

LETTER BOX CURIOS.

Strange Things Entrusted to the United States Mails.

Those That Are Unavailable Are Deposited in the Storage Room of the Inquiry Division—A Place of Rare Interest.

[Special Chicago Letter.]

Of course people try to send live frogs and toads and strawberry jam and such things through the mails. But Uncle Sam objects. That's why there's an inquiry division in the Chicago post office. It was for the purpose of intercepting this unavailable matter and rectifying odd blunders that the department was inaugurated. The storage room with its vast array of merchandise of all descriptions resembles a curiosity shop more than anything else. All kinds of articles, some improperly directed and some unavailable, are stored away there. I have always been interested in this



NEVER REACHED THEIR DESTINATION.

department and at various times have gone through it, and frequently have taken an inventory of the unique things that have found their way there. I have seen a set of false teeth, neatly done up in a package bearing no address, awaiting identification. Near by were a couple of fret saws, a wig for an actor, a pair of hair switches, a Kansas grasshopper, a pretzel attached to a tag directed to somebody in New York, a can of soft soap, a box of red pepper, grapes, candies, toys and almost everything imaginable. Among the unavailable matter I once saw a piece of wedding cake, presumably sent to some friend to dream upon. One inoffensive-looking little parcel contained a piece of pie addressed to an employe at the city hall. He was duly notified that such a package awaited his orders, but he evidently did not care for pie, as he never called for it.

Another package had printed on the top of it: "This side up with care, Ink." The sender evidently took the United States mail service for an express company. Sometimes there seems to be method in the madness of those who are bent on evading the postal regulations. Not long ago a loaded six-shooter was intercepted, and the next day a box of cartridges was sent on by the same person.

It keeps the superintendent and his assistants pretty busy attending to the unavailable articles, but this is only a part of the business. Although the people have learned to be more careful in the transmission of mail matter, and are better informed in regard to the rules regulating this branch of the service, queer mistakes happen very frequently. In addition to in-



ALIVE AND KICKING.

tercepting the unavailable articles the inquiry department is expected to untangle all the snarls and rectify all the blunders that come into the post offices. Some of these blunders are amusing.

Not long ago an unstamped letter was found in the city drop. It was sent to the inquiry department. A few hours later a nickel pasted to a piece of cardboard was found in the mailing box. On the cardboard was written:

I MAILED A LETTER
WITHOUT A STAMP KEE THE
CHANG

The nickel was also sent to the inquiry office, where a two-cent stamp was put on the unstamped letter and

the balance of the money applied to the United States sinking fund.

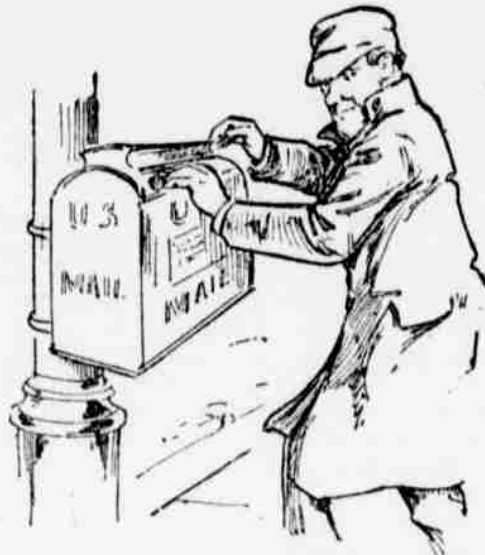
On one occasion a child's book was received. It had been sent as merchandise, but on the fly leaf a girl's name had been written, which is contrary to the postal regulations, and it was therefore held. At the bottom of the first page was also written: "Look on page 129." Turning to the page indicated the clerk found a crisp two-dollar bill.

Sometimes things get a little mixed up by the employes of the post office, but not often, for the positions of the clerks depend upon their correctness. However, an error now and then does creep in. A case of this kind occurred once when two packages, almost alike, came in at the same time. Both were in bad order, and in trying to fix them in proper shape the clerk got the wrappers mixed. One package contained an alligator and the other roses. Nobody knew which was which so they just made a guess of it, and put a note in the alligator box to the effect: "If you are expecting a box of roses, write to Miss —, of —," and in the box of roses they wrote a few lines like this: "If you are expecting an alligator, write to Mrs. —, of —." The post office authorities did not hear of the matter again, so in all probabilities the guess came out all right.

About one of the most ridiculous errors was made by a woman in Mobile who imagined that one of the employes in the Chicago post office was writing her a personal letter, when he had simply sent her the regulation notice informing her that a letter she had written was being held for postage. It all came about in this way: The woman had answered an advertisement requesting a "lady correspondent." She had sent her letter unsealed without any stamp. In some way it had been overlooked and came through the mails till it reached Chicago. Here it was turned over to the inquiry department. The clerk promptly notified the sender. She thought it was an answer to her letter by the man who had advertised for a correspondent. This is what she wrote:

Mobile, —, Mr. — Dear Sir: Among the advertisements in the Enquirer desiring young lady correspondents, I find one from Chicago Enquirer office, to which I will reply. I have never had an unknown correspondent, but know of several who have answered advertisements, so I thought that I would be E pluribus unum. I will reserve description and age till my next. Hoping that my letter will meet with your approval and a hasty reply, I remain an unknown friend.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that Uncle Sam's prudent young man evaded



RETURNING STOLEN PROPERTY.

this attempt to open a correspondence with the Mobile belle, and explained to her in plain language the whole situation.

