

# THE POSTMEN'S OWN VALENTINE.

It Came a Little Late, but All Too Soon for Them, for It Meant a Loss of Their Positions.

And All Because, After an Arduous Day's Work, in Delivering Paper, Lace and Cupid's Darts, They Got Something to Eat Before "Facing Up."

Isn't It a Little Shabby for Uncle Sam to Treat His Employees in This Fashion?

To-day is a holiday for most of you who are reading *The World* this morning over your eggs and coffee; it is to be a day of rest, of pleasure, of a "jolly good time" generally.

When you have swallowed the last sip of your warm coffee, finished the last bright editorial in your newspaper and watched the last puff of smoke from your cigar fade into a white, thin smoke, you will saunter to the window and look out. If it is a sunny, happy morning like yesterday you will take a brisk stroll up the avenue, enjoy a spin over the Boulevard, or wander into the Park and then come back home again for a cosy dinner towards evening time, with perhaps a theatre after to round out the day pleasantly. If it is rainy and cheerless outside you

will stay quietly indoors and read and sleep and toast your feet. But, rain or shine, you will know the divine meaning of the word Rest.

That is the blessing most of you will share, but not all. In this busy, restless world of ours to-day, in order that your enjoyment may be perfect, somebody must pay for it. Selfish in your own warm comfort of enjoyment you will grumble if your barber is not open till 2 in the afternoon to scrape your face; you must eat and drink and an army of unfortunates must be on their feet all day to minister to the cravings of your stomach. The patrolman on beat before your door must tramp up and down the street to see that your precious peace is not disturbed. And how you would grumble if the postman did not appear around the cor-

ner to deliver that particular missive you are anxiously awaiting to know if she of the fair hair is to keep her tryst or if Ned intends to keep his promised appointment with you.

The postman—he of whom Owen Meredith has sung with so much truth—it is with him that this little story has to do.

## THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

You remember St. Valentine's Day? It was a week ago Saturday last. To be sure they say that the day when Cupid used to reign supreme is dying out and that the pretty custom of sending valentines to the "sweetest eyes ever seen" is fast falling into desuetude. There's a lot of romance and poetry about the worship of St. Valentine, or at least there ought to be, but there's a very practical, matter-of-fact side to the day in these prosaic times that you have never probably stopped to think about.

Six postmen who up to Saturday a week ago were in the service of the New York Post-Office are now thrown out of employment all on account of St. Valentine and those slimy, perforated little pieces of paper, with Cupids and hearts and mottoes all over them, which fly about like rooks when his day in the calendar comes around. One of these postmen had been in the local postal employ for twenty-one years. And they were one and all expelled from the service for what the officials call insubordination.

The postmen in their turn say that on account of the custom of sending valentines—by no means dead or dying—their mail pouches were so loaded down, they were so fatigued when night came by reason of having so much work to do, and they were so faint from hunger with their day's labor, that they gave out from sheer exhaustion.

They don't cross themselves, these six carriers, when they hear the name of St. Valentine mentioned in their presence.

It all came about because Postmen G. W. Perry, M. Costello, John Hannigan, Otto Weissner, L. A. Troy and John E. Moy, of Branch Station E, got so tired and hungry when 11 o'clock had come on St. Valentine's eve. They could not carry out the rest of the work they had to do without a bit of rest and a bite of food, so they sat down by the wayside for a moment, and they had been severely punished for it.

It was their daily experience anyway, one of these unfortunates told *The World* man yesterday, to work from fifty minutes to an hour in excess of the schedule time required by the Post-Office regulations in order to properly cover their routes. He had just got the notice of his definite expulsion from the force, and he was feeling very bitter. On the particular and decidedly unlucky Friday, when the trouble occurred, the mails, he explained, were unusually heavy, and the pouches began, as evening wore away, to weigh like lead.

He and his companions, he went on to say, had worked an hour and fifteen minutes over time, and "even that," he added simply, "was nothing unusual at any busy season of the year. But the authorities never gave us any credit for all the time we have given the office when they were considering the little time we took from it. Moreover, the time we took to swallow our supper was our's by right anyway."

## THE POSTMAN'S DIARY.

This is the diary of a postman's duties. He has to make eight trips a day, and a schedule time card allows him an hour for every trip—45 minutes in which to travel over the route and 15 minutes to "face up" the letters. "Facing up" is the post-

man's vernacular means turning the stamps upward, so that they may readily be cancelled.

Twice during the day the time schedule allows the postman 15 minutes "swing." In his dictionary a "swing" is a synonym for rest—for such rest as he gets. At 10 o'clock p. m. he has an hour "swing." Then he goes out on his last trip at 11 o'clock, returns at midnight to finish his day's work, and closes it at 12.30 a. m.

