

Russian farmers hold an average of twenty-seven acres to each family.

The annual average of criminals tried in Germany for all offenses is 222,694; in Italy, 127,372; in Great Britain, 78,438.

In a German university a student's matriculation card shields him from arrest, admits him at half price to the theatres, and takes him free to the art galleries.

The son of a real marquis is working on the streets of Tacoma, Wash. His father has disowned him, but the boy, more forgiving and less proud, still acknowledges his father.

The United States steamer Philadelphia has the honor of being the fastest warship afloat. On one day, during her recent trip from New York to Honolulu, 330 knots were made, which, in the opinion of the Hartford Journal, is a remarkable record.

It is worth while now and then to pause and consider, soliloquizes Foster Coates in Frank Leslie's. New York contains within its borders more Hebrews than there are in Jerusalem, more Irishmen than there are in Dublin, more Germans than there are in Hamburg, and more Italians than there are in Rome.

Among the multifarious duties which demand the attention of the Calcutta police, the capture of sharks in the Hooghly finds a place. During the past twenty years rewards have been paid for the destruction of these marine man-eaters, and recently the Bengal Government laid down a scale for these payments.

Doubtless three-fourths of the Americans who visit the Bermudas, remarks the New York Sun, pronounce the second syllable of the name as if it were spelled "mew," although Shakespeare in the "Tempest" has indicated for all time the original pronunciation of that syllable by calling the islands "the still vexed Bermoothes."

Says the New Orleans Picayune: The Government of Italy has determined to effectually suppress the brigandage which has long terrorized the Island of Sicily. It proposes to declare martial law in the island and to send thither 12,000 troops, who will have the assistance of the local police, and will push a vigorous campaign, especially through the mountainous districts. The courts where the brigands are tried will have special measures taken for their protection. The Sicilian Mafia in this country will doubtless soon have large accessions to its ranks.

Do you ever notice how few patches people are wearing? asks the New York Sun. It is because clothing is so much cheaper now than it used to be, that it is not worth while pulling old garments together. When they are worn out, they go into the rag bag or are given to tramps and new ones are ordered to the custom tailors, or more often are bought outright at the nearest hand-me-down shop. A pair of colonial boots, recently shown in a shoe maker's window, was almost covered with home-made patches. Such exhaustive eking out of old boots is not in vogue nowadays; it is cheaper and better to get new goods.

The red deer is still hunted in England, but in a way that the San Francisco Chronicle thinks make the gorge of true sportsmen rise. A recent English paper describes the method. It says: "The red deer which are annually required for sport with the Queen's buckhounds were selected yesterday from the famous herds in Windsor Great Park. After one or two unsuccessful raids among the favorite haunts of the wild red deer about sixty fine stags and hinds were pursued across the royal demesne and driven into Cranbourne paddock, near the Flemish farm, where some of them were speedily caught in the nets stretched across the enclosure and secured by the huntsmen and park laborers. The strongest animals on being released from the toils were carefully placed in wooden crates and conveyed in the royal van and carts to Swinley paddocks, where they await the opening of the hunting season." After reading this description we no longer wonder that there is a society in England which devotes itself to creating sentiment against hunting with the buckhounds, but we do wonder that the English are so slow to apprehend how utterly inhuman and farcical it is to call a roundup of tame deer hunting. If any one attempted to harry the deer in our park with dogs and called the thing hunting, he would in all probability be treated to a coat of tar and feathers.

### CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Sleep! snow-white world, under the stars,  
Sleep! Sleep!  
While chorals angels from on high,  
Floating across the midnight sky,  
Lean down with waving lily-wands,  
To bless the earth with gracious hands.  
And hark! the golden choral  
"Praise be to Christ our Lord!  
The Son of Man in lowly manger born,  
Before whose face the strength of Sin is  
shorn."  
Then, till the holy morn,  
Sleep! Sleep!  
Wake! bright world, under the bright sun,  
Wake! Wake!  
Hark! how the Christmas angels sing:  
"All hail! to Christ our Lord and King!  
All hail! good will and peace to men!  
All hail! to God on high! Amen!"  
Join ye the joyful song:  
The reign of ancient wrong  
Is o'er this hour; for Christ the Child is born!  
Oh, happy world! thy bonds of sin are torn!  
This holy Christmas morn,  
Wake! Wake!  
—Charles L. Hildreth, in Demorest's.