The criminal classes have frequently used the postal service for returning stolen property. Now because a thief sometimes returns property for which he has no use, it isn't always an indication that he is about to reform. It may simply show that he has an idea of being half way square. It isn't always convenient for him to send back papers that are of no value to anyone but the owner, but some of the more ingenious members of the light-fingered gentry have discovered a way that is both safe and easy. It consists of dropping a purse or other stolen article, after, of course, denuding it of all suspicion of money, in the nearest mail box. The inquiry division does the rest. It is by no means an uncommon occurrence for the mail collectors to gather up wallets and packages of papers that have been dropped in the boxes by thieves. Sometimes the addresses are attached and the articles are at once returned to the owners. If there is no clew as to the ownership they are held subject to future developments.

A short time ago one of the collectors brought in a money order that he found loose in a box in Canal street. It was issued in New York and drawn on a post office in the state of Washington. The department here wrote on to the postmaster there, and when the answer came back a strange tale was unfolded. It appears that the man who remitted the order was also the payee. That is, he had drawn the order, which was for a considerable sum, while he was in New York, and made it payable to himself in his native western town as a safe way of transmitting the cash across the continent. While in Chicago he was sandbagged and robbed. The thug saw the money order was of no use to him, so he dropped it in the letter box. The western postmaster wrote that he believed the man's story, for the reason that his face bore every evidence that he had been assaulted.

FREDERICK BOYD STEVENSON.

WITHOUT SENATORS.

Several States Have But One Representative in the Upper House.

Should the Constitution Be Amended So That Senators Could Be Chosen by the Direct Vote of the People?

[Special Washington Letter.]

One of the growing questions before our people is whether members of the United States senate shall continue to be elected by state legislatures or by direct vote of the people.

There are now 45 states in the federal union, and each state is entitled to two senators. Consequently, if every state legislature performed its constitutional duty, there would be 90 members of the national senate. When the constitution was adopted there were 13 states, each entitled to two senators; and the total membership of the national senate was 26.

Thirty-two states have been added to the federal union since the foundation of the government. By purchase, by cession and by conquest the original republic has expanded from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans, and from the great lakes to the gulf.

But, while the republic has been expanding, and while its power has

they will have the advantage anyway, because they can have bigger meetings, better brass bands, bigger processions, more expensive and extensive barbecues and other entertainments; so that, even by a direct vote of the people, the election of senators might be corruptly secured. That is to say, the rich man who would expend a quarter of a million dollars to corrupt a state legislature would spend half a million to influence the votes of the people in the various polling places. The millionaire of the present can as well afford to spend half a million for the honor as he can afford to spend a quarter of a million. There is also the danger that the people might become accustomed to look for wholesale bribery, and enough of them become corruptible to sell their votes, and affect the elections.

There you have an epitome of both sides of the argument. The reason for calling attention to this condition prospectively affecting our body politic lies in the fact that during the past decade various state legislatures have failed to perform their constitutional functions, and have adjourned without electing senators, thereby depriving sovereign states of their right to complete representation on the floor of the national senate.

One striking example of this condition may be referred to without prejudice. In 1894 Senator Mitchell, of Oregon, discussing the right of the governor of Montana to appoint Lee Mantle as a senator, after the legislature of



A REPUBLICAN PAPER'S VIEW OF THE SITUATION.

been increasing, men gifted with talents for acquisition have acquired wealth in great measure. Their sons have added to the hoards by modern methods of speculation. They ignore that Scripture which says that it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to pass through the gate called the needle's eye. They have laid up treasure on earth, seeming to care little or nothing for laying up treasure in Heaven.

It is because of this accumulation of riches that many of our people believe that legislatures are corruptible, and that rich men buy their way into the national senate. No higher honor can be attained by any man in this republic than that he shall be elected to the national senate; excepting, of course, the presidency. Rich men covet the distinction and the social honor. It is not a secret that, not many years ago, a man expended upwards of a quarter of a million dollars to secure his election to the senate.

The salary of a senator is only \$5,000 a year, and the term lasts but six years. Consequently when a man is elected to the senate his total salary for six years amounts to \$30,000. And yet a man expended a quarter of a million dollars to secure an election to the senate. Why did he do it?

He expended that large amount of money simply to have the honor of being a senator; just as he expended \$50,000 for a painting to adorn his parlor; just as he expended \$750,000 for a house in a certain city.

