

## WE LEAD THE WORLD

Uncle Sam's Mail Service the Acme of Perfection.

Foreign Systems Seem Facile When Compared with Our—Work of the National Dead-Letter Office.

[Special Washington Letter.]

THE illiteracy of Europe rests as a heavy burden on the dead letter office of this republic. Upwards of half a million letters annually come to this country from Europe with addresses which are insufficient, illegible or undecipherable. They must be returned to the countries whence they come. Consequently this European illiteracy is costly, not only to the countries whence the misdirected letters come, but also to us.

The fact is well known that our own people furnish employment to hundreds of employes because of their inability to properly address their communications; but the illiteracy of foreign correspondents is incalculably greater than that of our own people. In our republic the majority of the errors are caused by carelessness, but ignorance is at the bottom of the enormous number of errors committed by those in foreign countries.

Compared with our own perfected dead letter office system those of foreign countries seem to be in their infancy. Many evidences are shown by the experiences of our officials, indicating that the foreign governments do not attach such importance to the delivery of obscure addresses as our government has always manifested. For example, when Levi P. Morton was minister to France, a letter addressed "Levi P. Morton, Paris, France," was returned to this country marked, "inconnu;" that is, "unknown." And yet the American minister was living in Paris at one of the leading hotels. No effort was made to deliver that letter, or it could have been delivered.

Many letters from this country addressed to Walter Besant, Algernon Swinburne, Alfred Austin, and other

for the word "taxee," meaning "taxed" or extra rate. The Italians are very thrifty people, and it often happens that the sender in that country prefers to leave the payment to the addressee, who, in America, is usually of the same nationality. On delivery of the letter he refuses to receive it and pay the ten cents demanded. There may be nothing important in it, and he is not willing to squander that amount of money on an uncertainty. His friend or relative having written, it is safe to conclude that the writer is well.

Hundreds of letters, though actually delivered to the intended recipients, are returned to Italy every year. At least 75 per cent. of the mail matter sent from that country to the United States is not paid in advance. What has been said on this point applies in a somewhat less degree to the Swedes, who are likewise a thrifty people. It is observed that immigrants from abroad retain their thrifty habits on this side of the water. In the next generation, however, they lose them entirely. Their sons and daughters have all the wants and requirements of Americans. The continental peasant is content to live on bread and potatoes, but his American-born children must have meat three times a day.

Some of the articles found enclosed in parcels from abroad, which, unlike letters, may be opened, are very odd. They will often contain such things as one sock, one shoe or one glove, the customs regulations forbidding the sending of pairs of such things. Pieces of lace and valuable embroidery are discovered wrapped up in the newspapers which are devoted to destruction when not delivered. These are disposed of at the annual auction sale, held at the post office department. Rosaries and crucifixes are sent in a similar fashion in great numbers. At every yearly sale hundreds of these are disposed of, many of them having been blessed by priests and forwarded by people in Catholic countries for use by friends in our country.

Comparatively few of the foreign letters which reach our dead letter office can be delivered to the persons addressed, because it is not permissible to open them. If one of them

## NIAGARA FALLS POWER.

Lines Along Which It Will Be Extended in Future Operations.

A glance at the past development of the Niagara Falls Power company indicates the lines along which it is likely to grow in the future, says Cassier's Magazine. As the manufacturing arts advance, the element of power becomes more and more important, and cheap power, therefore, more demanded. Electro-chemistry is a new art and one which has great possibilities ahead of it. The high temperatures obtainable in electric furnaces have opened up a new field to chemical synthesis, and it is likely that many as yet undiscovered processes, which will require large amounts of electrical power for their

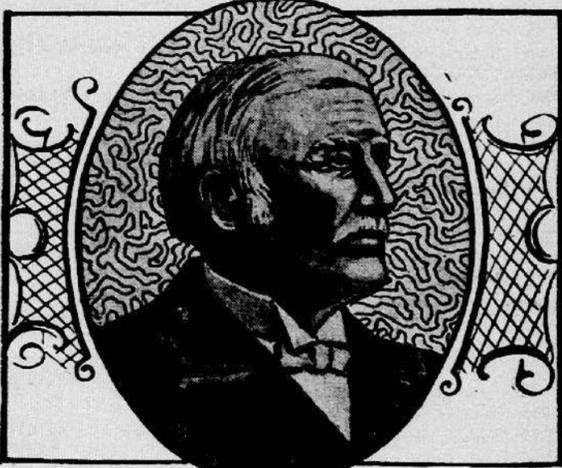
## LOST MASTERPIECES.

