

LOVE PIRATES PROVING UNCLE SAM'S WORST FOE IN FIGHT TO PROTECT MAILS FROM THIEVES

Keen-eyed Detectives Watch Suspects From Secret Gallery at Philadelphia Office While Millions of Letters Are Handled and Dishonest Try to Filch Valuables

"FIND THE WOMAN" IS FIRST TASK OF INSPECTORS WHEN DISHONESTY IS DISCOVERED

Illicit Love Affairs Declared at Bottom of Most Lapses by Government Workers—Public Blamed for Its Attitude of Carelessness, as Large Majority of Federal Workers Are Temptation Proof

BILLIONS of dollars are consigned annually to the wonderful organization of the United States Postoffice Department for safe transit to payees in the form of money orders, checks, bonds and currency. An unestimated number of millions of cold cash is "lost" in the mails every year, or "goes astray," as the customary phrase has it, since much of it is never traced.

It is not the fault of the Postoffice Department, nor of 999 out of 1000 of its loyal, conscientious and hard-working employees who work night and day, rain or shine, in their ceaseless round of duties for the public.

The plain, blunt truth of the case is that the mails are robbed in many large and even in some of the smaller postoffices by an infinitely small minority of men who are tempted beyond withstanding by the carelessness of the public.

But the impetus behind these thefts, the motive behind taking the cash you have foolishly put in letters without registering them or sending it in safe form, can and has been traced to almost a single compelling human force.

"Find the Woman" Always Is Start for Operatives

The French language describes the situation in three words—*cherchez la femme!*

It is the unequivocal declaration of the ablest of the postoffice inspectors, those keen-witted and incorruptible sleuths of Uncle Sam who guard such of your money, your family's bosom secrets and closet skeletons and even such of your loveliness as you intrust to the mails, that their chief foe to combat in detecting and punishing thefts from the mails is the one figure made most familiar through the movies.

Wives and mothers will want to know about this.

Sentimentally, if surreptitiously, susceptible male employees in the great army of the postal service do know.

The general public ought to know.

The principal cause of thefts from the mails is—"the other woman."

At the enticing second door of "the eternal triangle" stands this "other woman," bread and butter of the gelatin drama writer and dear to the heart of his accessory after the fact, the avid movie director.

This vampire person, substantive of the popular juvenile and adult verb "to vamp," is also not without her fascination for that large commercial market of the films, America's 20,000,000 daily cinema fans, as either your own inner voice or your corner movie exhibitor will tell you.

But whoever suspected that builders of postoffices in stone and steel, architects poring over plans for them, Congress voting funds and postmasters implementing more adequate facilities all put their wits together in fabricating and providing postoffice buildings and special equipment to cause the discomfort and undoing respectively of the vampire and her victim in the postal service?

On Trail of Vampires to End Mail Thefts

It is a fact. Even unregistered cash in the mails would be safe were it not for her.

The main Philadelphia postoffice, at Ninth and Chestnut streets, like all its branches and in common with all but the smallest postoffices throughout the Nation, is equipped with a big "look-out" gallery, from which all employees, night and day, may be observed at work. This gallery, just beneath the high ceiling, is marked with shuttered windows, through which postoffice inspectors and superintendents watch suspected employees.

If the officials ever hear that an employee who is married is interested in "another woman"—and they court and seek such information from any source—they immediately set a watch for experience in thousands of cases has taught the sleuths that sooner or later if the employe keeps up his "affair," he is extremely likely to succumb to temptation, fall from grace and steal from the first-class mails and the parcels post.

The vast majority of all postal employees, as noted, are impeccably honest, but in such a great army of men there are bound to be a very small percentage who will prove weak and untrustworthy. If there is one branch of the Government's business more closely and rigidly conducted than another, it is the Postoffice Department. It is a co-operative business institution, the largest of its kind on earth, for the benefit of 110,000,000 Americans and all of their friends and relatives, and even enemies, throughout the world. Safeguarding its functions and maintaining its strict integrity is a tremendous job.

The forty postoffice inspectors who

officials, sit men night and day, who, without being seen themselves, watch every operation.

They oversee everything going on in the receiving, sorting, pouching, dispatching and general routine handling of the mail, much of which is now done by truly wonderful machinery.

Among the thousands of employes, probably all of the older men know there are watchers and realize what that overhead gallery means, and many of the newer employes may have heard about it, but nearly all grow oblivious and forget the espionage, because of the speed with which they work and their preoccupation.

