

UNITED STATES POST-OFFICE,

RALEIGH, N. C., March 31, 1894.

HON. WILSON S. BISSELL, *Postmaster-General*,

SIR:—The evolution of quadrennial elections affords to the fitting subordinate his first opportunity to address his late superior, if not upon terms of equality, certainly free from the perils of the incumbent for truths too plainly spoken, or cherished methods too rashly assailed respecting those errors of practice which creep into every service and fix the attention of the observant official during his term of office.

Permit me in parting to submit a few plain, critical comments upon so much of those apparent errors as relate to the administration of post-offices of the second class, in the hope that a bold, fearless, and not altogether unfriendly portrayal may develop their deformity and effect a cure.

Offices of the second class alone will be considered, because these alone are familiar to the writer, and citations of fact shall be those of personal observation during four years of service in an office located at the seat of State government, the designated depository of the surplus postal funds of fourteen hundred third and fourth class offices, and of one hundred and thirty money-order offices, receiving, paying out and accounting for, in pennies, dimes and dollars, three hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars during the year ending March 31, 1893, as follows:

For sale of stamps and rent of lock-boxes	\$ 28,590 63
From money-orders and postal-notes issued	49,150 00
Surplus postal funds from 1,400 other offices	40,553 58
Surplus money-order funds from 130 other offices	256,800 00

Total received and accounted for during year

	\$375,099 21
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Of the first item above cited the sum of \$2,694.50 was collected on second-class matter at one cent per pound, averaging about eighteen pieces to the pound, and aggregating 4,850,100 pieces. Probably this item and the free matter dispatched equals that of all other offices of its class in the State combined.

Item three is composed of the deposit of surplus postal funds from over 1,400 third and fourth class offices, in sums varying from one cent to one hundred dollars, for which no clerical allowance is made.

Of the last item (\$256,800), for the proper handling of which the clerical allowance prescribed by law is denied, the sum of \$155,120 was twice handled and twice accounted for: first, as deposits from other offices; second, in payment of local money-orders and postal-notes. If this last sum were added to the foregoing statement, as it should be to properly show the labor and responsibility of the office, the aggregate would be \$530,000 per annum.

To properly receive, verify, safely keep, disburse and account for this large sum of money with all the minuteness of detail known to Department book-keeping with abundant, competent and well-paid clerks, to promptly receive and dispatch the daily mails of 20,000 people, and perform promptly and on time all the multitudinous other duties incident to an office of this class and character, there is allowed five clerks and two stampers, the aggregate of whose salary and allowance is \$4,700, as follows:

One Chief Clerk at.....	\$ 300 00
One Registry Clerk at.....	900 00
One Chief Mailing Clerk at.....	800 00
One Assistant Mailing Clerk at.....	600 00
One General Delivery Clerk at.....	600 00
One stamper at.....	400 00
One stamper at.....	300 00
Allowance on money-order account.....	800 00
	\$4,700 00

This allowance of \$4,700 is 16.45 per cent. of the annual income of the office for the year ending March 31, 1893, from the sale of stamps and rent of lock-boxes alone, without any consideration of the income from money-order and postal-note business; and as the Department claims to conduct the business of offices of this class upon 18 per cent. of their income, it not only requires this office to conduct its local money-order and postal-note business upon something less than nothing, but to receive and account for \$297,353 in surplus postal and money-order funds from over fifteen hundred other offices without any compensation whatever, and an office retailing some 1,500,000 postage stamps per annum at an average of two cents each is without a stamp clerk, while Wilmington, N. C., handling about \$40,000 to our \$375,000 and dispatching less than one-third the general mail, is awarded a much larger sum on clerical allowance, merely because its mail is nearly all first-class matter and produces more postage—a practical demonstration that the system of clerical allowance is founded purely upon the office income and the clerical squeeze; is radically unjust, inequitable and contrary to law.

Aside from the labor and responsibility of receiving and properly accounting for the surplus funds of fourteen hundred third and fourth class offices without compensation, there is nothing so fruitful of curses and crime as the niggardly management of the money-order business, of which this office is a conspicuous example. It has a Chief Clerk at \$300, who is not only expected to perform the duties of such Chief Clerk, but those of local money-order clerk, for which he receives the additional sum of \$800—total, \$1,100. Added to this work he is required to receive, verify and account for the surplus postal funds from over fourteen hundred other offices and the surplus money-order funds from one hundred and forty additional offices, aggregating \$297,353 per annum, without any compensation therefor.