Other Famous Paintings Besides the Gainsborough Work Have Been Stolen.

Gainsborough's Duchess of Devonshire, which will probably find its last resting place in the Metropolitan museum of art, in this city, is not the only great painting which has been stolen, says the New York Herald. A portrait of the countess of Derby disappeared shortly after it was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Rewards for its return were vainly offered. The final conclusion was that the then earl of Derby, who had quarreled with his wife at the time the picture was painted, had destroyed it.

The celebrated "Field of the Cloth of Gold" was never stolen outright, but an important part of it was extracted.

## COL. ALEXANDER K. MCCLURE.



The retirement of this famous editor from the management of the Philadelphia Times is a distinct loss to American journalism. Col. McClure was the last of the great trio of American editors who had so much to do with the shaping of American history during the trying times of the civil war and the reconstruction period, the two others being Horace Greeley and Charles A. Dana. Although old in years, Col. McClure is still bright mentally, and his retirement was due more to a desire for rest than anything else. He will spend the rest of his life in doing such literary work as his fancy may dictate.

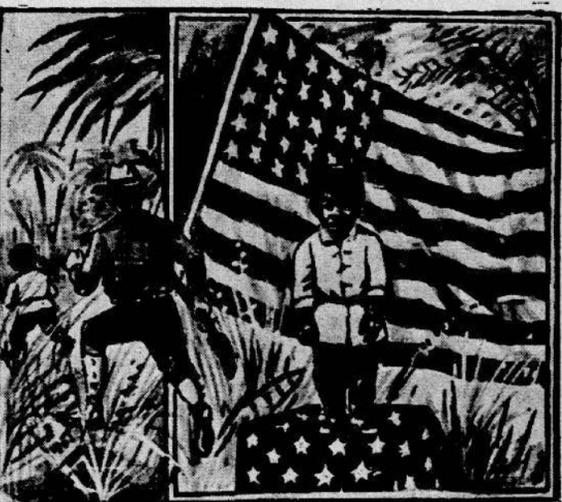
operation, will be brought to light. The supply of power for electro-chemical purposes is especially desirable in a water-power plant, where large investment is necessary, for the power used by these processes is practically constant for 24 hours of the day, thus tending to reduce load "peaks" on the total station output. The economical distance to which power can be transmitted extends every year as the general demand for power increases and methods of handling high voltages improve, and the electric equipment of steam railway systems, which is certain to come in time, will open up a further field for the long-distance transmission of large amounts of power from a central plant.

Victoria's Indian Attendants. The late queen's Indian attendants have been retired on pensions, says Truth, and several of them have already returned to their native land.

The theft was discovered when Cromwell opened negotiations with a foreign dealer for the sale of some of the pictures of Charles I. On this particular picture being examined, one of the principal faces, that of Henry VIII, was missed. It had been dexterously cut out, and upon the restoration the thief, a nobleman of note, handed it back to Charles II. in a perfect state of preservation. His object had been to prevent the picture going out of the country.

Lord Crewe has a picture which was lost and recovered in a remarkable manner. An ancestor of his had a picture painted of his son and daughter in which the son posed as Cupid. Many years afterward the father and son quarreled, and the younger man, out of revenge, caused the Cupid to be cut out of the canvas. The piece knocked about unheard of for over 100 years. A dealer who had seen an engraving of the original happened to get hold of it

## CAPTURE OF A FILIPINO DWARF.



One of the meanest insurgents in the Philippine Islands was a dwarf but 30 inches high, who knew how to handle a gun and sniped more American pickets than any other native soldier in and around Zamboanga. The little fellow was spotted by Sergt. Henry Stepler, of company M, Thirty-first infantry, U. S. A., and captured after a lively chase. The sergeant swung his captive under his arm and lugged him back to camp. The dwarf gave his age as 60 years, and said that he had been fighting for years, and that this was the first time he was ever captured.

