

# Chain-Letter Fad Doomed to Early Death



Left, Denver Post Office Swamped by "Send-a-Dime" Letters; Right, Stella Onizuka, Los Angeles Japanese Girl Gets Chain-Letter in Japanese.

By WILLIAM C. UTLEY

EVERY day the President of the United States receives in the mail scores of letters from private citizens, some finding fault with his administration, some cheerful in their endorsement of his New Deal, many with axes to grind. It is reasonable to suppose that plenty of them seek money, especially since only recently the Chief Executive has been given a fresh roll of nearly \$5,000,000 to spend.

Of this latter kind, all too few have aught a sum so insignificant as a single thin dime—that is, until the last few days. Early this month no less than 200 letters of the "Brother-can-you-spare-a-dime?" variety popped up in the Presidential post. And every one of them offered Mr. Roosevelt a return on his investment that would have startled the imagination of even a 1929 investor.

The text of any one of them would be recognized at sight by almost every English-speaking inhabitant of the land:

"Faith—Hope—Charity."  
"This chain was started in the hope of bringing prosperity to you."  
"Within three days, make five copies of this letter, leaving off the top name and address and adding your name and address at the bottom of the list, and mail to five of your friends to whom you wish prosperity to come."  
"In omitting the top name, send that person ten cents wrapped in paper as a charity donation."  
"In turn, as your names leave the top, you will receive 15,625 letters with donations amounting to \$1,625.50."  
"Now, is this worth a dime to you?"  
"Have the faith that your friend had and this chain will not be broken."

**Aches and Aches.**  
The President's 200 letters were, of course, ordinary specimens of the chain letters that have swept over the country by storm, thrown whole communities into frenzies of speculation, given postal officials a nation-wide headache and postal carriers a nationwide backache.

No White House secretaries answered these letters as they have practically all others. They were turned over to Postmaster General James A. Farley, with the possibility ensuing that their senders may be denied the use of the United States mails. Post office officials said that under the fraud and lottery laws the department could hold up all mail addressed to persons known to have written such letters. In such a case, post offices would be required to stamp all such mail "fraudulent" and return it to the senders.

Mathematically, if the chain were carried through perfectly, and every member sent out his five letters and a dime, the originator would receive his \$1,625.50, sure enough. So far, despite the millions of such letters which are known to have flooded the mails, there has been not a single case reported in which any participant benefited to the extent of the full amount, or anything like it. This element of chance—that the chain may not be completed—makes the scheme a lottery, and if the Post Office department wants to get nasty about it, it lays the participant, under Section 601 of the postal regulations, based on title 18, section 336, of the United States criminal code, open to five years in the penitentiary or a fine of \$1,000. Drastic prosecution of such a scheme would be nothing new.

"The endless chain schemes were started for the purpose of selling merchandise, approximately 35 years ago," said Henry L. Fuller, of the St. Louis post office, where chain letters have caused a 65 per cent increase in the first class mail. "They were considered fraudulent on account of the fact that if the chain was broken, persons who had made remittances to the promoters neither received the merchandise nor were they compensated for the money spent. Fraud orders were issued, prohibiting the use of the mails to endless chain systems."

**Fad Will Die Out.**  
The Post Office department, however, has no intention of attempting to seek the arrest of everyone who contributes to one of the chains. The principal reason seems to be that if all of them were arrested, there would

be nobody left to keep them in jail! This latest and most fantastic of all the fantastic share-the-wealth ideas that have come to light in the last few months has, like all such schemes, its members who are more than willing to get the lion's share. It is these that the post office has gone after in earnest.

They are the smart operators who discovered that there was nothing—except the law—to keep them from sending out just as many letters as they pleased, all with their own names at the top! They have gone into their racket on a business basis, renting offices and hiring help. Three of them were arrested in Denver whose plans, if successful, would have netted them \$750,000. Several more were apprehended in San Antonio, Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis and Kansas City, Mo. Authorities are dragging the net for others in other points of the country.

In recent weeks chains have been started with larger amounts as a unit, from 25 cents to \$10. The most common unit in this upper bracket is \$1. Most of the cheating occurred with the dollar letters.