The strictly honest employe does not mind the espionage. He only resents the thought, one veteran distributor volunteered in talking about the matter, that dishonest or weak men do creep into the service, making constant

as he was in not sending the money in proper fashion.

Sending cash in letters is putting a premium on crime. It is tempting weak men. It is helping the game of some vamps.

Where thefts go undiscovered it is because the public is indifferent, blames itself, or "doesn't want to take the trouble" to report them. People are prone to say, "Oh, the money is gone and it's my own fault, so what's the use of kicking. It is due to my own foolishness and I might have expected it." Some folk also hate to admit that they have been so silly as to send cash unprotected in a letter. Uncounted millions have been "lost" in this way in the mails.

The postoffice welcomes constructive criticism and suggestions, especially the Philadelphia headquarters under its new



Postmaster Kemp at his desk

watchfulness necessary. He takes no personal umbrage.

The naturally crooked or too strongly tempted mail handler, or spy for outside robbers who gets into the service for a purpose, realizes the lookout gallery is there, but if determined to steal or to help others steal, he ignores it, takes a chance, and robs or abets the robbery of the mails anyway.

"Whispering Gallery" Not Crime Deterrent

On this head the chief inspector remarked as he glanced through the shutters at the men working below:

"Long experience has taught us that this lookout gallery, and all our main and branch postoffices of any note in the country have them, has no moral effect as a deterrent to crime. The system merely helps to catch and convict an indoor thief when by a process of elimination and careful detective work we have run down the right man to a moral certainty. Up here we bide our time until we have complete evidence.

"Not so long ago I stood up here with two other inspectors watching a man for whom we had laid a trap. We actually laughed aloud as we followed his actions.

"He deliberately stole and slit open thirty letters in an hour and extracted some of our marked banknotes and other people's cash. These sorters and distributors can tell by the 'feel' of an envelope when there is cash inside of it.

"This incident shows how callous and careless in their pilfering some of the newer employes have been.

"We have even seen a man turn around and look up at the blinds before stealing a letter with cash in it. He looked, said to himself, 'Oh, I guess nobody's up there now, and I'll just take a chance.' He took one chance too often.

"Yes, I must admit that some of them are pretty brazen in the way they steal for their lady loves, and we always have to 'look for the woman!' One man slit open a letter in the new West Philadelphia postoffice one day, where there is also a lookout. A man was working near him. The thief found only two one-dollar bills in the envelope and was so disgusted he turned to his fellow employe and said, 'Just look, Bill. Now whaddya know about that?' It cost him eight years in the penitentiary."

Average Citizen to Blame for His Carelessness

The Postoffice Department is an unusually efficient institution as a business concern, but to make it more efficient it requires some help from its patrons. Mr. Average Citizen is really as much to blame as the "other woman" for thefts in the mails.

An employe of the postoffice at Plainfield, N. J., stole, opened and took money from 300 letters, throwing the envelopes down a manhole. The envelopes were all recovered and the names of the senders found in most cases. Only one of these 300 persons who had lost money had made a complaint to the postoffice authorities.

On an average, not one person in a hundred, as a conservative estimate, say the postoffice people, ever notifies the authorities when he or she has been so foolish as to put cash into a letter. The sender knows that he should have registered the letter or better still have sent the money in the form of a postal money order, express order or check. But he is as indolent in reporting the matter

postmaster, Colonel George E. Kemp, who took office January 1. Colonel Kemp, the twenty-seventh postmaster of Philadelphia since Benjamin Franklin, is the first who has risen from the ranks to the postmastership. Such appointments are usually entirely political. His was not. He has been in the postal service for thirty-two years and for sixteen years was superintendent of the West Philadelphia station.

