

## Santa's Christmas Mail

**H**IS sleigh and reindeer re-enforced by fast trains and ocean liners, Santa Claus is delivering a much larger number of presents every year. The United States postal authorities say the Christmas mail this season will far exceed in volume that of last winter. And then it was tremendous.

With every hamlet, town and city sending out and receiving its quota, millions of letters and packages—some by special delivery, many registered and others with ordinary postage—travel from and to all parts of the nation, arrive from foreign shores or pass out to them. There are about 80,000, 000 persons in this country. A majority of them both send and receive Christmas mail, from one to several dozen pieces each. This gives a faint idea of the extent of the work that falls upon the postal authorities.

Whether in the heart of the city or on a rural delivery route the carrier is loaded down with gifts—remembrances of living friends or heart echoes of scattered families. The letters he must deliver are easily three times as many as in ordinary seasons, but his greatest burden is the packages—immense, back-breaking packages.

But if the carriers are worked hard, how about the postoffice clerks? Besides the increased amount of matter they have to handle, they must be par-



**SANTA MAKES THE POSTMAN'S BACK ACHIE,** particularly careful that the regulations of the department are not being violated. Many articles of merchandise are prohibited transmission in the mails. Violations are frequent because of ignorance.

One thing that causes extra work for the letter sorters is the peculiar addresses on many letters and packages. Aside from the thousands of missives sent to Santa Claus, there are those with some such address as "Care of Lieutenant Perry, North Pole." Puzzle addresses are not uncommon, and, although postoffice people enjoy them ordinarily, they do not at Christmas time. A frequent form of address is a drawing of a plum pudding, with the name, street and city written in minute characters on a leaf of a sprig of holly at the top.

The greatest center of postal activity in the world is probably New York city. It is by far the largest mail distributing or shipping point on the continent, receiving postal matter from foreign countries, from the north, south and west. It also has an immense foreign postoffice that sends home vast numbers of money orders and registered letters.

In the midst of the Christmas rush an average of 5,000 registered parcels and 6,000 letters an hour are received at the foreign mail station in New York. Recently one ship sailed for Europe with 3,000 sacks of ordinary mail matter and almost 75,000 registered packages, while another vessel carried away half a million dollars in money orders.

D. W. DOW.

**D**O not know his name. Perhaps it was Tom. Most cats of his persuasion are called Tom. It is a sort of noncommittal name and is no burden to the cat. Mark Twain says he once killed a promising bunch of cats by overloading them with names. He called them Zoroaster, Sour Mash, Apollinaris and Blatherskite. I once knew a cat named Plukey Shute, but he was fairly husky and did not seem to mind it. We might compromise by calling this special feline Micawber. He was always looking for something. Mostly it was for something to eat, and when it wasn't that it was for trouble.

Micawber had had a hard life. What between the world, the flesh and the small boy he was up against it most of the time. As a kitten he had been reared in comparative luxury, but that time now seemed to him, when he thought of it at all, like a dim, sweet dream. Mostly he did not think of it, being too busy with everyday affairs, such as fighting, dodging stones and looking for provender. The family where he had lived in his happy youth had moved away, forgetting to take him along. The next occupants of the house did not want him, so he was thrown out on the cold world. He did not leave voluntarily, but after being

chased out, kicked out, locked out and doused with hot water a sufficient number of times he finally took the hint that his company was not desired. He did not so much mind the indignities, but rude, physical assault pained and surprised him. There are some things that even a cat will not stand.

After that, for the most part, he lived in a back alley. He slept in a barrel by day and went on voyages of exploration and discovery by night. He did not find much but tribulation and scraps—scraps that were eatable and scraps with other felines. Sometimes, when driven by hunger, he ventured out by day. Occasionally he caught sight of a mouse, a bird or a chipmunk. Then, motionless and alert, he would watch it for what seemed ages. The patience of a cat is a thing that should be immortalized on a monument. While on these daily outings he had to jump sideways and straight up to get out of the way of playful brickbats and clods hurled in his direction. He became an expert in dodging missiles as a millionaire in evading a court summons. Only Micawber knew nothing about millionaires. He belonged to the hot polloi. Most of the time he lived the strenuous life. He became expert in war through many trouncings. He learned to flit everything he could not make love to. He had no morals to speak of and was never troubled by conscience or altruism. When living the simple life he was mild and meek looking and had a voice as gentle and pleading as that of a book agent. But when on the war-path he was a cyclone and emitted yells that would wake up the block. He was a hard man from the mountains and was yearning to make the world acquainted with the fact.

