

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE---

RETIRE AT 9, RISES AT 1 A. M.

He Even Learns to Work in His Sleep on Occasions; Is a Real Veteran.

Perhaps you have never seen him. For there are many customers that the milkman has never seen, although he has been leaving milk on their back doorsteps for many months. He comes around to many houses in the earliest hours of the morning, and if you are staid and middle-aged, nothing short of a death in the family would keep you awake until that hour. You may never see that man who places the milk there every morning, rain or shine, hot or cold.

Do you know what it means to peddle milk? To peddle milk, to possess a milk route all your own and to work it on the one-man plan is the most heart-breaking toil that can be imagined. Here is the program followed by a man who did that very thing, did it for many years and now that he has stopped, often regrets that he is not still doing it.

Out of Bed at 1 A. M.

Every morning the year round he was out of bed at 1 o'clock. He would go out to feed his horse, and then prepare himself a breakfast while his faithful steed was eating. It is that happy season of the year that is not too hot or too cold, as soon as he has eaten he can hitch the horse to the wagon and start away. If, on the other hand, it is in the hot weather, the milk must be kept on ice until the last moment. This means getting up even earlier, for the milk must be taken off the ice and the wagon loaded. This means at least an hour or half hour. The same thing holds true in the winter. The milk must be kept in a place that is sufficiently warm to keep it from freezing until time to start out on the road, and this, too, means loading the wagon in the bitter cold of the early morning. Even at that it may freeze and you may find three inches of frozen milk jutting from the top of your bottle.

Then, after he has started, from the time the house of his first customer is reached, he must start on the run and keep up his pace until the last customer is supplied. This man had a milk route on which he sold about 250 quarts each day. That meant that if he got on the road by 2 o'clock, or 2:30 at the latest, he would not be able to get back home until after 9 o'clock.

Not Like Good Old Days.

In the old days, when everyone put a pail on the back porch and the milkman poured milk into it from a can, the proposition of clearing up after the day's business was comparatively easy, but nowadays, when everyone takes milk in bottles, it means that in addition to washing all the cans and thoroughly sterilizing them, all the bottles must be washed—more than 300 of them a day—on a route of fair size.

A route of that size will not finance a machine for washing bottles, so each one of them must be washed painstakingly by hand, and sterilized the same way. By the time that is finished it is noon. After dinner there may be a short respite in which the hard-pushed milkman can get about two hours' sleep. Then he is up and at it again. The milk to be sold the next day must be collected from the farmers and bottled.

This takes most of the afternoon, for again the size of the plant is a handicap. A large bottling machine—that is, one that will fill four or more bottles at a time, is usually beyond the reach of the small milkman, so that they must all be filled one at a time. Not long ago this



The Milkman?

was done by pouring the milk from a can into the bottle, but now there is a small filler that will hold 10 quarts of milk, and fill the bottles much more rapidly than the old method, and with no loss from spilled milk.

By the time that all the milk is bottled, collected and iced, it is getting well into the evening, and even though it is early, there are things to be done about every well-regulated house that always fall to the men folk, and the milkman, though he has little in common with the rest of his race, must do them. During the 11 years that he peddled milk this man says it was seldom earlier than 9 o'clock at night when he was ready to retire.

That means between four and five hours of sleep before starting out again. Averaging an hour or two of sleep during the day, it makes a total of seven hours. How many of us would get along with five hours' sleep for 11 years at a stretch, even though there was an opportunity for a nap during the day?

And There's the Weather. There are too many kinds of weather to combat with, and a milkman takes a professional pride in getting his customers supplied at the time that they have been accustomed to receive their milk. If they are relying on the fresh bottle of milk for their breakfast coffee, it must be there, no matter what the difficulties may be. If it rains the milkman merely hunches his shoulders

together a bit, and clad in a raincoat and rubber boots fares forth, to return a few hours later, wet to the skin.

If a blizzard breaks over the country round he sticks his feet in felt boots, and if he lives in the country, ties a shovel on his wagon and digs his way into town. If there are drifts to wade through and paths to break, going is slow, and it means an earlier start. It means wallowing, slipping and sliding, and worst of all it means falling.