### LOU'S CLARINET.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

HERE was a Christmas eve service in the Second Westcock Church. The church at Second Westcock was quaint and old-fashioned, like the village over which it presided. Its shingles were gray with the beating of many winters; its little square tower was surmounted by four spindling posts, like the legs of a table turned heavenward; its staring windows were adorned with curtains of yellow cotton; its uneven and desolate churchyard, strewn with graves and snow-drifts, occupied a bleak hillside looking out across the bay to the lonely height of Shepody Mountain.

Down the long slope below the church struggled the village, half-lost in the snow, and whistled over by the winds of the Bay of Fundy. Second Westcock was an outlying corner of the rector's expansive parish, and a Christmas eve service there was an event almost unparalleled. To give Second Westcock this service, the rector had forsaken his prosperous congregations at Westcock, Sackville and Dorchester, driving some eight or ten miles through the snows and solitude of the deep Dorchester woods.

And because the choir at Second Westcock was not remarkable even for willingness, much less for strength or skill, he had brought with him his fifteen-year-old niece, Lou Allison, to swell the Christmas praises with the notes of her clarinet.

The little church was lighted with oil lamps ranged along the white wall between the windows. The poor, bare chancel—a red-cloth covered kitchen table in a semi-circle of painless railing—was flanked by two towering pulpits of white pine. On either side the narrow, carpetless aisle were rows of unpainted benches.

On the left were gathered solemnly the men of the congregation, each looking straight ahead. On the right were the women, whispering and scanning each others' bonnets, till the appearance of the rector from the little vestry-room by the door should bring silence and reverent attention.

In front of the women's row stood the melodeon, and the two benches behind it were occupied by the choir, the male members of which sat blushing self-conscious, proud of their office, but deeply abashed at the necessity of sitting among the women.

There was no attempt at Christmas decorations, for Second Westcock had never been awakened to the delicious excitements of the church greening. At last the rector appeared in his voluminous white surplice. He moved slowly up the aisle, and mounted the winding steps of the right-hand pulpit, and as he did so his five-year-old son, forsaking his place by Lou's side, marched forward and seated himself resolutely on the pulpit steps. He did not feel quite at home in Second Westcock Church.

The sweet old carol, "While shepherds watched their flocks by night," rose rather doubtfully from the little choir, who looked and listened askance at the glittering clarinet, into which Lou was now blowing softly. Lou was afraid to make herself distinctly heard at first, lest she should startle the singers; but in the second verse the pure vibrant notes came out with confidence, and then for two lines the song was little more than a duet between Lou and the rector's vigorous baritone.

In the third verse, however, it all came right. The choir felt and responded to the strong support and thrilling stimulus of the instrument, and at length ceased to dread their own voices. The naked little church was glorified with the sweep of triumphal song pulsating through it.

Never before had such music been heard there. Men, women and children sang from their very souls, and when the hymn was ended the whole congregation stood for some seconds as in a dream, with quivering throats, till the rector's calm voice, repeating the opening words of the liturgy, brought back their self-control in some measure.

Thereafter every hymn and chant and carol was like an inspiration, and Lou's eyes sparkled with exaltation.

But music of yours would just soften the hardest heart as ever was." The rector had just come from the vestry room, well wrapped up in his furs, and was shaking hands and wishing every one a Merry Christmas, while the sexton brought the horse to the door. He overheard the old lady's last remark, as she was bundling Teddy up in a huge woollen muffler.

"It certainly did," said he, "make the singing go magnificently to-night, didn't it, Mrs. Tait? But I wonder, now, what sort of an effect it would produce on a hard-hearted bear, if such a creature should come out at us while we are going through Dorchester woods?"

