

Our Own Magazine.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

Single Number 5 cents—One Year (including postage) 50 cents.

THE MAGAZINE is published on the first of each month, and given gratis to all Mr. A. S. In vino's subscribers to the English and American Magazines. Any person subscribing to any Magazine from him will receive "OUR OWN MAGAZINE" for one year gratis, thus making it one of the best mediums for advertisers.

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AN HOUR IN THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

BY A LADY.

The dead letter office! Alas, what a mausoleum of perished hopes and chilled memories is comprehended in those three little words! How many eager hearts are looking and longing for some token of answer to the loving missives that lie in heaps, with seals unbroken and pages unperused, within those massive walls at Ottawa.

These were the thoughts that came to my mind, as I stood in the dead letter office that bright wintry morning, with the yellow sunshine playing on the floor, and gilding the locks of the men who were busied in opening the dead letters.

We had been fortunate enough to procure the Postmaster General's entree to this place through special favor and influence, although, as a general thing, no visitors are admitted. It was a large, light room, with two or

three desks, at which were seated the officials in silent occupation among literal drifts of letters. On every side there were huge mail-sacks which had been returned full of unclaimed epistles, from myriads of post offices; there might have been fifty or a hundred of these sacks and each probably contained thousands on thousands of letters!

"How rapidly you dispose of them!" said I, watching the lightning speed with which the clerks tore open the epistles, glanced over them to see that no drafts, checks, or other important documents were enclosed, and throw them upon an immense heap of opened letters at their feet.

"It is all habit, ma'am," said the young Irish gentleman nearest to me. "We are accustomed to open a certain number daily, and to those who do not understand the expedition and accuracy with