Why this Chief Clerk should be left to stagger like a pack-mule under the load of two statutory clerkships, with additional work enough for a third; why he should receive only 20 per cent. of the maximum salary provided by law for the first, an allowance in gross for the second and none whatever for the third; why these three should be consolidated into one and the registry and stamp clerkships into another, and why only half paid, is one of those involved, Dundrean mysteries which "no fellow can find out"; but it savors much of official invitation and example for all the crime and speculation complained of in this division of the service, and as such it should receive a swift and sudden remedy.

The law upon this subject of money-order business has been so doctored and befuddled that the proverbial "Philadelphia Lawyer" can scarcely unravel its true meaning, and lest he should do so, the subject, as settled by the Act of June 29, 1886, is not indexed in the supplement to the Revised Statutes of 1874 to 1891. Nevertheless it would seem to be law, if one could only find it, that all statutory allowances for clerical services on local money-order account are now made by and upon the discretion of the Postmaster-General; paid out of the general postal fund, and based upon, but cannot exceed, the rates specified in the fourth sec-

tion of the Act of March 2, 1883. In case the office is designated as a depository of surplus money-order funds from other offices, as in this office, then the statute and the P. L. & R. provide that the compensation SHALL be by fees, to-wit, three and a half cents for each certificate of deposit given. (Act of March 3, 1883, and Sec. 1230 P. L. & R. of 1893).

Now mark the Departmental emasculation of the clerks who do the work of the Depository. Two certificates of deposit are required to be given for each deposit (reduced to one January 25, 1894), one to be mailed to the depositing Postmaster, the other to the Superintendent of the Money-order System. If we ask the Auditor to certify from his records the number of certificates issued, with a view to the adjustment of the fees due the clerks thereon, he certifies but one for each deposit, and the fees, if computed at all, must be computed on that basis.

Second, the Postmaster is forbidden to pay or take credit for even the half statutory fees certified by the Auditor until the allowance is formally made at the Department in the general allowance for clerk-hire, which it refuses to make. If the Postmaster pays the clerks who do the work and takes credit for it in his quarterly account, under the provisions of a mandatory law it is disallowed and charged up against him; if he persists, off goes his head, doesn't it?

And so it has come to pass in ten years of money-order law and business that the words, "The compensation shall be 3.5 cents for each money-order issued and paid, and for each certificate of deposit given," has degenerated into the *dictum* of the Chief of the Salary and Allowance Division, and virtually without appeal, to-wit, "The allowance on local issues and payments may or may not be made, but as for the statutory fee for certificates of deposit, we suppress one-half and confiscate the other, and what are you going to do about it?"

The resulting situation in this office is that the \$800 allowance on money-order account does not cover the statutory provision for the local money-order and postal-note business (issues and payments), while the daily deposits from one hundred and forty other offices, amounting, as stated, to \$256,800, must be received, opened, verified by count, entered in cash book, receipted for in duplicate, remitted to the sub-treasury, reported in daily tabular statements and accounted for at the end of every week in summary of deposits without a cent of compensation whatever!

To secure credit among the inexperienced for such a story of official injustice and oppression ripened into custom through years of impunity may require the additional assurance that its endurance was neither patient nor voluntary; that its years have been years of mingled prayer and petition, protest and remonstrance while witnessing the awful strain and mental vacuity inseparable from the resistance and defeat of an application to the Salary and Allowance Division for a few dollars additional allowance to eke out a starvation salary and lighten the burden of excessive toil. We have yet in memory the details of a case which may properly be cited as an example of the deathless repetend of expensive visitations, aborted inspections, conflicting reports, hindrance, delay, countercheck and discouragement that beset and bewilder the Chief of the Salary and Allowance Division in the great paramount question of HOW NOT TO DO IT.

A careful statement of the situation in the office was prepared, showing the character and volume of the work, the inadequacy of the force, the insufficiency of the annual allowance and the right and justice of the office claim for more under the provisions of law, upon which an additional allowance of \$200 was asked on money-order account.