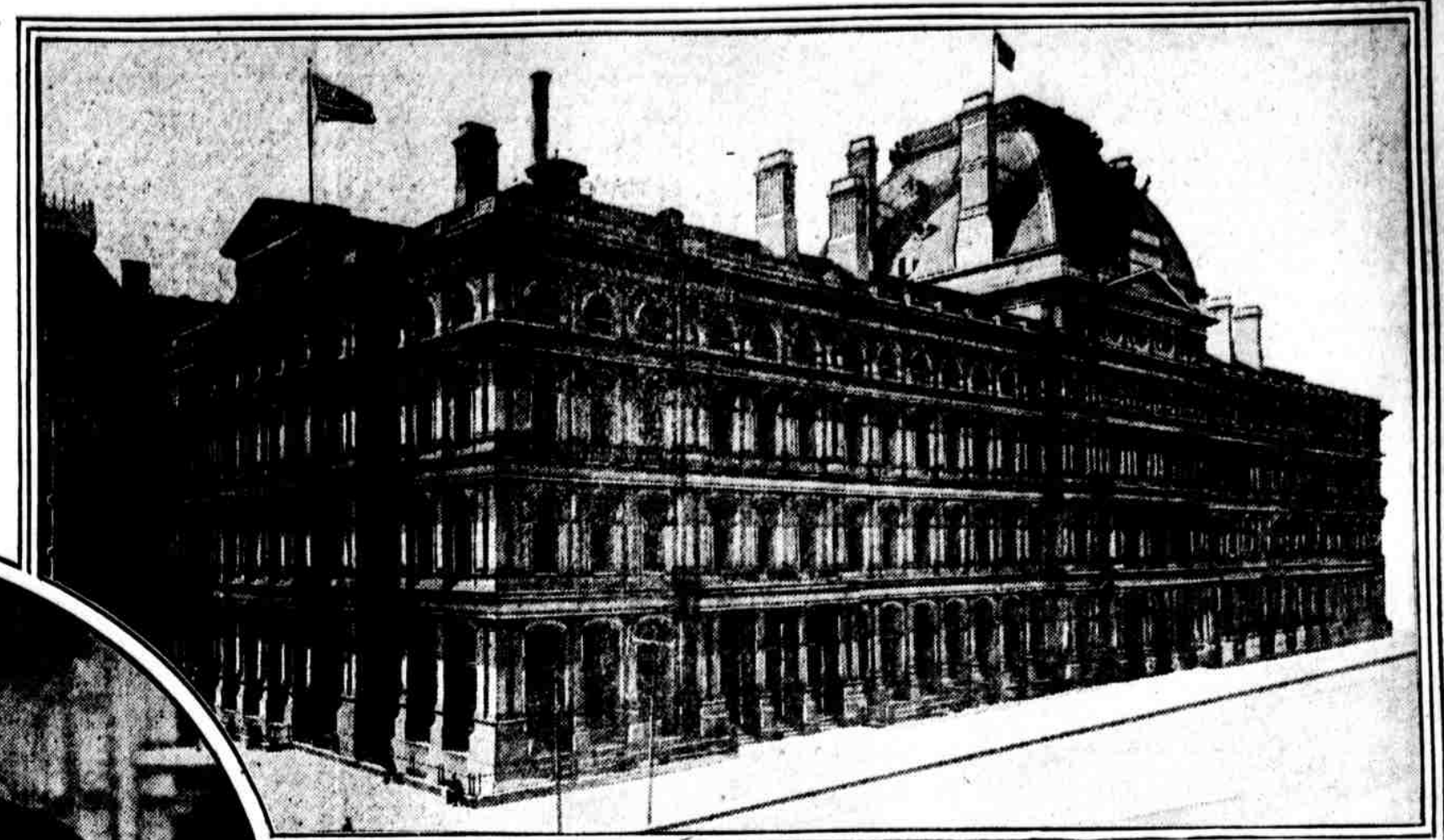
Kemp Willing to Hear All Real Criticism

"I am happy to say that any one with a complaint or a suggestion is welcome in my office," said the Postmaster. "He may walk in without announcement and he will be welcomed as would be the most distinguished visitor. I feel that the only way to get satisfactory service is by listening to constructive criticism.

