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Handling the Yuletide Mail

Work of Men Who Can't Be Home for Christmas Dinner

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WALK down street Christmas Day, meet some official in the service of the Post-Office Department, clap him on the back and say, "Merry Christmas, old chap!" You will wonder at the peculiar worn smile on his lips as he accepts your good wishes. All the world has a good time on December 25th—except those who provide the entertainment. They work. And among those who are absent from the guest table at the Yuletide festival, are the men connected with the distribution of His Majesty's mail.

None labour so perseveringly, and with such self-sacrifice, that others may enjoy themselves, than your postman, who, on Christmas morning, with a bright and cheery smile, hands you a gaily decorated card, or package pregnant with mystery. He is the link which binds the affection of friends, separated by oceans and by prairies. While you are reclining in the luxurious depths of a Morris chair, smoking a "presentation" cigar, he is creaking down the frost-bitten street, humped with a load of toys and books and candy for the world to laugh over. His family know him not. They gather around the table to feast on turkey; he is eating a sandwich, perched on a mail sack. When the evergreen is ablaze with lights, his children wish that "Dad might only come." Couped up among mountains of mail in a musty post-office, he is fervently muttering that wish, too. But he is about his business; business before pleasure. It happens in the life of the postal staff that Christmas is the very busiest time of the year.

Its business in the Christmas season just closed was unprecedented. At no previous holiday season

were the mails so heavy. That is in great part because there is all the time more of a cosmopolitan interest being taken in Canadian Christmas. The pictures on this page show an Atlantic liner landing its Yuletide cargo at Halifax. From Europe,

Victoria, who, many of them, worked fourteen hours the day the rest of the nation sat down to the Christmas festival. The ordinary staffs were augmented by additional temporary clerks and carriers. Take Toronto as typical of the Christmas rush in the Canadian post-office. During Christmas week 140 new men and 130 extra waggons were added to the Toronto postal force. In the heat of the battle a special restaurant for employees was installed on the premises, where, at stated periods, batches of clerks repaired to refresh the inner man for another round.

Though the imminent necessity of their work deprives the postman of the ordinary joys of Christmas, he has a consolation in the fact that without his energies—well, there wouldn't be a real Christmas at all. If the post-office men did not meet the liners at Halifax, St. John, Montreal or Victoria, take from them their messages of good will for the city, the prairie and the Arctic trail, one half of the world would go without its message. And what is Christmas, anyway, but a message?

When you stop to think of it, you wonder how the mail-carrier can so well preserve a cheerful Christmas spirit. Not only is he required to work on the great holiday, but also at every house where he calls he sees evidences that other people are enjoying themselves. Many a man who can hardly imagine what it feels like to work on Christmas day would probably carry a good-sized "grouch" if he had to change places with the postman on that day. But, as a rule, the patient, faithful carrier of letters goes about his Christmas task with a surprising amount of cheerfulness.



Handling the Christmas Mail at the Dock in Halifax Harbour.

Asia, Africa, Australia, and the other half of America the Christmas mail stream pours into the Dominion, and is regulated and guided by Canadian postmasters. The stream is swelling. Every year there are an increase of inspiring Yuletide messages to be conveyed from the Old World to those who have come to this "land of hope."

Much Foreign Mail

Statistics of the cargoes of two great ocean liners, which docked at Halifax recently, give some idea of the amount of foreign mail handled in this country at Christmas. *The Empress of Britain* discharged on December 21st, 5,841 cases and sacks of mail. The week before, the *Hesperian* handed over to the Canadian postal officials 5,500 bags and cases, 2,500,000 Christmas letters, and 1,000,000 parcels! Think of the enormous amount of extra toil these stamped articles entail upon the officials, whose business it is to distribute them, while the Yuletide bells are ringing. At the Toronto post-office, for example, on an ordinary day in October, incoming British mail amounts to a paltry forty sacks of matter. The day the *Hesperian* docked last month 7,000 packages of mail left Halifax for Toronto. Every scrap of this mail, from the humblest Christmas card to bulky articles, such as five-pound boxes of candy, had to be checked by the officials.

Tremendous Increase

Postmaster Rogers, of Toronto, says that the increase of British mail received this year over last year at his office is seventy-five per cent. His estimate can pretty well be taken as applying also to the rest of Canada. No details can be given as yet of the incalculable mass of Christmas mail matter which reached this country from the United States; nor of the huge volume of domestic mail.

All of it was handled by men from Halifax to



Sacks and Hampers of Mail between decks on a Canadian Mail Steamer.



Christmas Luggage as well as Christmas Mail on Dock after the Steamer Arrives.