Now, there are cats and cats, as you doubtless know. Sometimes there are too many of them, especially at night. Micawber belonged to this overplus. The cat's voice when tuned up is not exactly like the music of the spheres, but attracts more attention. When excited by wrath feline language has a diabolic quality that sounds like blasphemy. So does the language of the man who is stirred out of his rest thereby. If some Gurnoe could discover just what feline small talk means he would doubtless bring to our notice an original and delicious array of swear words that would enrich the language.

Through long practice Micawber had developed a voice that ran all the gamut of hideousness. It scouted through all the scales of discord and embraced all the ravages of inharmoniousness. It was not musical, but penetrating. It was chaotic, criminal and assault provoking. It expressed all that is fiendish and malevolent. It had in it the despair and error of a lost soul, the wail of a defeated demon. It was a scandal, an outrage and an infamy. The steam siren got all its sliding scale of diabolism, all its crescendo of cussedness, all its switchbacks and shoot the chutes of the infernalism of sound from the feline voice.

Yet to regard Micawber's sleepy eyes, his inoffensive demeanor and his playful disposition one could not suspect him of harboring such sentiments. You would not imagine that under that fluffy and amiable exterior could be ruffled up so much noise and depravity—on the outside, inoffensive and guileless docility; on the inside, murder, riot and vice. "Childlike and bland," like "the heathen Chinese," he had underneath a double portion of the spirit of Beelzebub. That is a cat. That was Micawber.

His life contained other forms of excitement. Once for a time he found a haven of refuge in a saloon. He did not learn to tipple, for that is a form of human delinquency that is beyond even a cat. He was regarded as the mascot of the place and grew as sleek and prosperous looking as the owner. One night the saloon blew up from a defective gas main. In removing the ruins the workmen unearthed one piece of debris that emitted a wild yell and shot out of the place like a streak. It was Micawber, denuded of hair, but very much alive. Many emotions were expressed in that yell—pain, rage, terror, hunger and the outraged sense that follows the betrayal of childlike faith. He had trusted and in return had had hurled at him a large section of earthquake and destruction. Out of peaceful sleep he had been hit by a house, hurled back seemed miles upward and had fallen back to be pinned down under a rain of broken bar fixtures, fragments of free lunches and smashed beer bottles, there to be imprisoned in the blackness of utter darkness for what seemed unending ages. What way was this to treat a defenseless and unsuspecting cat? What had he done to the world that it should blow him up and trample on him in such fashion?

In time, however, his wounded feelings and skin healed, his fur grew back and he was once more ready to make a presentable appearance in company. Even cats feel some delicacy about venturing into society with most of their clothes ripped off.

Still later in his career he was taken in by a large and matronly woman with an amiable disposition and a double chin. Here he regained his faith in humankind and ceased for a time to be a howling pessimist. Having had a little orifice cut for him into the kitchen freeway, this he wore slick with his frequent comings and goings. But some stray cats also learned of the hole, so a small door with hinges above was placed over the opening. This hurt Micawber's feelings, and he mewed piteously until one day the small boy of the house pushed him through the hole and showed him how the door worked. Ever afterward he asked nobody's assistance—that is, in going out. But when it came to getting back, that was a different matter. At first he pushed against the door, but this hurt his head and did not effect the desired result. Then he newed. Finally he worked it out with

his small cat brain. Lying on his back, he pawed the door open, then by a sudden squirting motion was through the hole before it could close again. After that achievement he arched his back and walked as proudly as though he had whipped the biggest Tom on the block. Nor did he forget the trick. Finally the family discovered him at it, and neighbors came to see his cleverness. If this caused him any pride, however, he never showed it. Cats are not afflicted with swelled head, even though they have no ethics worth mentioning.

When the family whom Micawber had honored with his presence moved away to a distant city it was with sincere regret that they were forced to leave him behind. As the house stood vacant for a time he again became a wanderer on the face of the earth, a tramp, a stray, a vagabond. So once more he began carousing and disturbing the neighborhood. He had a perennial appetite that never was appeased, a craving that never was filled. Micawber was a handsome cat and valiant withal, and among the nondescript felines of all colors and no color to speak of he shone resplendent in a tabby coat, striped like a tiger. He had now reached an age when any well regulated cat should have settled down and become a respected citizen. Perhaps it was a sense of his unregenerate condition that caused him to cast about for another home. During his wanderings he stopped at a barn and a farmer gave him milk fresh from the cow. There were three dogs on the place, and Micawber did not stay.

One winter's day he especially felt the need of a new life. Perhaps it was because he was cold; also hungry. It seemed to him that he was always hungry. He was a bundle of appetite, an animated void, an incarnate longing. This particular day, which was to prove a red letter one in his career, he wandered far from his usual haunts. Finally espying a slightly open door, his old domestic habits got the best of him, and he ventured in. It was Christmas, but he knew nothing of that, being a pagan and heathen by nature. Perhaps in some subconscious way he was sent as a Christmas gift to the little folks there, but of that he also was in ignorance.

