every kind. Curbstones were unknown, and only in a few thoroughfares were the footpaths divided from the carriageway with posts and chains. This was the London of Elizabeth, just 300 years ago—a very different city from that of today—a London gradually becoming foul and pestilential, ultimately to be cleared and purified by the great plague, which carried off a fifth of the inhabitants in 1665, and the great fire of the following year, which involved 400 streets, 13,200 houses, 88 churches, St. Paul's cathedral and four city gates.

Before the fire it is estimated to have contained from 10,000 to 12,000 streets, alleys and lanes, 156,000 houses and about 760,000 inhabitants. So that in 17 centuries London had grown to a population of under 750,000. By the beginning of Queen Victoria's life it had increased to 1,000,000, and now it is sevenfold what it was under "good Queen Bess." Rather than to Elizabeth, London owes its growth to Charles II, for, after the restoration, those who returned with him did not care to return to their old city houses, but built themselves mansions farther west, leaving the city to the merchants, by whom it has ever since been monopolized.—London Standard.

Jowett's Idea of a University.

In Jowett's first sermon in Balliol chapel, he spoke of the college, "first, as a place of education; secondly, as a place of society; thirdly, as a place of religion." He was accustomed to use very similar language about the university: "There are two things which distinguish a university from a mere scientific institution. First of all, it is a seat of liberal education, and, secondly, it is a place of society." Both education and society he conceived of nobly. He sought to impress upon each generation of undergraduates "the unspeakable importance of the four critical years of life between about 18 and 22," when the task before each young man is "to improve his mind, to eradicate bad mental habits, to acquire the power of order and arrangement, to learn the art of fixing his attention." "The object of reading for the schools"—the final honor examinations—"is not chiefly to attain a first class, but to elevate and strengthen the character for life."

As against those who declare examinations injurious, he maintained that "they give a fixed aim toward which to direct our efforts. They stimulate us by the love of honorable distinction. They afford an opportunity of becoming known to those who might not otherwise emerge. They supply the leading strings which we also need. Neither freedom nor power can be attained without order and regularity and method. The restless habit of mind which passes at will from one view of a subject or from one kind of knowledge to another is not intellectual power."—Professor W. J. Ashley in Atlantic.

Johannes Brahms.

Had not Wagner's opponents chosen Brahms as a bulwark from behind which to attack and harass Wagner I cannot conceive how their art interests could ever have clashed. Wagner was devoted wholly to the stage and was the successful creator of an entirely new form of musico-dramatic composition. Brahms not only never attempted to compose an opera, but did not care for opera as an art form.

Brahms' fame could rest securely upon his songs. Still working within established forms, he has again poured thoroughly original and, above all, thoroughly modern music into them. His are the most modern songs, more modern even than those of Schumann or Franz. Schubert, Schumann, Franz and Brahms are the four great figures in the development of the lied.

If I were asked to sum up in a single sentence Brahms' service to art, I should say that it consisted in his having created, within established forms, music wholly original, thoroughly modern and profoundly beautiful.—Gustav Kobbe in Forum.

No Letter Writer.

"I'm no letter writer," said Mr. Gobbleby. "I can say, 'Yours of the 30th inst. came duly to hand,' and I can say: 'We've been having some pretty fine weather lately, but we are looking now for a change. Johnny cut himself bad yesterday with his new jackknife. Mary's new dress fits her beautifully. Mary has the measles. Johnny is just getting over the whooping cough. Willie is down with the croup, and Jane had to stay home from school today on account of the earache. Mother has a touch of the asthma again, but otherwise we are all well.' I can tell these plain facts well enough, but when I get to the end of that I have to stop.

"But, don't you know, some folks can go right on, easy as rolling off a log, talk, talk, talk, talk, and have so much to say they have to crisscross the letter when they get to the end, something I never could do and never could understand."—New York Sun.

Appearances Are Deceptive.

Do not judge from mere appearances, for the light laughter that bubbles on the lip often mantles over the depths of sadness, and the serious look may be the sober veil that covers a divine peace and joy. The bosom can ache beneath diamond brooches, and many a blithe heart dances under coarse wool.—E. H. Chapin.

AN ODD SLIP.

There Is No Official Record of Queen Victoria's Birth.

Curiously enough, neither the birth, baptism nor confirmation of Queen Victoria is a matter of official public record. One might suppose that, filed away in its appointed place among the state archives, there could be found a document formally setting forth the birth of the child who, though not heir presumptive to the throne at the time of the birth, was removed from it by only three degrees, but such is not the case. With regard to her birth, all that was deemed necessary was its announcement by the state officials whose duty it was to be personally cognizant of the fact.