It was no uncommon occurrence, the deposed postman was telling *The World* reporter, to have to work till 10 o'clock without any respite at all. At that time, however, it was the invariable custom for him and his associates to get something to eat. They had to, for they would at that hour be famished. And then, in addition to the extra time that they had given gratuitously to Uncle Sam, they had to start out on their first trip at 2.20 o'clock, ten minutes before the time fixed on the schedule, for otherwise it would have been impossible for them to have made their trips on time.

## A BLACK FRIDAY FOR THEM.

On the Friday in question the six men were at work constantly from 2.30 p. m. to 10 o'clock without any intermission whatsoever. They had only to look forward to another trip and another turn at "facing up," which would consume a great deal of time. They had grown very hungry by this hour and they began to feel the pangs of an empty stomach. They must eat then or not at all. They decided to eat.

Two or three of the men strolled out of the office at the corner of Seventh avenue and Twenty-eighth street. The others followed soon. Clerk Weissner happened to come in just before the last man had disappeared, and, turning to Otto Weissner, who had served faithfully for twenty-one

years, he said to the collector: "What's the matter here?"

Weissner replied: "They've all gone to get some supper." Directly he went out himself.

Clerk Weissner, it is alleged, said nothing at the time, but directed a substitute clerk to finish the "facing up." He asked the time clerk for the names of the men on the tour, but, it is averred, neither sent to order them back to work, nor told them that it was necessary that they should finish their labors. But a report of charges against the men was made out at once, and they heard from it next day. And at just about the same hour that so many of you were laughingly tearing open the missives which were the cause of all this misfortune to six faithful, hardworking servants of the Post-Office, they, too, were tearing open missives—well, their valentines, poor fellows, had very little of poetry and Cupid's darts and fun inside them.

They each read for the motto on their special valentine: "Suspended till further notice."

The collectors came back again to Station E at 10.50 o'clock in time to make their last collection. The schedule didn't call for them till 11 o'clock. They returned from the collection at 11.45 o'clock and completed "facing up" the letters at 12.25. The schedule in this case fixed an hour as the regular time for the accomplishment of both duties.

## THEN THEY GOT THEIR VALENTINES.

The next morning it was when the six men got their valentines. They were ordered to report to Supt. Morgan, of the General Delivery at the General Post-Office. He read the riot act to the men before him when they gathered and charged them with insubordination. Clerk Weissner, it appeared, had

asserted in writing that he had ordered the men back to duty and they had disobeyed him. Each collector in turn told the Superintendent that Weissner had issued no order whatever.

Then Mr. Morgan asked Weissner why he made such a charge in writing. Weissner admitted that in so many words he had not ordered them back because he did not think it his duty to do so.

"Did these men, by their action delay the mail?" questioned the Superintendent. Weissner answered that they did not, and admitted that the mail was too heavy to be "faced up" and despatched on time.

The collectors were then asked if there had been any preconcerted arrangement among them to quit work promptly at 10 o'clock.

No. One of them remembered, however, hearing a comrade say, "I'm really too exhausted to work any longer without eating." The sentiment of this man seemed in turn to possess them one and all. At the conclusion of the hearing the delinquents were officially suspended until the matter was brought before the heads of the department.

## DISMISSED FROM THE FORCE.

Thursday last the six men were called downtown to meet Postmaster Van Cott. They told substantially the same story they had already told Supt. Morgan. A stenographer made notes of the inquest. At its conclusion the collectors were charged with desertion of the table before the mail was "faced up" and with a refusal to return to work when so ordered by Clerk Weissner. Both the Postmaster and Supt. Morgan had laid stress on the inquest. "Did the clerk order you back to duty?" Emphatically each collector to each inquirer had given a denial.

Clerk Weissner was granted a private

hearing subsequently, and while the six collectors were waiting in the corridor before the Postmaster's office, Mr. Morgan came out and announced that they were all still under suspension. They went away and heard nothing more about the matter till Saturday morning. Then they read in *The World* that they had been finally dismissed from the force.

Clerk Weissner, when seen by a *World* man, wouldn't open his lips about the matter. Superintendent Morgan explained away the situation by saying that the men had been guilty of insubordination in office. "They are expected to work as long as the Postmaster desires to have them," he remarked; "and on nights like that before St. Valentine's Day it is only to be expected that they would be required to put in extra time. As regards the schedule, it is observed whenever it is possible."

## AND ISN'T IT A LITTLE ROUGH?

And so they were expelled, thrown out of employment, these six unfortunates. One of them had served on the force as long a time as it takes a babe just born to reach his majority. All his "extra time" in all this period availed nothing when he was accused of snatching a few moments to get a bit of food to sustain him in an arduous night's labor. Bureaucracy, however, has no room for sentiment and red tape is not the kind of ribbon with which you tie up your valentines.

But it's pretty hard, now, isn't it, you who taste every week the divine enjoyment of the command which says six days shall thou labor, but the seventh thou shalt rest? The poor postman who brings you round your letters, well, he gets a little benefit from that command, to be sure, but not much. So remember him when New Year's comes again.