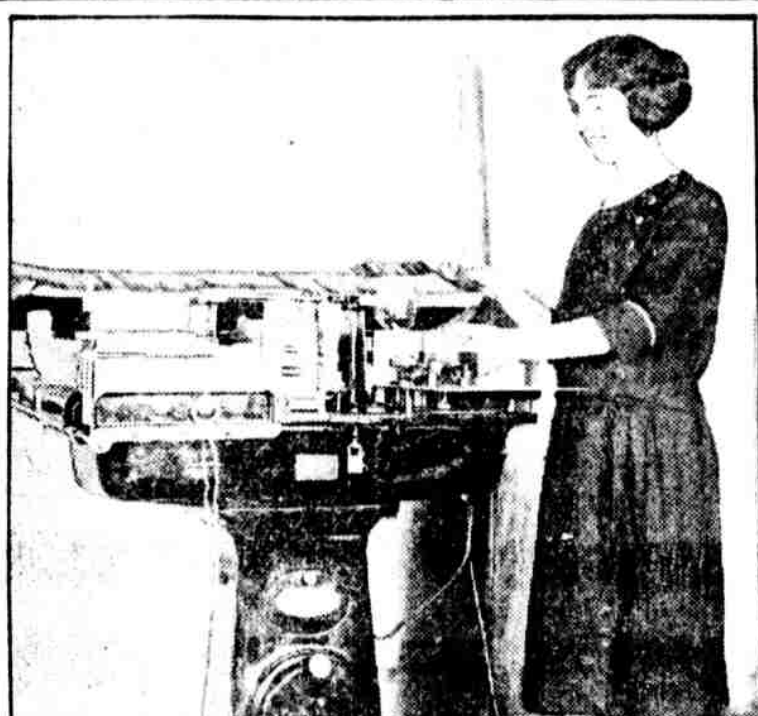
"If our patrons cannot call, we are glad to have them write. I personally open all of my own mail and give each case personal consideration. In important cases I immediately send out a trusted man to investigate. Some routine cases, of course, I refer to department heads. I send out special representatives on about three or four cases a day.

"When I came into office I was told about three or four 'chronic kickers' and was advised to pay no attention to them. But I said, 'I will pay attention to them, for I want such complaints to stop. I want no reason for complaints.' I have since seen to it that the people who criticized the department are now well satisfied. I found there was justice in some of their criticisms.

"We endeavor not to overwork our men. They are supposed to work eight hours and no longer. Our hours are like a woman's skirt. They should be



The Philadelphia Postoffice and Federal Building



to recall, the Western mails were carried once a month in coaches from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The coaches were drawn by six fast and sturdy mules and guarded by eight men, fully armed. If there was no mishap, the coaches were able to make the distance by continuous travel of 850 miles in two weeks.

"Compare this with a letter mailed in Philadelphia, postmarked 5 P. M., Tuesday, February 21, 1922, directed to Portland, Oregon, that reached Portland at 8 A. M. the following Saturday morning, or in three and one-half days. The speed of a letter in a prominent banker of Philadelphia could not believe that mail could be carried from the Atlantic to the Pacific in such time, but reference to the actual records showed that such a feat is being accomplished every day.

"The Philadelphia post office is the third largest branch in the United States and requires 4000 regular employes, and some 5000 part-timers to transact its business. The population of Philadelphia is 1,200,000, and the rate of mail business is such that it requires 100,000,000 letters and 100,000,000 parcels a day, and for the postal service to handle this business requires 1,200,000,000 man-hours a year.

"Few men could do this work in three-fourths of the time it takes to do it at night. Our Philadelphia post office work is done at night, and it is the most efficient work in the world. It is the only work in the world that is done at night and is done so efficiently. The bulk of the outgoing mail is 'vamped' and is carried by the 'vampire'.

"I am glad of the opportunity to say to the public that a new, greatly facilitated service is being provided by the use of the 'vampire' in the carrying of envelopes, by using the stamp in the upper right-hand corner so that it can properly be cancelled by the machine and by placing the name and address of the sender in the upper left-hand corner, which will prevent its being cancelled by the machine in the event of a change of address. More than twenty million letters a year are carried by the 'vampire' and the name of the sender did not appear on the envelope.

"While we have our own national 'band' in the service, I want to say that the employees of the Philadelphia postoffice are a loyal and efficient body of men. Their morale is high and second to none in any corporation in the city or State.

"The 'vampire' does not exist in the form of a few of our men. I'm afraid she does. We watch out for her and her wiles and very often we circumvent her. You can only say that if 'vamps' exist in the country they would pick them outside of the postoffice department.

"She has recently appropriated of \$14,000 from the Government to extend our look-out gallery so it covers every corner of our working floor. That is sufficiently significant.

"Back in 1850, we postal men like



Sorting mail packages while under secret scrutiny

long enough to cover the subject and short enough to be interesting. If I may quote from one of our best-known

in the morning first delivery, the most important of the day, may answer a letter and post it and have it collected by

Colonel Kemp talks authoritatively

"Back in 1850, we postal men like