It was well known at the Department that the salary of the Chief Clerk, sought to be increased, was then \$500, with an allowance of \$600 on money-order account, making a total salary of \$1,100 to one clerk for the combined service

of Chief Clerk, Money-order Clerk, and the statutory fees of 3.5 cents each for every certificate of deposit given for surplus money-order funds from other offices, the mean statutory compensation of which is \$2,200, sponged down to \$1,100 per annum.

A brief examination of the records of this office at the Department would have verified or disproved the claim for an additional allowance, without expense or loss of time, but it wasn't adopted. During the three months following the filing of the application at the Department we received several acknowledgments of its receipt, with assurances of prompt attention, and then followed the "action." In response to an urgent appeal for relief from oppressive labor without adequate compensation, the Chief of the Salary and Allowance Division *swapped ends* with the salary of the oppressed official by detaching \$200 from his salary as Chief Clerk and annexing it to that on money-order account of the same official; only this, and nothing more; not even a line to say it wasn't a ghastly joke on the differential relations of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, nor an ill-timed illustration of his kinship to that great Presence which "takes a step, and * * * ages have rolled away."

Unfortunately these phenomenal prodigies of intellect and genius occur so rarely, and move upon orbits so eccentric, that, defying all human computation, they steal into our horizon unannounced and unrecognized, to amaze and confound the world with their brilliant coruscations of intellect and their gorgeous display of genius. Of course we were surprised, and went down before the end-swapping cyclone; but arose again to renew the application and secure the detail of a Division Inspector, who made a careful examination of the office force and labor, and departed.

Two months later we learned by the arrival of a second Inspector, fresh from the Department and fairly gibbous with a predetermined verdict, that a report had been filed by the Division Inspector recommending the allowance of the \$200 asked for; that it didn't suit the views of the Chief, and was to be reversed, hence the second Inspector, who performed his mission with great expedition and no doubt justified the language of the late Hon. First Assistant, who voluntarily underwrote him and all his predecessors, jointly and severally, as of "excellent judgment, sound discretion, conscientious, intelligent and beyond all possible doubt or question every way qualified to perform the service assigned them."

This rather "previous" apotheosis of the Inspectors before they had passed under the rod of detraction may be allowed to pass as a superfluity, but not so the allegation of the same letter (February 8, 1893) that the "two visiting Inspectors agreed that the clerical allowance of the office was sufficient"; the fact being that the first recommended the additional allowance of \$200 asked for, while the second came unsolicited and unannounced, only to make a contrary report, and did so. Thus ended the "end-swapping" campaign in a water-haul.

As heretofore intimated, this office enjoys the luxury of two stampers at \$300 and \$400 per annum, respectively; the first from sheer necessity; the second born of Parsimony on a \$600 night clerk. Not that the night clerk was dispensable or the second stamper needed, but that the Postmaster might retain the new stamper upon his night clerk duties at stamper's wages "unbeknownst" to the Department, whereby \$200 per annum would be sweated out of him and a plea of "no authority" would estop an action at law for its recovery.

When the Postmaster declined to put this device into operation without a written order to that effect, he was ordered, on peril of his removal from office, to

promptly receive, open, back-stamp and distribute the midnight mail—well knowing there was no official in the office available for the work who had not already made two Department days in one, and none could be transferred except this second stamper and sometime night clerk, distinctly indicated verbally, but wholly ignored in written instructions.

The Postmaster again declined to place the stamper upon night clerk duty without written orders to that effect, or to require midnight service of mailing clerks who had already been on duty from thirteen to fifteen hours, and nothing further came of it or the threatened removal; but the fact remains, and is worthy of consideration, that the ill-paid and insignificant stamper is the Cheap-John scapegoat of the Salary and Allowance Division; the safety-valve of all short appropriations, and the standing victim of all Inspectors, who must have something, and can find nothing better or safer, to grumble about. He is expected to have the heads of Hydra, the arms of Briarius, the legs of a centipede and the wisdom of all the P. L. & R., the schemes and the Postal Guide—everything, barring the uses of a living salary, that he may be utilized at all times, in all places and under all conditions without corresponding expense.

