

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

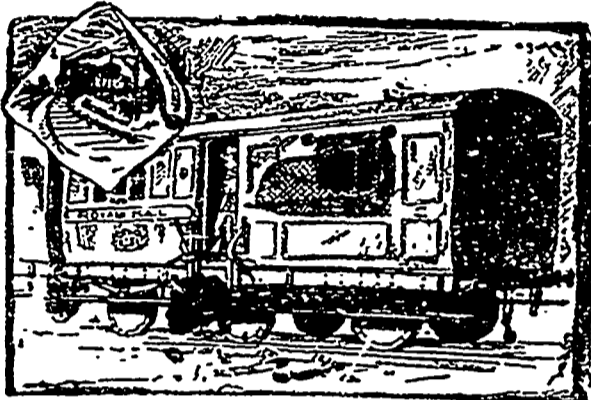
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Heimgang.

"Heimgang!" So the German people
Whisper when they hear the bell
Tolling from some gray old steeple,
Death's familiar tale to tell;
When they hear the organ dirges
Swelling out from chapel dome,
And the singers chanting surges,
"Heimgang!" Always going home.
"Heimgang!" Quaint and tender say-
ing.



TRAVELLING POST-OFFICE.

In the grand old German tongue,
That hath shaped Melancthon's praying,
And the hymns that Luther sung;
Blessed is our loving Maker,
That where'er our feet shall roam,
"Hail we journey toward God's acre,
"Heimgang!" Always going home.

HER MAJESTY'S MAIL.

BY MISS MAY TWEEDIE.

The most graphic pen, or brilliant im-
agination, must fail in attempting any
adequate picture of the condition of
society without the modern post-office.
As our morning letters arrive and are
handed in at the breakfast table, specu-
lation arises as to their origin; a well-
known hand is recognized, interest is ex-
cited by the contents or the well-springs
of emotion are opened—joy is brought
with the silvered note, or sorrow with
the black insignia of death; and thus ab-
sorbed in the matter of the letters them-
selves, no thought is spared to the past
and present labour which has given them
wings or directed their flight.



HASTE! HASTE! POST HASTE!

Notwithstanding the fact that the
post-office is pre-eminently a people's in-
stitution, and that from the universality
of its operations it becomes familiar to
the rich and the poor, the educated and
the illiterate, yet its internal manage-
ment and organization are comparatively
unknown.

It is difficult to realize that through-
out the United Kingdom—which to
younger countries seems a type of almost
immortal civilization—the public high-

ways were for a long time little more
than tracks worn out of the surface of
the virgin land, following principally
the natural features of the country, and
giving evidence that they had never
been systematically made, but were the
outcome of a mere habit of travel. They
would not admit of the use of a stage-
coach with any degree of comfort or
safety. Great men only, who could
afford the necessary expense of a foot-
man to run on either side of the coach
and support it in rough
places, adopted this
method of travel.

No one felt more keen-
ly the deplorable con-
dition of the roads than
the post-boys, who were
obliged continually to
travel over them, and
whose occupation must
have been anything but
light or agreeable. Cow-
per brings them vividly
before us in the "Task".

"Hark! 'tis the twang-
ing horn!
He comes, the herald of
a noisy world,
With spatter'd boots,
strapped waist, and
frozen locks;

News from all nations lumbering at his
back,
True to his charge, the close-packed load
behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one
concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn;
And, having dropped the expected bag,
pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted
wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of
grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to
some;
To him indifferent whether grief or joy."

Doubtless the temptation of the ale
house, combined with the frequent bad
roads and bad weather, explains the
vexatious delays which induced letter-
writers to inscribe on their missive,
"Be this letter delivered with great
haste—haste—haste! Post haste! Ride,
villain, ride—for thy life—for thy life—
for thy life!"

In 1715, six days were required to per-
form the journey between London and
Edinburgh, which rate of speed con-
tinued for forty years. Scotland, in the
year 1715, could not boast of a single
horse post, all the mails being
conveyed by foot
posts.

In 1796 the num-
ber of men em-
ployed in the Lon-
don post-office for
general post de-
livery was 126. In
1884 the number of
men required to
discharge the duty
of letter delivery
was no less than
4,030. The officers
at present employed
in the metropolitan
district exceed 10,
000, i.e., exclusive
of the postmen
above referred to.
In 1708 the staff of
the Edinburgh post-
office was composed
of no more than
seven persons. In
1884 the total num-
ber employed was
339. In 1792 the
staff of the Glasgow
post-office was composed of only eight
persons. At present the staff of the
Glasgow post-office numbers 1,267.