When once inside, the house seemed deserted, but it was warm. That was the main thing. No, not quite the main thing, for the inward gnawing continued. The carnal nature of a cat is as strong as that of some people. The only object in the universe now worth seeking was a dinner. Suddenly he caught an unmistakable scent that made his nerves tingle and his mouth water. Surely that was milk! Micawber's unerring instinct located it on a nearby table, and with a single spring he was there. But the best laid plans not only of mice and men, but also of cats, go oft astray. There was certainly milk here, but in such peculiar guise that his feline brain could not make it out. The nursing bottle was a new thing in his experience. He gave it up.

Next he espied another cat, one that looked like a very small edition of himself. It reminded him of his own days of kittenhood, when he had played with a ball and romped his way into the hearts of the children. He was not without sentiment, and hungry as he was, he would stop to make friends. Leaping on to the table where the small cat was seated, he proceeded to make advances. But never a word said the other cat. He advanced closer, but the kitten did not even deign to notice him. This was rank discourtesy, and he went away in disgust. Stuffed cats were also a new thing to Micawber.

Venturing on his hunger driven way, he suddenly became rigid in every limb. He knew that odor. What cat does not? It was a mouse. But where?

Again his instinct directed him to the spot. It was on a table in the kitchen, and with a bound he was there. Yes, here was the hole—two of them, in fact. Placing his nose down in cat fashion, he discovered which hole the mouse used. Knowing nothing of the mysteries of traps and that this particular one had caught a small rodent only the night before, he sat down patiently to wait for that mouse to come forth. There the mistress found him when she returned from a hurried call to borrow some extra spoons for the Christmas dinner. Out of her large heart she took pity on the wandering feline, and he was rewarded with a liberal Christmas helping of his own. He was forthwith adopted and settled down to an old and respected cathood.

Only he was not called Micawber, but by the more appropriate, if more commonplace, name of Tabby. Of his former wanderings and adventures he told me himself as he purred out his content and gratitude at his new found home.

### Care of the Dog.

Dogs vary greatly in their appetites, and occasionally we find a dainty feeder who will nose over a mixed dish of food, picking out a bit here and there and showing but little relish for what he does eat. This is an evident sign that something is wrong. Changing his teeth, if a puppy, thus disturbing his system, may be the cause, and in this case a little cooling medicine should be given.

### The Worst Part.

A professor of Trinity college, Dublin, overhearing an undergraduate making use of profane language, rushed at him frantically, exclaiming, "Are you aware, sir, that you are imperiling your immortal soul and, what is worse, incurring a fine of 5 shillings?"

### Proof.

Edie—Were you taken by surprise when he proposed, dear? Ella—Goodness, yes! Why, I hadn't even looked up his financial standing!—Ally Sloper.

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Of Ladies and Children's Trimmed and Untrimmed Hats, Coats, Skirts, Waists, Furs, Underwear, that we are going to dispose of in the next two weeks regardless of Cost.

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Ladies and Children's hats.  
Ladies \$2.00 and \$3.00 hats, . . . . . 1.98  
Ladies 4.00 and 5.00 hats, . . . . . \$1.98  
Ladies 6.00 and 7.00 hats, . . . . . 3.19  
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Children's \$2.00 and \$3.00 hats, . . . . . 89  
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Ladies 15.00 furs now, . . . . . 11.00  
Children's \$3.00 fur set now, . . . . . 1.49  
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Children's 7.00 fur set now, . . . . . 4.00

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Ladies 4.00 skirts now, . . . . . 2.39  
Ladies 5.00 skirts now, . . . . . 3.19  
Ladies 6.00 skirts now, . . . . . 4.00  
Ladies 8.00 skirts now, . . . . . 4.98

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Ladies 10.00 Coat now, . . . . . 6.00  
Ladies 12.00 Coat now, . . . . . 7.98  
Ladies 16.00 Coat now, . . . . . 11.00  
Ladies 20.00 Coat now, . . . . . 13.50  
Children's \$4.00 Coat now, . . . . . 1.98  
Children's \$6.00 Coat now, . . . . . 3.49  
Children's \$8.00 Coat now, . . . . . 4.98

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Ladies \$1.00 white lawn waist now, . . . . . 49  
Ladies 1.50 and \$2.00 white lawn waist now, . . . . . 78  
Ladies \$1.25 white Madras waist, . . . . . 75  
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Ladies 2.50 white and colored wool waist, . . . . . 1.69  
Ladies \$3.50 white and colored silk waist, . . . . . 2.49  
Ladies \$4.00 white and colored silk waist, . . . . . 2.68  
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