Probably the most potent element of discord and demoralization in offices of this class is that ubiquitous Congressional fondling, the Letter Carrier. Monopolizing, as he does by the nature of his duties, all the oxygen and ozone of God's free air and outdoor exercise, he acquires a robust constitution and great powers of physical endurance without the impediment of mental exertion. He is the best paid subordinate in service; allowed fifteen days' vacation per annum with full pay; a regularly appointed and paid substitute to keep off the ghostly apparition of the clerical delusion of the same name (annual vacation), and his labor is limited to eight hours' strictly Carrier's duty per day, under penalty of a corresponding increase of salary. If crossed or denied in whim or fancy, he runs blubbering to his Congressional champion, and three great Departments of government are haled to his lullaby. Briefly stated, he comes as near having the earth and the fullness thereof as most mortals attain unto, and only lacks a wet-nurse and bunch of diapers to make him a baby, but, like the daughters of the horse-leech, his cry is still for more salary and less labor, and he gets there every time.

Even while in office awaiting the arrival of belated trains, the cause and duration of which cannot be ascertained, he is not permitted to lend a helping hand to the weary clerks, nor touch with the tips of his dainty fingers the general mail; but he must loaf about the office or on the streets until the delinquent mail arrives, is opened, back-stamped, *separated for each particular Carrier and "placed in his separate box by the office clerks,"* who know absolutely nothing of his patrons or divisions, and whose privileges and hours of labor are those of a galley slave under the lash of a driver.

While the Carriers are so dawdling about, forbidden to assist, the mailing-room has but one General Delivery Clerk, whose window, say the Department, must be always open; two Mailing Clerks, whose duties require them at their cases; two stampers, neither of whom is employed or paid for these higher duties, and nobody whatever whose special duty it is to distribute incoming mails to the boxes, the general and the free delivery. It is the knowledge of these facts that makes Par. 614, P. L. & R.—requiring office clerks to know the Carriers' patrons and divisions; to separate and deliver to the box of each waiting Carrier the mail of his division, and the frequent frantic circulars requiring a strict compliance therewith—read like grave-yard jokes, and suggest to the bewildered Postmaster

the unspeakable need of an automatic distributor acquainted with the city delivery, a French dancing master and a silver platter, to serve with befitting homage, genuflection and salaam the dawdling dudes of the free delivery.

Any Postmaster of this class who conforms strictly to the regulations for the government of the Carrier's service—if any such there be,—and says that he promptly handles all his mail, is favored in allowance beyond anything this office ever knew, or he is away up on the roll of honor in the Annanias Club, for the Devil never invented anything more fruitful of falsehood or more fertile in lies than the requirement that the incoming mails shall be promptly handled without anybody to handle them, while the monthly report of the Carrier's service must show only eight hours' service per day of unadulterated Carrier service. No doubt this is new matter to you, but it is no new thing to your Chief of Salary and Allowance, and he doesn't care a baabee so long as his reputation is unimpaired for squeezing two dollars' worth of work out of a dollar of salary.

There is a popular theory that the post-office clerk is within the pale of Departmental protection, privilege and immunity, as well as subject to the pains and penalties of its violated law; that National statutes defining post-clerical grade, salary, hours of labor and classification of duties were in some occult or recondite way intended for him as well as the Congressional fondling and the seven-hour clerks in the great marble structure at the seat of government, and, strange as it may seem, he has shared in the delusion. The good God only knows what rubbish his faith has fed upon, for no glimmer of light has ever flashed athwart his vision to justify such an hypothesis, or to encourage the hope that *sometime* its infinite nebulosity might be resolved. Despite all statutes to the contrary, he has never known the luxury of a leave of absence with pay in which he did not furnish a substitute at his own expense. Days secular and days holy all merge in one unbroken round of duty to him, and he is fortunate indeed if he escapes with the minimum of salary for one, without the duties of two statutory clerks,—while only a story and a floor separates him from the clerks of a co-ordinate department who enjoy with the Carriers all the privileges of law on a moiety of his mental exertion, and receive about double his pay for half his work.