There are a few housekeepers on every milkman's route that are of the sort that are so clean that they sterilize the bottles and cans and sterilizes the old caps, puts them back on the bottle so that not the least bit of dust will collect in them. Even these bottles must be rewashed and sterilized.

He Has "Blue Saturday."

A housewife has her "blue Monday," and the blue day in the milkman's life is Saturday. There are many people who will not leave money out in the milk bottles for fear that it will be stolen, and there are others who will not mail, either the money or a check covering the amount of their milk bill unless they receive a voucher. The milkman is too busy to bother with extensive bookkeeping, so on Saturday he ties the little gray book in which he keeps a record of how much you owe him, and journeys around from customer to customer, collecting the week's milk money. This takes hours of his precious time, and means walking a few miles each Saturday more than upon the other days. And the average milkman, by the way, walks in the vicinity of 10 miles a day.

Knows How You Keep House.

A milkman knows more about how you keep house than anyone outside of your personal family, and often he knows a great deal about your personal characteristics. He takes a look at the empty bottles you leave out for him to take away, and he can almost tell from the sort of housekeeper you are. There are the bottles that are frankly dirty, that have not been washed at all with yesterday's milk soured and hardened on them. That is perhaps the worst sort of housekeeping from the milkman's standpoint.

The next upward grade is the housewife who rinses her bottles in cold water and then sets them out. Rinsing in either hot or cold water will never clean a milk bottle, because the fat in the milk causes the glass to become greasy, and it is harder than ever to clean when the milkman gets home, because the grease has become so hardened that it is difficult to remove it.

The good housekeepers thoroughly wash their bottles, boil them and wet to the skin. That brings joy to the heart of the milkman, because, although he washes and sterilizes all the bottles before they are used again, it is not nearly so difficult if

they are clean in the first place. There are a few housekeepers on every milkman's route that are of the sort that are so clean that they sterilize the bottles and cans and sterilizes the old caps, puts them back on the bottle so that not the least bit of dust will collect in them. Even these bottles must be rewashed and sterilized.

Now the Modern Big Route.

The wagon man employed by the larger milk dealers, who operate several teams, is a different variety of milkman but his life is by no means a bed of roses. Although his hours are of the sort that would put an alley cat to shame, he is relieved of much of the drudgery incident to the conduct of a milk route. His business is to deliver

the milk, keep up the business and the good will of the customers, and nothing more.

It is not up to him to wash any bottles or collect the milk. In many cases, and indeed in most cases, he does not even have to load his wagon before starting out. All he has to do is arrive at the starting point at the designated time, harness his horse and cast off. When he gets back to the barn there is really "nothing to do until tomorrow," for his bottles and cans are washed for him by machinery and his job is only to deliver the milk.

Meets All Sorts of Folks.

Milkmen meet with all sorts and varieties of humans—those few they do meet. Some sorts of housewives are actually terrorizing to those usually cheery purveyors of milk, for in the words of one of them, "You can never tell what they are going to do next."

He tells with a reminiscent grin of a certain good housewife who woke up in the early hours of one morning, and hearing the rattle of the bottles on the back porch, suddenly decided that she wanted another pint of milk. Down the stairs she dashed madly and out on the street. When the milkman, whistling cheerfully, swung around the corner of a house next door he was greeted by a sight for the gods. There she stood, panting, clad only in a nightgown, with her husband, with his tousled head stuck out of the window was shouting at the top of his voice, and amid frenzied speculations was admonishing his faithful spouse that she was making a spectacle of herself. Nothing daunted, she asked for and received her pint of milk. Clutching it to her breast with one hand, and holding the shivering pup with the other, she carpet slipped her way back into her house.

That is just an example of what one milkman saw, and every man who has ever worked on a wagon has many tales of the same sort to tell, and some that are more exciting. In the dark hours of the early morning the lone milkman on a deserted road runs more or less danger from petty holdup men. One man tells of being stopped on a lonely street one morning by a gruff individual who demanded his cash. The

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