The departure of these oriental menials from England will not be regretted by anyone about the court, as they gave an enormous deal of trouble, and, being regarded as privileged persons, they were excessively arrogant and insolent to the British domestics, most of whom both feared and detested them. They were a constant source of worry, fuss and anxiety. The queen's munshi—Hafiz Abdul Karim—who has been a powerful personage at court for the last 15 years or so, is also going back to India with a pension. The munshi and his wife had a charming cottage on the Frogmore demesne, and a house was built for them a few years ago in the Balmoral grounds.

Blow at the New Woman. A New York judge has decided that the money a married woman earns belongs to her husband. It is evident, says the Chicago Record-Herald, that they are scheming in New York to have the married women stay at home and look after the babies.

Bricks from Coke Ashes. A European scientific journal reports that the coke ashes of gas works are now manufactured into bricks resembling pressed brick, but considerably harder than the latter. Heretofore these ashes were looked upon as absolute waste, and were often piled up on land which might have been profitably cultivated, so that the innovation is doubly profitable. The manufacture of coke ash brick is a very simple one. The ashes are carefully reduced to a fine powder, mixed with one-tenth part of slaked lime, and, after the addition of water, kneaded until the mass forms a stiff paste. Then it is treated like ordinary clay and formed into bricks by the use of suitable presses. The bricks are then stacked, protected from rain and dried in the air. No artificial heat is required. The air-dried bricks are very hard and make excellent building material.

## AS BETWEEN FRIENDS

The Touch of Nature Which Makes All Women Kin.

A Little Confidential Chat on a Subject in Which All of Us Are Interested—Speculation in Wedding Anniversaries.

[Special Chicago Letter.]

HUMAN nature never changes. Time and circumstances may work a revolution in social customs, but the old Adam and venerable Mother Eve still do business at the same stand. Cervantes, several centuries ago, sagely observed that "many go out for wool, and come home shorn themselves." Few there are among our friends who have not gone through this identical experience. A moss-covered proverb, which lingers consolingly in many recalcitrant memories, says that

"Doubtless the pleasure is as great Of being cheated as to cheat."

When we are inclined to kick, we very frequently find consolation in the fact that while being "done up good and brown" we labored under the impression that we were taking advantage of somebody else. Our impression probably was based on erroneous premises from the start, but as long as it appeared as a living truth to us we were satisfied; and even after we are compelled to admit that the joke was on us we persuade ourselves that others, if placed in similar circumstances, would have fared much worse than such clever persons as You, I & Co.

Reference is not had in this connection to ordinary swindling schemes. Bunco men and thieves of the ordinary stripe are altogether too coarse and vulgar to be considered in polite society. We have in mind those ambitious little social humbugs who make life interesting and by their comparatively inexpensive confidence games add zest to life and relieve the monotony of existence in the average American city. Man, who does battle with the world during the day to enable his wife to take her proper place in the social swim in the evening, takes a secondary part in the comedy of deception which is going on all around us. His name, it is true, appears first on the bill when "Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Breakup request the honour of your company" at their



## "DID YOU GET MAMIE'S CARD?"

tenth wedding anniversary. He heads the procession, but madame, his wife, is the star actor, stage manager and impresario. He is surely one of the elphers added to lend impressiveness to the show, like the gentleman-in-waiting in the old play who acts the thinking part to perfection.

Woman manipulates all of the puppets on the social board. And in moving them around she displays extraordinary generalship and a thorough comprehension of human nature.

"For her own breakfast she'll project a scheme. Nor take her tea without a stratagem." Marcus Aurelius, who had the happy faculty of condensing much practical wisdom into a single sentence, said that "things that have a common quality ever seek their kind." That is probably the reason why women who are "fond of going out" soon become acquainted, even in large cities where the forming of friendships is not as easy as in smaller towns where everybody knows everybody else. And when you have found a woman who dotes on card parties and evening "companies" you have, in nine cases out of ten, discovered a social schemer, a charming speculator who lets no wedding anniversary or similar happy occasion pass without levying tribute from her friends.