But as all human sentiment has its bounds and limits, so even the credulity of the post-office official vanished before that phenomenal Congressional humbug, "fifteen days' leave with pay," without a dollar of appropriation to make it available! Of all the barren monuments of Congressional folly which the statutes of the century disclose, the Act of October 1, 1890, may be said to "take the cake." It would be insulting the intelligence of Congress to assume that it didn't know that any Postmaster, in the exercise of a sound discretion, with or without law, would grant so much as fifteen days' leave per annum to his faithful clerks upon the tender of competent and acceptable substitutes at their own expense; therefore it could not have been enacted upon the theory that the clerk required the protection or the Postmaster the authority of law on that score.

If it means anything more than the bitter fruit it has borne during the last four years, it is based upon some one of four rather far-fetched assumptions: either (1) that the act carries with it the authority to employ and pay a substitute; or (2) that the division of the absent clerk may be closed and its duties suspended during his vacation; or (3) that there is always one or more supernumeraries about the office under salary, who may be assigned to the duties of the absent clerk; or (4) that there is always some official present whose legitimate duties are so small, and whose bump of complaisance is so large, that he can and will volunteer to

perform double duty for successive periods of fifteen days until the annual round of statutory vacations is complete,—for all of which Congress and the Department will graciously accept the credit at the expense of the bumptious clerk aforesaid.

Of these four assumptions, the law officer of the Department holds the first to be unauthorized. Everybody knows the second to be wholly inadmissible, and the third and fourth never existed in this office, nor probably in any other of its class and duties. On the contrary, it is well known at the Department that the meagre clerical allowance at these offices necessitates a constant strain upon the force, when all at work, to perform the daily routine in ten to fourteen hours of labor per day; that if a clerk is disabled for a day a substitute must be provided at his expense, there being no clerk in the office whose duties are so light or variable as to enable him to perform his own and another's duty at the same time for any part of fifteen successive days.

It is these facts and conditions, when properly understood, that make it possible to conjecture the unamiable sensations induced by rather frequent reminders that "the provisions of law respecting post-clerical vacations are mandatory upon Postmasters"; the plain English of which is, "You must grant fifteen days' vacation per annum with full pay to all your clerks and employees and maintain the duties of their several offices without money and without price, for thus saith the law."

What unmitigated flapdoodle it is!

The post-office clerk is not unmindful of the statute forbidding an expenditure in excess of appropriations for clerk-hire, and does not ask or expect any violation or evasion of that law in his behalf, but he claims, and will probably attempt to maintain, the same treatment that is accorded to officials in other departments under like conditions, in the absence of legal warrant to the contrary, and among the apparent exceptions to this treatment which he believes has ripened into a grievance are these:

1. The indiscriminate requirement, with or without formal assignment, of duty in grades above that of his appointment without the increased rank or salary of that grade.
2. The exaction of the duties of two or more statutory offices requiring excessive and oppressive labor from one clerk without an equitable or ratable proportion of the salary thereof.
3. The arbitrary reduction of the salary of statutory positions below the minimum of the classification act without any known authority of law therefor.
4. The practical nullification of the provisions of law respecting clerical vacations and the compensation for clerical work on money-order business, and especially on deposits from other offices.

These four affect, directly or indirectly, the labor and compensation of every clerk in the office. Neither a \$300 stamper, assigned to the duties, responsibilities and opportunities of a night or stamp clerk without a corresponding increase of salary, nor a Chief Clerk who finds his statutory salary of \$700 to \$1,500 cut to a paltry \$300 without a remission of labor or responsibility, can fail to see that he is being despoiled of his just rights and lawful dues by somebody high in authority. Ought it to be matter of surprise if, goaded to desperation by the example of a Congress enacting "mandatory" laws on the subject of clerical vacations without any rational means for their execution, and a Department swapping ends with the salary of a double-duty clerk in response to an urgent appeal for a just and rightful increase,—ought it, I say, to be matter of surprise that the wronged and oppressed clerk *sometimes* resorts to the desperate alternative of embezzlement,

and justifies his crime in the language of Shylock: "*The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the example?*"

You may or may not have had occasion to acquaint yourself with the system in vogue at the Department for the determination of a Postmaster's application for additional allowance to meet the exigency of an ever-increasing business. It is a subject worthy of your attention; a hard road to travel for the Postmaster, and no very new or very wise thing. It is based upon the theory that some men know more about other people's business than other people know about their own, increasing in intensity as the square of the distance between them; the ignoring of the representations of the local Postmasters, and the running at long range the minutest detail of the office on the negative accomplishments of a casual Inspector, or the Chief of the Salary and Allowance Division.