This mild pleasantry was very delicately adapted to the rector's audience, and the group about the stove smiled with a reverent air befitting the place they were in; but the old lady exclaimed in haste:

"My land sakes, parson, a bear'd be just scared to death!"

"I wonder if it would frighten a bear?" thought Lou to herself, as they were getting snugly bundled into the warm, deep "pung," as the low-box sleigh with movable seats is called.

Soon the crest of the hill was passed, and the four-poster on the top of Second Westcock Church sank out of sight. For a mile or more the road led through half-cleared stumps lands, where the black stumps stuck up so strangely through the drifts that Teddy discovered bears on every hand.

Probably keep well out of our sight. However, it's just as well to get beyond its neighborhood as quickly as possible. Steady, Jerry, old boy! Steady—don't use yourself up too fast!"

The rector kept the horse well in hand; but in a short time it was plain that the panther was not avoiding the party. The cries came nearer and nearer, and Lou's breath came quicker and quicker, and the rector's teeth began to set themselves grimly, while his brows gathered in anxious thought.

If it should come to a struggle, what was there in the sleigh, he was wondering, that could serve as a weapon? Nothing, absolutely nothing but his heavy pocket-knife.

"A poor weapon," thought he, ruefully, "with which to fight a panther." But he felt in his pocket with one hand, and opened the knife, and slipped it under the edge of the cushion beside him.

At this instant he caught sight of the panther, bounding along through the low underbrush, keeping parallel with the road, and not forty yards away.

"There it is!" came in a terrified whisper from Lou's lips; and just then Teddy lifted his head from under the robes. Frightened at the speed and at the set look on his father's face he began to cry. The panther heard him and turned at once toward the sleigh.

Old Jerry stretched himself out in a burst of speed, while the rector grasped his poor knife fiercely; and the panther came with a long leap right into the road not ten paces behind the flying sleigh.

Teddy stared in amazement, and then covered down in fresh terror that there came an ear-splitting screech, wild and high and long, from Lou's clarinet. Lou had turned, and over

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### SANTA CLAUS ON HIS ROUND.



Look at him there on the chimney top  
Just ready to descend—  
There never lived in this whole wide world  
Such a dear good-hearted friend!  
But see, he has heaped to listen  
If the children are asleep  
For he never goes down if they stayed awake  
Or tried to take one peep!

He was not at all alarmed, however, for he was sure his father was a match for a thousand bears.

By and by the road entered the curious inverted dark of Dorchester woods, where all the light seemed to come from the white snow under the trees rather than from the dark sky above them. At this stage of the journey Teddy retired under the buffalo-ropes, and went to sleep in the bottom of the pung.

The horse jogged slowly along the somewhat heavy road. The bells jingled drowsily amid the soft, pushing whisper of the runners. Lou and the rector talked in quiet voices, attuned to the solemn hush of the great forest.

"What's that?" Lou shivered up closer to the rector as she spoke, and glanced nervously into the dark woods whence a sound had come. The rector did not answer at once, but instinctively seized the whip, and tightened the reins as a signal to Old Jerry to move on faster.

The horse needed no signal, but awoke into an eager trot which would have become a gallop had the rector permitted.

Again came the sound, this time a little nearer, and still apparently just abreast of the pung, but deep in the woods. It was a bitter, long, wailing cry, blended with a harshly grating undertone, like the rasping of a saw.

"What is it?" again asked Lou, her teeth chattering.

The rector let Old Jerry out into a gallop, as he answered, "I'm afraid it's a panther—what they call around here an 'Indian Devil.' But I don't think there is any real danger. It is a ferocious beast, but will probably give us a wide berth."

"Why won't it attack us?" asked Lou.

the back of the seat was blowing this puff of desperate defiance in the brute's very face. The astonished animal shrank back in his tracks and sprang again into the underbrush.