"Harry, my boy," said a dejected looking passenger on a suburban train to a friend who had just entered the car, "did you get Mamie's card for our crystal wedding?"

"We did."

"Are you coming?"

"Will, if I'm in town."

"Wish you'd be out of town. Wish everybody that's been invited would be out of town. I'm dead tired of the whole thing. It's all Mamie's doings. She said that Mrs. Catchem celebrated her tin wedding last January and all her friends gave her nice presents. Now Mamie doesn't want any tin coffee pots or dishpans, but she thought this crystal wedding party would be just the thing for getting a lot of cut glass truck. I don't want to bleed my friends," says I, "if you want to entertain them put off your party and don't make everybody feel that you want their presents more than their company." I might just as well have talked to a stone wall. She has made up her mind to get a lot of cut glass; and unless the people that have been invited have more sense than I give them credit for she'll get it, too.

Her refreshments were served in borrowed cut-glass dishes. Before her guests departed, they left behind them a choice assortment of carafes, goblets, olive dishes, salad bowls and tankards; and hereafter she will have to borrow no more.

But it was not Mamie alone who was satisfied with the result of her social speculation. It made an equally soothing impression on the mind of Mrs. Skinner, whose supply of dishes was running desperately low. Mr. Skinner had repeatedly declined to invest his hard-earned dollars in fancy tableware, but he had never yet refused to welcome his friends or his wife's friends to his house. Mr. and Mrs. Skinner had been one for nearly 20 years; and on the way home from the crystal wedding Mrs. S. sug-



## THEY DOTE ON CARD PARTIES.

gested that it would be a good thing to celebrate their china wedding.

"Celebrate what?" asked Mr. S.

"Our china wedding, stupid. Our twentieth anniversary."

"What for?"

"Why, don't you see, we'd get a lot of nice things—china things that we couldn't afford to buy. Look at all the cut glass Mamie got to-night. It's worth all of \$250, and her party didn't cost her more than \$25. I've made up my mind to have a china wedding, no matter what you think about it. Why, I paid nine dollars for the salad bowl we gave Mamie, and we've got to get even some way."

Mr. Skinner protested, but the cards went out; and if his enterprising wife does not "get even" it will certainly not be her fault.

The next day Skinner met his friend Jaggars at the club.

"So you're going to celebrate your china wedding, old man," observed the latter.

"My wife 'is," curtly responded Skinner.

"Well, Mrs. Jaggars says it's a nice way of getting back part of the blackmail you have had to contribute to your friends," suggested the amiable Jaggars.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Oh, don't get on your ear. You know well enough what I mean. Mrs. Jaggars has a habit of looking every financial proposition squarely in the face. 'Henney,' she says to me when we go your card; 'last January we had to give the Ketchams a two-dollar coffee pot, the other day we gave the Baldeys a six-dollar cut glass carafe, next week we'll have to spend five dollars for the Skinners. Next fall, Henry, we celebrate our silver wedding, and what I say goes.' I had nothing to say; not because I like the idea, but because I know that Maria will have her way."

Skinner listened to the explanation in silence, and then joined Jaggars in a bottle of Apollinaris. They felt dissatisfied with themselves and all the world, and caused the grass widower, who noticed their depression, to repeat his favorite quotation:

"Wedlock, indeed, had oft compared been To public feasts, where meet a public rout Where they that are without would fain go in. And they that are within would fain go out."

But in spite of the discomfiture of husbands women will continue to play their amateur hold-up games. It's



## GOT A LOT OF CUT GLASS.

in them to do it, and they can't help but take delight in getting just a bit ahead of their dear friends. Mrs. Jaggars, so the latest report goes, will send out 500 invitations for her silver wedding, which will be celebrated in the club house and is to be the great social event of the season. She expects to receive at least 200 presents, worth five dollars apiece on the average. She will, at the same time, pay all her social obligations, and retire from the field \$600 ahead of the game. Her intimates already speak of her as the "female Napoleon of suburban society," and she will probably hold the title undisputed until next December, when, according to Dame Rumor, the venerable but wide-awake Mrs. Fleece will celebrate her golden wedding anniversary.

