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WHOLE NO. 37

Miles of Stamps.

From Happy Days.

Uncle Sam printed just a few postage stamps during the year 1898. The number of 2-cent stamps issued during the year was about 2,500,000,000. Such a number, obviously, is beyond the grasp of the human mind, but perhaps the matter may be made more clear by putting it otherwise.

An ordinary 2-cent stamp is exactly one inch long. From this fact, by a little calculation, it is easy to discover that the number of stamps of this denomination issued in 1898, placed end to end, would extend a distance considerably exceeding 39 000 miles. In other words, they would make a continuous strip of stamps, each one adorned with the head of the Father of His Country, stretching in a belt more than once and a half around the equator.

Of course, though the 2-cent stamps are those principally used, there are others. Enough 1-cent postage stamps have been issued during the year 1898 to stretch from New York City, by way of Europe & Asia, to Bombay, India, if similarly arranged in one strip. All other stamps, as to production and sales, are of minor importance, comparatively speaking, but it is interesting to know that almost exactly one mile of \$1 stamps were manufactured for the demand of 1898. Of \$5 stamps the production was equivalent to a little more than half a fur-

long, or about one-fifth of a mile.

Now, if all the postage stamps printed by the United States Government in 1898 were placed one on top of each other, as nearly as might be without putting them under pressure, how high do you suppose the pile of them would be? There is no use guessing; you would never get it nearly right, unless you went to work to calculate it for yourself. The 3,500,000,000 stamps of all denominations printed the current year—the statement, of course, is approximate—would tower to an elevation of 21 miles. This is more than thrice the height of the highest mountain in the world—Mount Everest, in the Himalayas. If the same number of stamps was piled up in the form of the ordinary sheets of 100 each, it follows that the stack would be over a fifth of a mile high.

During the year 1898 the number of special-delivery stamps sold was about 5, 250,000. It is only reasonable to suppose that the average journey of the special-delivery messenger is half a mile. Indeed, that is an absurd underestimate; but let it go at that. On this assumption the distance traveled for special delivery in 1898 was about 2,625,000 miles. That is a very considerable space to traverse, as may be realized when it is considered that a messenger boy, in order to accomplish that total distance, would have to go about 11, 000 times around the world, or 5 times to the moon and back.