In the huge public records building, in Chancery lane, wherein are jealously guarded the muniments of ancient landed titles and the records of royal treaties, one may see the marvelously well preserved Doomsday Book, which is the beginning of all things to the English conveyancer; the solemn compacts of cardinals, envoys, embassadors and ministers; the priceless records of royal prerogatives side by side with the grants wrung from unwilling monarchs to the growing power of the people. There also are preserved, and with equal care, a multitude of writings which have no other interest, despite their antiquity, than that which comes from the fact that they have to do with the trivial details of the most common incidents in the lives of the kings and queens of England, but among them all there can be found no official or other record of the coming into existence of a certain child, one Alexandrina Victoria, who was destined to become the first empress that ever sat upon an English throne, to rule over a wider extent of country than ever before constituted the dominion of a sovereign, to count among her willing subjects a greater number of people and a wider diversity of races than has ever acknowledged a common scepter, and who has, finally, in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, completed a longer term of continuous reign than has been allotted to a queen in the world's history.—From "Queen Victoria's Coronation Roll," by Florence Hayward.

ANTHOUSES IN AUSTRALIA.

Mounds In Which Millions of the Insects Live In Perfect Amity.

One mound in particular, a groined columnar structure, was 18 feet high. This was not far from Port Darwin. The discoverer believes that originally the mound was conical in shape. The sides were smooth. It has evidently been in use for many years and the columnar effect noticeable, he believes, is due to the fact that the ants incessantly traveling the pathways up and down the mound produced the grooves that are seen and resulted in giving the effect of a columnar formation. The entrance to the mound, examination showed, had varied in location, for there was distinct evidence that apertures of this sort had been walled up in several instances.

The interior of the mound referred to showed as much as anything the remarkable instinct of the ants. It was divided up very much after the fashion of the tall buildings which are now becoming so common, with an immense court within the structure itself—that is, there were hundreds of tiny cells built in from galleries which were terraced one above the other. The galleries were connected by paths of stairways, each of these being constructed with architectural exactness. The cells were almost uniform in size, and reminded one, the explorer said, of the cell of a monk. The earth in each instance was as hard and smooth as marble and bore evidence of long continued usage. A portion of the ground floor, or basement, of the mound had been divided up into storerooms, and here it was evident the ants had carefully packed away the provender which they had secured from various points about.

While naturalists and students of the intelligence of insects and animals have long been inclined to believe that the ant exceeded in at least keenness of instinct all other creatures of its kind, it has never been conclusively shown until demonstrated by Mr. Saville-Kent.—San Francisco Call.

Royal Ladies In the Harem.

According to Richard Davey, in his book, "The Sultan and His Subjects," the status of the royal ladies in the harem is classed as follows:

"All good Mussulmans should have four official wives, so the sultan has four kadines—sultana is not Turkish. Each bears her own distinctive title and takes precedence accordingly. Death quite recently removed the bach kadine, or first wife of the reigning sultan, who was the sister of the pasha all too well known for his exploit in the Sasunk. The three other kadines are respectively denominated the skindji kadine, or second lady; the artanie kadine, or middle lady, and the kutchuk kadine, or little lady. When a kadine becomes a mother of a male child, she is called khasseki sultan, or royal princess; when of a daughter, khassei kadine, or royal lady. The fact that each of these ladies must, according to the Moslem law, have a court equal in every detail, from the mistress of the robes down to the lowest soullion, and even to the number of the horses in each stable, explains why some other female personage of the imperial entourage must perforce be selected to hold the place and title usually allotted to the wife of a monogamous sovereign."

Studying Songs.

Mme. Belle Cole began life as an infant prodigy, but her parents were very careful not to spoil her voice, and she made her real debut in New York as a church chorister. Unlike most singers, she is very fond of teaching, and she has produced some of the most notable vocalists of the day. She sums up her advice to amateurs in the following words: "In studying a new song remember that the melody and the words should be dealt with separately. You should thoroughly master the one before attempting to deal with the other. The words should, of course, be learned by heart, for it is a great mistake to be at all dependent on the sheet of music you hold in your hand."

Disagreeably Emphatic

He—What is a crank?

She—Why, a person with one idea.

"Would you call me a crank?"

"Why, no. I never gave you credit for having one idea."—Yonkers Statesman.

People who sell newspapers in the streets of Moscow are compelled to appear in uniform.

Mustard used to be eaten whole and dry instead of in a paste made from mustard flour.

It is said that chrysanthemums live longer than any other flower after being cut.

MARI MAGNO.

Wild is the sea and dark when night befalleth,
In unknown tongues breaker to breaker calleth,
With murmurs as of menace and foreboding
Groan the black waves beneath the grim wind's goading.

Yet passing lights may shine with friendly seeming,
And from the pharo's tower long rays are streaming,
And songs of mariners are blithe to hail
The rising anchor or the spreading sail.