Thirty years of evolution has reduced it to the system and identified it with the terse maxims of the legal practitioner: "Find out what your adversary, the Postmaster, wants you to do, and—don't do it." Ply him with dilatory tactics; assume that he doesn't know anything; that what he does know he couldn't tell if he would, and he wouldn't if he could. Assure him with one hand that his communication shall have immediate attention, while sinking it with the other in a pigeon-hole so low that only Gabriel's Trumpet can sound the depths of its hiding-place. If he proves persistent and refractory, order out the Division Inspector, and if "captured,"—official English for convinced by the Postmaster,—then a brace of the Great Minds reserved about the Department for such occasions is indispensable. Probably neither ever attempted to run a post-office, unless it be a railway post-office with sixteen hours on and sixty off, but they are supposed to know how to subdue an opinionated Postmaster,—for the same reason that summer roses fade—"It's their biz!" Moreover, what a brace of specially instructed Inspectors fresh from the Salary and Allowance Division don't know about an office after parading through it, is unlawful for the Postmaster to know, and if they get away without convincing him that he ought to be born again,—all ears and bray,—then it is a case of "Blackjack vs. Thunder," and only their "confidential report" will ever disclose the gorgeous success of their expedition to silence a Postmaster who had the temerity to know more about the requirements of his office than the Chief of the Salary and Allowance Division, who never saw it, or a brace of honorable theorists on a pop visit.

Poets have written and bards sung the obverse glories of the P. O. D. until their united sweets require a thousand pages and an *édition de luxe* costs the P. M. at Camby, in your regal county of Dutchess, a year's salary to acquire; but it is all glory, honor, praise and power—hallelujah—amen; while this is only a kodak snap of a nook in a dark corner of the reverse, where the hallelujah man never enters, but it is true, and what will you do with it? Is it lawful to require a Postmaster, on peril of his removal from office, to assign a stamper or porter to the duties, responsibilities and *opportunities* of a wronged clerk, without the salary annexed by Congress to the office; to reduce the statutory salary of a clerk or other employee from fifty to sixty per cent. below the minimum of the classification act, as in case of the Chief Clerk of this office, and put him upon double duty with such scant allowance, or no allowance, as your Chief of Division may think proper? What and where is the authority of law for imposing upon this office all the responsibility and labor of receiving in driblets from fifteen hundred other offices more

than a quarter of a million dollars per annum, counting, recounting and accounting therefor in duplicate receipts, returns, statements and vouchers, daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly, without a cent of compensation therefor? When the statutory fees on deposits of surplus money-order funds from other offices were asked for, the Chief of Division, under the *fac-simile* of the Hon. First Assistant, replied that those fees had been *considered* in the annual allowance for clerk-hire to the office, and no further allowance would be made. As these fees have never materialized, it seems proper to ask whether any other class of post-office officials are fed out of the "consideration" spoon, and if so, who are they and what is the average duration of life upon it?

This writer doesn't pretend to know more about official justice and fair dealing with subordinates, nor the proper management of a great Department, than other people of like limited observation and experience; but in the light of that limited observation and experience he can see two divergent ways, of which a Postmaster-General, zealous for the rights and privileges of his subordinates as for his own, can travel but one. The first is the easy, well-beaten trail of all his predecessors, in which the traveller maunders about the hardships and oppressions of the post-office clerks, while formulating new statutes to geld, and unheard-of systems to torture them. It is the broad, short way, paved with the victims of half a century of confessed wrong and studied plunder under color of "short appropriations," while from \$30,000 to \$100,000 of the same "short appropriations" is covered into the Treasury at the end of every fiscal year as an evidence of a masterly official skill in finance.