**Started in Denver.**  
Just who started the present chain letter craze is not known, but its origin seems to have been in Denver, and even today Denver is certainly the chain letter capital of the nation. Hundreds of extra employees have been added to handle the heavy increase in the mail, which in a city of about 300,000 inhabitants, is running approximately 500,000 pieces a day. The normal load is about 180,000.

In Detroit, which normally handles about 900,000 pieces of mail daily, the amount jumped by another 100,000. Mail carriers labored under heavy burdens in Los Angeles, Spokane, Seattle, Indianapolis and Washington. In Muskogee, Okla., the postmen were given a somewhat diverting apertif for their days' labors when a wag started a letter instructing the recipient to send a kiss to the person whose name was at the top of the list and "surely he may find a true love among the 15,000-odd trading kisses."

Large increases in the daily mails were worrying the Cleveland post office, where authorities are searching for three promoters who are alleged to have mailed 30,000 of the letters with their names at the top. Two big printing shops there are working night and day to supply orders for printed chain letter forms. In virtually every city of any size a set of five chain letter forms can be purchased at any five-and-ten-cent store for a nickel. Post office officials pointed out that racketeers are more likely to use printed or mimeographed forms.

St. Louis has been a veritable hotbed of the "chain gangs." In a single day more than 330,000 chain letters went through the mails there; if all of them went through the five steps without the chains being broken, this single day's mail would grow to more than 5,000,000,000 letters. That would mean that the members would have to dig up \$500,000,000 to pay their chain letter bills and another \$100,000,000 for postage. Mail collections there were several hours late. William H. Noah, chief postal inspector at St. Louis, said that "it is like any other species of mass hysteria which will run its course as soon as the novelty wears off. With so many chains in circulation soon the market will be saturated and the thing will fall off of its own weight."

**Chain Letter Wild.**  
But nowhere in the country has a community gone quite so chain-letter wild as in Springfield, Mo. The town simply became one grand clearing house for the schemes. And down in the Ozarks they don't fool around with trinkets so trivial as dimes, either. Exchanges have been opened which will handle nothing less than a dollar and which claim to "leave nothing to chance."

In Missouri the people have to be "shown," and they will pay their money and join the chains only when there is a notary public's seal on the letter. There were no less than ten exchanges in the town, all doing a land office business. Stenographers, for whom the depression had in many

cases brought lean years, thought the millennium had arrived. Every available one had been pressed into service and was working overtime. Notaries were receiving 25 cents a letter. Typewriters, ordinarily rented for \$5 for three months, were getting as much as \$2.50 a day. Great lines of people were stampeding to gain entrance to the exchanges where they could lay down their hard-earned dough and promote some easy money. One account said nothing like it had happened since the Confederates rode into town in '61.

A typical exchange was one which called its letter the "Cream of the Crop." Ten names appeared on the list. To join the chain, one had to call at the exchange with his \$3, put it in a letter addressed to the top man, and have the mailing and sealing attested to by the ever-present notary public. He was then given two blanks, each attested by the notary; he had to corral two others, bring them back to the exchange, get them to mail \$3 each in notarized letters and then each start out after two others, and so on. The exchange told its buyers to expect a return of \$3,072, the result of two being raised to the tenth power.

Of course the buyer had to help his customers sell two letters, and his customers' customers, and so on down the line, in order to get his name up at the top of the list. This left Springfield citizens with little time to do anything else. They wandered about the city with haunted looks in their eyes, dragging workers from offices, wives from ironing boards, school ma'ams from their classes. If there were flagpole sitters the inspired citizens would have fought to climb their poles. Real estate promoters would have frothed with envy at the spectacle of the most intense concentration of high-pressure salesmanship this much-solicited world has ever seen.

A brisk business was conducted for a time at the "Pot of Gold" chain exchange, where \$5 was the entree. This beneficent organization promised an immediate return of the original investment. You paid \$5, got two letters, then went out and sold them for \$5 apiece, sending \$5 on and keeping \$5. Even people on relief were sinking their checks in this one.

**Where the Catch Came.**  
The catch of course was that pretty soon everybody in Springfield and its environs within 40 or 50 miles had been "sold." As a matter of fact, strangers were virtually the toast of the town. Localities pounced upon them eagerly in almost undeniable efforts to sell them chain letters.