Now when the expenditure of a quarter of a million dollars will enable a rich man to have himself elected to the senate many of our good people think that a halt should be called. If a man in one state can control a legislature with money, a man in every state might do the same; and hence no man could aspire to become a great law-giver without first becoming a rich man. Moreover, all legislatures might become corrupt.

That is, in brief, the argument made by the people who favor the election of senators by direct votes of the people. It is for the purpose of enabling poor men to aspire, as they did in the days of Jackson, Polk, Clay, Webster, Lincoln and Garfield; it is for the purpose of putting the poor men on a level with the rich men in aspiring to national honors and distinction that they advocate the proposed change.

But there is another side to the question. If wealth continues to accumulate, and rich men continue to aspire,

CHILDREN'S FASHIONS.

White Frocks and Canning Bonnets for Tiny Tots the Coming Summer.

Charming little dresses for girls for spring and cool summer day wear are made from the soft silk warp fabrics, such as Lansdowne, Henrietta, poplin and yendella, and from the fine all-wools, such as cashmeres, ribbons shirred over their own cords being used for trimmings.

Girls' skirts are gored, but do not have the ultra-sheath effect of the skirts in vogue for their elders. The prettiest bodices for girls are those which, in reality or appearance, are worn with under bodices.

A model that is becoming to girls from four to six falls straight from a short yoke, the seam being hidden under a deep yoke shaped in four long tabs. A picturesque hat for such a frock is a large straw with wide brim, trimmed only with a crown sash and huge sweeping bow of silk ribbon.

Piques are shown in many styles for both little boys and girls of all sizes. They are attractive when new, but they are difficult to launder, a fact worthy the attention of the mistress of the household where labor is at a premium. They should always be shrunk before they are cut.

For wraps there is nothing jauntier for small children than the reefer jacket; these are made in a wide range of materials this spring, from plain cloth to pique. Some are braided, some are trimmed with heavy lace, overlaid on collars, put on jabot style down the edges from plaits, set on or in plaits in insertion style, etc. Wide-shaped collars are on practically all children's garments.

There is a marked revival of white and wash goods for children's wear. The children in fashionable families are frocked in white Sunday, Monday and every day in the week all the year round. Necessary warmth is secured in underclothes which reach from neck to ankles and in outer wraps.

Nothing washes so easily and well as white, and it soils no more quickly than any light-hued wash fabric. But there are, none the less, many pretty gingham and percale from which to make selection.

The little tots too young for straw hats are wearing delightfully pretty headgear made of shirred, finely twilled Japanese silk, with plaits of mull, which fluff and fall and fly about the face. Lace is interspersed with the mull on some hats, and bows of ribbon and rosebuds are a pretty addition. The close-fitting bonnets are not confined to infants this spring, some of them being made with lacelike straw braid crowns, and looking quaint as can be on little women who have reached the toddling stage.—Gentlewoman.

UNCLE SAM'S BOYS.

A Graphic Description of the Taking of Hilo by One with a Brogue.

There have been several accounts of the capture of Hilo, but the following is the most succinct and vivid I have heard, says a Manila correspondent. It was given between drinks by a Milesian jockey from the fleet to a group of admiring soldiers in the Senate saloon, on the Escotta. Holding aloft his empty glass he discoursed as follows:

"We was a-standing at quarters waitin' fur the nagers to do ayther the wan thing or the ither, for the ginnal had sint thim word they must ayther surrender or git out, when I heard a howlin' over in the transport beyant.

"What's the matter wid them Tinnaysays," says I.

"They's fightin' mad," says the gunner.

"What fur?" says I, kind of interest-ed loike.

"'Bekase they's been on the ship fur a wake," says he, a-grinnin' loike a baboon, 'and hev'n't had a drink of whiskey since they left Manily."

"God rist them," says I; and jus' then I heard the ould man—that's the captain—swear, for the nagers, instid of surrenderin' or gittin' out, was a wurkin' on their intrinchements.

"O'll stand no more such foolishness," says he. "Open up on 'em," says he, 'and we opened up. B'ys, ye ought to of seen it. Iv'ry toime we let off a gun we opened a new strate through Hilo, till yez could throw a stone troe do town anywhere ye plazed. Thim the Petrel sailed in an' let 'em have it wid the machine guns, an' she jist swept the pebbles off de beach. 'Thim we landed in the boats, an' after us came the moonshiners, yellin' like iv'ry man of 'em owned a private sthill and was afraid of losin' it. We chased the nagers out of the town and way into the country, till it was too dark to chase 'em any more, and then the retreat sounded, and we came back to town, and whin we went into quarters fur de night, thim Tinnaysays detailed thim min from iv'ry company to start a distillery."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Baked Apples with Honey.

Wipe as many apples as desired and remove the core at one end without running the knife clear through. Into this hollow put a bit of butter and a teaspoonful of honey and place in a pan and bake. For cooking purposes it is well to buy the bottled honey, which is free from wax and will keep for an indefinite time.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

SMITH D. FRY.

Boring for Oil in Cuba.

An American capitalist is boring for petroleum near the suburbs of Havana.