Lou turned to the rector with a flushed face of triumph; and the rector exclaimed in a husky voice, "Thank God!" But Teddy, between his sobs, complained, "What did you do that for, Lou?"

Lou jumped to the conclusion that her victory was complete and final; but the rector kept Jerry at his top speed and scrutinized the underwood apprehensively.

The panther appeared again in four or five minutes, returning to the road, and leaping along some forty or fifty feet behind the sleigh. His pace was a very curious disjointed, india-rubbery spring, which rapidly closed up on the fugitives.

Then round swung Lou's long instrument again, and at its piercing cry the animal again shrank back. This time, however, he kept to the road, and the moment Lou paused for breath he resumed the chase.

"Save your breath, child," exclaimed the rector, as Lou again put the slender tube to her lips. "Save your breath, and let him have it ferociously when he begins to get too near."

The animal came within twenty or thirty feet again, and then Lou greeted him with an ear-splitting blast, and he fell back. Again and again the tactics were repeated. Lou tried a thrilling cadenza; it was too much for the brute's nerves. He could not comprehend a girl with such a penetrating voice, and he could not screw up his courage to a closer investigation of the marvel.

At last the animal seemed to resolve on a change of procedure. Plunging into the woods he made an effort to get ahead of the sleigh. Old Jerry was showing signs of exhaustion, but the rector roused him to an extra spurt—and there, just ahead, was the opening of Fillmore's settlement.

"Blow, Lou, blow!" shouted the

rector; and as the panther made a dash to intercept the sleigh, it found itself in too close proximity to the strange-voiced phenomenon in the pung, and sprang backward with an angry snarl.

As Lou's breath failed from her dry lips, the sleigh dashed out into the open. A dog bayed angrily from the nearest farm-house, and the panther stopped short on the edge of the wood. The rector drove into the farm-yard, and Old Jerry stopped, shivering as if he would fall between the shafts.

After the story had been told, and Jerry had been stabled and rubbed down, the rector resumed his journey with a fresh horse, having no fear that the panther would venture across the cleared lands. Three of the settlers started out forthwith, and following the tracks in the new snow, succeeded in shooting the wild beast after a chase of two or three hours.

The adventure supplied the country-side all that winter with a theme for conversation, and about Lou's clarinet there gathered a halo of romance that drew rousing congregations to the parish church, where its music was to be heard every alternate Sunday evening.—Youth's Companion.

### Antiquity of Christmas Toys.

The doll is thousands of years old; it has been found inside the graves of little Roman children, and will be found again by the archaeologists of a future date among the remains of our own culture. The children of Pompeii and Herculaneum trundled hoops just as we and I did, and who knows whether the rocking horse on which we rode in our young days is not a lineal descendant of that proud charger into whose flanks the children of Francis I's time dug their spurs.

The drum is also indestructible, and setting time at naught across the centuries, it beats the Christmas-tide and New Year summons that bids the tin soldier prepare himself for war, and shall continue to beat as long as there exist boyish arms to wield drumsticks, and grown-up people's ears to be deafened by the sound thereof. The tin soldier views the future with calm; he will not lay down his arms until the day of general disarmament, and there is, as yet, no prospect of a universal peace.

The toy sword also stands its ground; it is the nursery symbol of the ineradicable vice of our race—the lust for battle. Harlequins, fool's-cap-crowned and bell ringing, are also likely to endure; they are sure to be found among the members of the toy world as long as there are fools to be found among the inhabitants of our own. Gold-laced knights, their swords at their sides, curly-locked and satinshod princesses, stalwart musketeers, mustached and top-booted, are all types which still hold their own. The Chinese doll is young as yet, but she has a brilliant future before her.

### The Yule Log Custom.

The yule log or yule block is probably another form of that which has been preserved in the Christmas tree. A huge log of wood placed in the fire place is kept burning all the evening in many places in England, and even in the United States the custom is not unknown. It is called Buche de Noel in France.