"The other way?" Well, it isn't any "way" at all. It is only the same old brier-patch that Brer Rabbit didn't want to be lodged in, and which no Postmaster-General can traverse without infinite pluck and daring. Beset with thorns and barbed with steel, whetted for half a century on fossil forms, habits, customs, usages as hard and perverse as themselves,—only a forlorn hope can pierce the front, while a slight diversion may turn the flank and rout the rear, but if short appropriations must be eked out at the expense of somebody, and half a hundred thousand must be covered into the Treasury at the close of every fiscal year to show how false the claim of "short appropriations" ought to be, then why not give the helpless clerks and juvenile stampers a rest, and transfer the sweating process to the virile and cantankerous Postmasters, the Chiefs of Division and the seven-hour clerks in the Department? No doubt a change so radical would evoke some high gymnastics, and be not altogether lovely in net results from the stand-point of the Salary and Allowance Division; but it would have its compensation in the speedy modification of the theory that the curious perpetual shortage on post-clerical account was more the work of the Department than the fault of Congress. Moreover, the transition from the helpless clerks and stampers to a class of officials who at least dare *squeal*, will afford the Department some reasonable excuse for asking the support of public opinion; for there is implanted somewhere in the form of every living creature an ineradicable love of courage. Even an irate bull, heaving and setting at a glacial boulder, commands unbounded admiration for the hardihood of daring displayed, while in tossing the babes and goring the sucklings of his kind the meanest of the herd will turn and rend him.

The contemplation of the impunity with which the law has been evaded in the matter of the clerks makes it easy to see how wholly immaterial is the fact that the "swap-off" remedy last suggested is obnoxious to the statutory interdiction upon the reciprocal exchange of correlative appropriations. Preventive and prohibitory laws are good for the small fry, but like injunctions in Gravesend,

they "don't go" when the powers that be want to nullify, and the victim is too weak to resist or resent it. The annals of government may be safely challenged for anything so disgraceful and disgusting as the annual story of all the Postmasters-General for the last half century, how they skinned the Postmasters, scalped the clerks and ground them like toads under the harrow of the Salary and Allowance Division to eke out inadequate appropriations, and finally deserted them with the admonition that the Postmasters make good out of their own meagre salaries the short allowance of the fleeced clerks, and whistle through coming generations for reimbursement.

Thirty years ago the several departments nursed each its pet hobby unsuspected and unknown to the clerk, and the boastful wail of the Postmaster-General's annual report sounded like human sympathy for the oppressed officials and was accepted as such; but the garish light of recent statutes, construed, perverted and distorted to humiliate and degrade the clerks in these offices, has worked a change of base on that subject; and as it were to confirm it for all time, comes that most outrageous of all the devices of the Department,—the pending bill (56) for re-organization,—the paternity of which is deftly concealed under the diaphanous drapery of a "National Association of clerks in first and second class offices," composed entirely of clerks in first class offices, whose impudence and gall in the formulation of laws for a class of offices they don't know as much about as a Manx cat knows about the tails of its ancestors,—has been at the bottom of all the vicious legislation with which these offices have been afflicted for fifty years. It seems impossible to conjecture and scarcely polite to ask whether the inducement for the alleged approval and recommendation of this bastard monstrosity by the Department lay in the provision that all clerks in second class offices (including mailing and money-order clerks,—requiring endurance and mental capacity of the first order, and, as in this office, liable to handle a quarter of a million of dollars per annum as extra, unpaid labor) enter the service on the same plane, with the same rank and the same salary, as the porters, waste-paper examiners, and other honorable garbage-scavengers of the first class offices; or whether it was only the cutest of all the cute tricks of that prince of jugglers, the Chief of the Salary and Allowance Division, by which he substitutes "*General Utility Employees*" for stampers in the overdone racket of billeting Cheap-John "employees" for all grades upon postmasters in second class offices, that the sweating process may have a new lease of life, run and be glorified under a new name.

Be it as it may, it is fair to conclude from the ever-increasing hardship of the exactions upon the clerical force of second class offices; the manifest terror inspired by the successful litigation of the irrepressible Carrier, and the frequent circulars requiring office clerks to know more about the Carriers' patrons and divisions than the Carriers themselves know,—that the Department assumes an immortal wrong to have ripened into a prescriptive right, and the miserable clerical subject to have fallen to that state of imbecility and hopeless despair that precludes all possibility of successful resistance.

Let us devoutly hope that such is not the case, but that your sovereign hand may yet suffice to correct the wrong and effect a cure, and in default thereof that an abler pen than mine may unite the scattered plague-spots and pour them upon Congress, the courts and the country until a tortured sense of justice shall compel relief.

I am, very respectfully,

A. W. SHAFFER,
Postmaster.