One novel department of the postal
system in operation on most great post
routes is the Travelling Post-Office. It
consists of two or three, sometimes more,
railway carriages connected by a hooded
gangway or passage. (See cut 1.) One
side of the carriage is occupied by a
series of pigeon-holes divided into
groups for convenience of sorting letters.

The mail bags are delivered by an ap-
paratus consisting of an arm or arms
of stout iron attached to the carriage,
which can be extended outward from the
side, and to the end of which the mail
bag is suspended, and a receiving net,
also attached to the side of the carriage,
which can likewise be extended outward
to catch the mails to be taken up—this
portion acting the part of an aerial trawl
net, to capture the bags suspended from
brackets on the
roadside.

In 1883 the letters,
post-cards, books,
circulars, and new-
papers transmitted
through the British
post office during
that year numbered
1,853,541,400. That
total weight, ex-
clusive of the mail
bags, would exceed
42,000 tons, which
would be sufficient
to provide full
freight for a fleet
of twenty-one ships
carrying 2,000 tons
of cargo each. What
a burden of sorrows,
joys, scandals, mid-
night studies, pa-
tient labours, busi-
ness energy, and
everything good or
bad proceeding from
the human heart and brain does not this
represent. In view of the great quan-
tity of correspondence conveyed by the
post, as well as the hurry and bustle in
which letters are often written, it is not
astonishing that writers should oc-
casionally make mistakes in addressing their
letters; but it will perhaps create
surprise that one year's letters which
could neither be delivered as addressed,
nor returned to the senders through the
Dead Letter Office, were over half a mil-
lion in number! Letters posted in
envelopes altogether without address num-
ber 28,000 in the year, while loose stamps
found in post-offices reach the annual
total of 68,000. For the United King-
dom, one year's issue of postage stamps
amounts in weight to no less than 114
tons.

In the Christmas week of 1882 the extra
correspondence which passed through the
London post-office was estimated at four-
teen millions, including registered let-
ters (presumably containing presents of
value), of which there was no less than
three tons.

The post-office is not only called upon
to perform the duty of expeditiously con-
veying the correspondence entrusted to
it, but is made the vehicle for the car-
riage of an almost endless variety

of small articles.
Among these are
the following—many
of them having been
alive when posted—
viz., beetles, bees,
gold-finches, cater-
pillars, crabs, frogs,
leeches, moles, owls,
rabbits, rats, squir-
rels, snails, snakes,
worms, toads, etc.;
also artificial teeth,
cream, eggs, mince
pies, musical instru-
ments, ointments,
pork pies, revolvers,
sausages, tobacco,
cigars, etc. Occa-
sionally the send-
ing of live reptiles
through the post-
office gives rise to
a lively scene when the snake's hiss has
escaped from the packages in which he
had been enclosed.

FRANKING LETTERS.

The unbusiness way in which the
British post-office in its earlier days was
called upon not only to convey franked
letters, but, under forged franks, articles
of a totally different class, will be per-
ceived from the following cases:

"Dr. Creighton, carrying with him a
cow and divers other necessaries."

"Fifteen couples of hounds going to
the King of the Romans with a free
pass."

"Two servant maids going as laund-
resses to my Lord Ambassador Methuen."

"Three suits of cloaths for some noble-
man's lady at the Court of Portugal."

It is not to be understood that the
things consigned actually passed through
the post-office, but they were admitted
for transport on board the special packet



DAILY COURIER.

ships of Government, sailing for pur-
poses of the post-office. Petty frauds
are committed on the post-office to a
large extent at the present day by the
senders of newspapers who infringe the
rules by enclosing all sorts of things be-
tween the leaves, such as cigars, to-
bacco, collars, gloves, music, sermons,
etc. People in the United States and
Canada are much given to these prac-
tices, as is shown by the fact that in one
half of the year 1874 more than 14,000
newspapers were detected with such ar-
ticles secreted in them. The Cape Dia-
mond robbery of 1880 may be referred
to as an example of the great robberies
which have been perpetrated on the
post-office. The value of the diamonds
stolen at that time was £60,000.

The addresses of letters passing
through the post have often very curious
features arising from various causes.
Sometimes the whole writing is so bad
as to be all but illegible; sometimes the
orthography is extremely at fault; oc-
casionally the writer, having forgotten
the precise address, makes use of a
paraphrase; sometimes the addresses are
insufficient, and sometimes they are con-
joined with sketches on the envelopes
showing artistic taste and comic spirit.
(See cut 3).



QUEER ADDRESSES.

The following addresses are made use
of apparently owing to the correct ad-
resses being lost, but the directions
given serve their purpose and the letters
were duly delivered.

"This is for old Mr. Milly, what prints
the paper in Lancaster where the gaul is.
Just read him as soon as it comes to the
post-office."

"Mr. ——— Travelling Band, one of
four playing in the street.