G. W. WEIPPIERT.



FOUR ADDRESSES DECIPHERED BY DEAD LETTER EXPERTS.

literary lights, with only "England" on the envelope, have been returned to this country marked "insufficient address." Letters of that character from European countries for eminent men of letters in this country are always forwarded to their proper addresses, and without delay.

All printed matter received at the dead letter office from Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, South American countries and Australasia is destroyed, in accordance with a special agreement. Most of this stuff consists of newspapers and trade circulars. The countries mentioned do the same with similar matter that reaches them from the United States. But France, Italy, Russia, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium want every bit of their printed matter back, and it is returned to them.

Take Russia, for instance. All unclaimed matter from that country is sent back to the Russian post office department at St. Petersburg every week, including printed stuff. If the material is done up in bags. If there is reason to believe that a single parcel or letter holds anything of value, the bag containing it is registered. Many of the letters returned to Russia come to Washington from the post office at Boston, in which city there is a large Russian colony. "Returns" for Newfoundland and small dependencies in various parts of the world are made in big envelopes, the bulk of matter sent being small.

In the same way we get our dead matter back from foreign countries—weekly from some, monthly from others. The "returns" sent to us amounted last year to 250,000 pieces—only a little more than one-third as many as we forwarded to governments abroad. One reason for this great difference is found in the fact that addresses in Europe are more certain and permanent. Immigrants coming to the United States give their first addresses to relatives and friends on the other side of the water. Pretty soon they move, and track of them is lost. Native Americans are mostly educated and address letters to foreign parts with accuracy; foreigners here when they write home are sure of the addresses.

The number of letters returned to Italy is very great, most of them for non-payment of postage. Under the regulations of the postal union, letters may be sent unstamped and will be delivered, but the recipient must pay double—i. e., ten cents on an ordinary letter. Such an unpaid letter is marked with a big T, which stands

happens to be open when received here, it is sealed with a special stamp, bearing the words: "Post Office Department—Officially Sealed." The first stamp of this kind bore the words: "Post obitum," meaning "after death." A specimen is to-day worth ten dollars. It is difficult to procure sealing stamps, and collectors offer high prices for them.

Stamp collecting fiends bother the foreign division of our dead letter office very much. The average person afflicted with that mania believes that he can get all manner of stamps for the asking. One of them recently wrote: "You must have thousands of foreign letters which you can never deliver. Please send me a good collection." All such letters are answered with a reference to the law making the removal of stamps from letters subject to a fine of \$300, with or without imprisonment.

One great difficulty in the delivery of letters addressed in foreign countries is that the writers give defective or insufficient superscriptions to their communications. Only an expert would have known that a letter addressed: "Teserero General de Nacion," meant "Treasurer of the United States." But it did; and was properly delivered, and it contained a considerable sum of money.

A letter addressed to "Br Ameruky, D. Branz, Kemiabunkport, Americo," was sent to the postmaster at Kennebunk Port, Me., and by him forwarded to Portland, where it was delivered to D. Branz, in an alley in the rear of No. 34 North street. Another letter addressed "Br Ameruka," meaning British America, was superscribed "Elizabeth Afenue 515, Joseph Miron, House furnishing goods." That seemed like a hard one, but the experts in our dead letter office found Elizabeth avenue at Elizabeth, N. J., and delivered the letter there.

These are merely samples of the hundreds of thousands of difficult cases which are handled every year by our expert clerks in the dead letter office; and the work increases each year because of the increased illiteracy of Europe. On this point the superintendent of the dead letter office says: "There is also a great deal of illiteracy and carelessness in our own country. I think that the art of letter writing and of addressing envelopes ought to be a practical part of the work of our school children."

That's a good idea. It could be taught with the lessons in penmanship.

SMITH D. FRY.