There is another sea which no man knoweth,
Whereon with merchandise no captain goeth,
Unfathomed, unillumined and uncharted,
Whence never ship returns of all that started.

Yet where the distance darkens ever dimmer,
Dost thou not far discern a golden glimmer?
And down the fitful night wind, faintly ringing,
Hearest thou not a strange, triumphant singing?

—Pall Mall Gazette.

INDIAN IDEA OF FUN.

It Is Humor of the Rough, Practical Sort.

"Most everybody imagines that the North American Indian is a solemn and dignified individual," said an ex-army officer to a reporter. "Before I met a redskin I don't know how many times I had heard it asserted that as a race they were as destitute of humor as a patent office report or a graven image, but when I got acquainted with the aboriginal in his native wilds I found that this was a mistake.

"The Indian is a born humorist. There isn't the slightest doubt of that. The great trouble is, however, that his humor runs chiefly to practical jokes. I remember one time meeting, or rather discovering a few rods distant, a big Indian, when I was out walking alone about two miles from camp.

"Well, he discovered me about the same time, and the minute he did so he let out a terrific warwhoop, began flourishing his tomahawk and started for me on a run. He chased me until I keeled over from exhaustion, and then, instead of scalping me, as I naturally expected he would from his previous actions, he assisted me to my feet, with a broad grin on his face, and grunted:

"'Ugh! Indian only yell for fun. Too bad scare white man. Injun don't want scalp. Want chew terbacker!'

"The whole proceeding, it seemed, was only his humorous method of striking a stranger for a chew of tobacco. If I had had something to strike back with, it might not have been quite funny—for him—but unfortunately I had left my weapons in camp.

"And, again, I remember the time a lot of Indians, who had been fooling around on the warpath, were forced to capitulate and surrender their game to General Miles' command at the Pine Ridge agency, and the last thing the humorous cusses did before turning in their shooting irons was to load every old musket of the lot half way to the muzzle with slugs and nails and scrap iron and other bric-a-brac of that sort, and then hang around at a safe distance to see the fun when a bonfire was made of the guns, as was the usual rule in such cases.

"But, luckily for the soldiers, they discovered the trick in time, and the expected fun failed to pan out. Still, we must take the will for the deed, and this little incident goes to show that as a practical joker the wily aboriginal is not to be lightly sneezed at."—Detroit Free Press.

Flowers of Verse.

This is the age of anthologies. We have often wondered why some enterprising wit has not compiled an anthology of absurdities in serious poetry. At a recent literary symposium some amusing instances of these aberrations were given. It was universally agreed that Wordsworth's verses on the doomed chamois hunter's fate—verses which he was afterward induced to suppress—headed the list. They ran:

Haply his child in fearful doubt may gaze,
Passing his father's bones in future days,
Start at the reliques of that very thigh
On which so oft he prattled when a boy.

A not unknown living poet when he competed for the Newdigate prize on the subject of the siege of Paris came very near this. Describing the desolation wrought by war, he arrived at his pathetic climax with the couplet:

Stark on its threshold many a corpse was laid
Which yesterday with happy children played.

Yet it may be questioned whether any of those was equal to a stanza which not long ago headed in all seriousness an appeal for the restoration of the church attached to the rectory where Nelson was born:

The man who first taught Englishmen their duty
And fenc'd with wooden walls his native isle
Now asks one shilling to restore to beauty
The church that brooded o'er his infant smile.

—London Saturday Review.

Found the Ends.

An Irishman who was out of work went on board a vessel that was in the harbor and asked the captain if he could find him work on the ship.

"Well," said the captain, at the same time handing the Irishman a piece of rope, "if you can find three ends to that rope, you shall have some work."

The Irishman got hold of one end of the rope, and, showing it to the captain, said, "That's one end, your honor." Then he took hold of the other end, and, showing it to the captain as before, said, "And that's two ends, your honor." Then, taking hold of both ends of the rope, he threw it overboard, saying, "And, faith, there's another end to it, your honor!"

He was engaged.—Pearson's Weekly.

Cruel Punishment.

"The sentence of the court," said the judge, "is that you be confined in the county jail for one year and be disfranchised for five years."

"By gosh," said the gentleman who had misappropriated the poultry, "that is tough, and no mistake! Uv course a year's board at county expense ain't to be sneezed at, but it don't even up for the $35 or $40 a year I'm goin to lose on my votes."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Witchcraft.

The last execution for witchcraft in England was in 1716, when a woman and her daughter, aged 9 years, were hanged at Huntingdon for selling their souls to satan. The capital sentence against witchcraft was abolished in 1736. In 1789 a woman was first strangled and then burned for coining, but the law was altered in the following year.

The pope keeps a number of birds in his library and in the alcoves of his reception room.

The officials of Korea wear upon their hats the figures of various birds and animals.