Down in Nashville, Tenn., a chain letter fan finally saw the light. He was Dr. C. R. Fountain of Peabody college, who began thinking hard and heavy about a dime letter that came to him in the morning mail. It said that he might get as many as 15,000 dimes. Doctor Fountain began to figure out just what would happen if everyone in Davidson county fell for the craze and played fair.

"If there were just one chain and it was confined to Davidson county, and if everyone was fair about it," he concluded, "everybody in the county would eventually get 15,000 dimes."

"But in order to bring that about the chain would have to keep spreading until it reached everyone 15,000 times when each person will have to give back all the dimes he takes in."

"Then we will all be back where we started—only each one will be out the money he spends on postage, or about \$300."

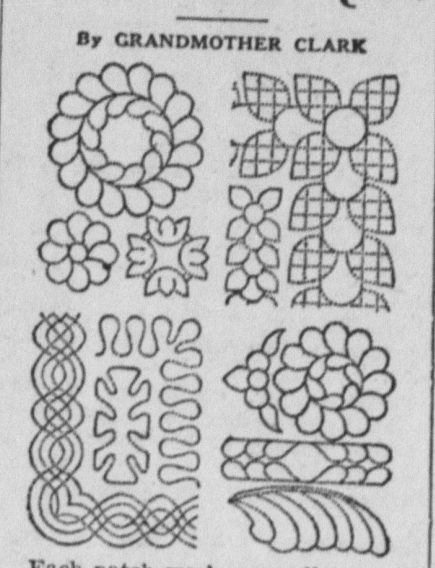
That's not so bad, at that. Everybody has a lot of fun and excitement, and Uncle Sam winds up \$300 to the good for every soul in Davidson county.

If you think it's not possible for practically everybody in one community, you simply don't realize the lengths to which this gag has gone, and don't try to tell your views to Postmaster Nelson of Denver. In fact don't try to tell anything to Postmaster Nelson. He isn't in a speaking mood.

A Los Angeles woman who had received some chain letters wrote to him recently asking him for an authentic list of the names of people who were members of the chains in Denver. He mailed her a copy of the city directory.

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## Make Selection for Your Quilt



By GRANDMOTHER CLARK

Each patch work or applique quilt requires quilting, and a design should be selected that harmonizes with the design used in the patches. Space for quilting also varies, and the women who do this work should have quite an assortment of quilting designs on hand from which to make a selection. We have pictured three different sets of perforated quilting patterns in past issues.

The above twelve patterns are not perforated. They are, however, printed in dots on perforating bond paper and must be perforated with a pin, which can be done in about ten minutes for each pattern. The patterns are eight times as large as the illustrations above.

Package No. 31A contains these twelve patterns, with cotton and blue powder for stamping; also full instructions how to perforate and stamp them will be mailed to you postpaid upon receipt of 75c.

Address—HOME CRAFT COMPANY, DEPARTMENT D, Nineteenth and St. Louis Avenue, St. Louis, Mo.

Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for reply when writing for any information.

## COLLEGE FOR DOGS

The world's first dog college organized on psychological principles has been started at Ilankoye, Russia, not far from Moscow. In its laboratories at Leningrad, the famous psychologist, Prof. Ivan Pavlov, has worked for years with dogs as experiment subjects. From this work has developed the theory of "conditioned reflexes," now one of the chief items of modern theory in both animal and human psychology. Until recently, however, Professor Pavlov and everybody else were thinking of the "conditioned" dogs as merely experimental material to show facts about the workings of the brain and nerves.

**Almost Century Old**  
London university, in England, is preparing to celebrate its centenary next year, when part of its new home at Bloomsbury will be ready for occupation. The university has in its colleges 18,000 students, 877 professors and readers, 883 other teachers and about 12,000 outside students.

**Should Be Excepted**  
"Only foolish men whistle at their work," declares a professor. This seems unduly hard on locomotive engineers.

## ELIOT'S INDIAN BIBLE

Sold from the library of John Baterson Stetson, Jr., of Philadelphia, Rev. John Eliot's Indian Bible brought \$2,400. Dated 1633, it was a translation into the Indian language and was used by Eliot in his missionary work among the Indians in New England. Approximately 1,000 copies were printed; only 50 are in existence.—Literary Digest.

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets are the original little liver pills put up 60 years ago. They regulate liver and bowels.—Adv.

**Seemed Appropriate**  
"How did you happen to become a chiropodist?" he was asked. "Oh," he replied, "I was always at the foot of my class at school, so just naturally drifted into this profession."—Stray Stories Magazine.

Quick, Safe Relief For Eyes Irritated By Exposure To Sun, Wind and Dust —

**MURINE** FOR YOUR EYES

## CLASSIFIED ADS

Improved Nancy Hall, Porto Rican potato plants; prompt shipment; \$1.25 1,000 postpaid. Bradberry & Crews, Glasgow, Tenn.

PORTO RICO POTATO PLANTS \$1 1,000. H. F. HARDY, LA GRANGE, NORTH CAROLINA.

State Certified Tomato Plants; Marglobe, Baltimore, Pritchard, Bonnie, 1,000 \$1.10; 10,000 up \$1; John Inar, Zayreside, Stone \$1; Cabbage 75c; Onion 75c; pepper 1.50; size plants \$1.25; potato \$1.50; prompt shipment. Oates Plant Co., Pembroke, Ga.

**KILLS ANTS**

Sprinkle Ant Food along window sills, doors and openings through which ants come and go. Guaranteed to rid quickly. Used in a million homes. Inexpensive. At your druggist's.

**PETERMAN'S ANT FOOD**

**Be Sure You Get SIMONIZ!**

MOTORISTS—WISE SIMONIZ

You can't Simoniz a car with anything but Simoniz and Simoniz Kleener. And, unless you Simoniz the finish, it will soon lose its lustre and beauty. So, if you want your car to sparkle like new for years... always insist on Simoniz and Simoniz Kleener.

To quickly allay skin irritations or hurts, depend on soothing

**Resinol**

FLORIDA FARMS 5 Acres \$10 total. \$5 cash. Pay balance with service address. Using Florida. Box 81-H, Jacksonville, Fla.

## DIZZY DEAN dusts one off

GEE, DIZZY, YOU SURE HAD SWELL CONTROL TODAY — BEATING THE TIGERS 11 TO 0

WHOA, BOBBY! EASY THERE, PRINCE!

NOT SO GOOD AS I HAD IN THE ARMY — DOWN IN TEXAS ONE NIGHT THE HORSES STARTED MILLIN' ROUND IN THE CORRAL AND —

SO YOU'RE THE VARMINT THAT'S CAUSIN' ALL THE FUSS! I'LL TAKE THE STING OUT OF YOU!

HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT BEAN BALL? YOU WON'T CAUSE ANY MORE TROUBLE 'ROUND THIS MAN'S CAMP!

GOSH, DIZZY, THAT WAS SOME CONTROL! AND AT NIGHT TOO!

BUT HOW CAN WE GET LOTS OF ENERGY?

WELL, YOU GOT TO HAVE CONTROL TO WIN WORLD SERIES GAMES, AND WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT, LOTS OF ENERGY TOO

I CAN TIP YOU OFF TO ONE WAY THAT CAN'T BE BEAT EAT GRAPE-NUTS FOR BREAKFAST LIKE I DO. IT'S GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE ENERGY — PLENTY OF IT

**Boys! Girls! Get Valuable Prizes Free!**

Join the Dizzy Dean Winners... wear the Membership Pin... get Dizzy's Autographed Portrait!

Send top from one full-sized Grape-Nuts package, with your name and address, to Grape-Nuts, Battle Creek, Mich., for membership pin and copy of club manual containing list of 37 nifty free prizes. And to have lots of energy, start eating Grape-Nuts right away. It has a winning flavor all its own. Economical, too, for two tablespoons, with milk or cream, provide more varied nourishment than many a hearty meal.

Dizzy Dean Winners Membership Pin. Solid bronze, with red enamel lettering. Free for 1 Grape-Nuts package-top. In ordering, be sure to ask for Prize No. 304.

Dizzy Dean Autographed Portrait. By Bachrach, size: 8 by 10—with Dizzy's facsimile signature. Free for 1 Grape-Nuts package-top. In ordering, be sure to ask for Prize No. 304.

Product of General Foods. (Offer expires Dec. 31, 1935.)