The yule candle is lighted the evening of December 24, midwinter-night, and kept burning all night if possible. If it goes out during the night it is looked upon as a sign that some one will die in the house soon. On the other hand, the stumps of these candles are considered a powerful remedy for diseased or injured hands or feet.

### Song of Kriss Kringle's Tree.

Kriss Kringle's bells are jingling,  
The frosty air is tingling,  
All silvery sounds are mingling,  
This merry, merry day,  
With many a feeble feather  
The snow-flakes dance together;  
Here comes Kriss Kringle's weather,  
In good Kriss Kringle's way.

Kriss Kringle's measure's tripping,  
Kriss Kringle's sweetness sipping,  
The while his gifts were clipping,  
From brave Kriss Kringle's tree,  
We set the candles burning,  
Like stars and planets turning,  
And every dream and yearning  
There satisfied we see—



Alone and solitary,  
Aloof from all and fairy,  
It grew in forests airy  
To reach its day of glory,  
When winter woods were hoary,  
To hear Kriss Kringle's story,  
An I dear Kriss Kringle's hymn.

O tree that warbles never!  
O tree that charms us ever!  
O tree that lives forever!  
The blessed Christmas tree,  
Where love and kindness blending  
Round up the year's air ending,  
There heaven's own beauty leading,  
Behold Kriss Kringle's tree,  
Margaret E. Sangster, in Young People's.

The little red house at Lenox, Mass., in which Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote "Tanglewood Tales," "The House of Seven Gables," and other stories, is to be restored.

### HANDLING FOREIGN MAILS.

HOW IT IS DONE IN THE BIG NEW YORK POSTOFFICE.

Accuracy and Rapidity of the System—Sorting Mail at Sea—Intricacies of the Work.

WALKING along the gallery that overlooks the city department of the New York Postoffice where, even in broad daylight there twinkle thousands of electric lights, you will come to a stairway which leads you into the northern end of the building, and there, in cramped, insufficient quarters, a corps of sixty men receive and distribute each week from Europe along an average of one hundred thousand foreign letters to residents of this city, and three hundred and fifty thousand additional letters addressed to out of town people by each of the incoming mail carriers.

Just how long it takes a letter dropped by a friend in London to reach a resident of this city depends largely upon the speed made by the ocean greyhound which happens to carry the mail bag. But within twenty-five minutes after the black hull of the steamer has been made fast at the dock the ten wagons employed for the purpose have hauled to their destination the entire mail, and in one hour and a half from their arrival two hundred and fifty pairs of hands have sorted and prepared the city letters and carriers are on their way to deliver them. The regular force especially designated to take charge of this department is composed of its sixty regular men, and their hours of duty, or "tours," as they are called, are from 12 m. to 9 a. m., and from 8 in the morning till 5 in the afternoon, and from 5 in the evening till 2 the next morning. The overlapping of hours is designed to provide against the possibility of being shorthanded on the unexpected arrival of a large mail.

Besides this regular force there are twelve additional employes, "floaters," so called, because their hours of occupation depend upon the tides and winds. They may report at eight and work until five, or they may be called upon at midnight to work until the distribution is completed. Opposite their names on the attendance book, which contains a complete record of every man employed in the department, is a cross, and if they were not known as "floaters" they would be known as "emergency men."

The number of ports from which the mail is received in this city is 100 and the number of languages represented in the addresses is 100 multiplied by the various dialects spoken or written by people the round world over, and in the decipherment of this multiplicity of tongues there is rarely a serious mistake, although there is no one person specially commissioned to attend to this branch of the department.

The "hards," as the illegible or outlandish addresses are called in the slang of the office, are sent to the "blind reader" (which seems a misnomer) and his assistants, and by means of directories and the forty years of experience of the head of this department the most ill addressed letter seldom fails to find its proper owner. Of all the foreign countries it seems singular that India should furnish the best addressed letters and Russia and Italy the worst. With reference to the latter country it is a curious fact that correspondents writing to their friends on this side almost invariably neglect to prepay the postage, and the carrier who delivers the mail in the Italian quarter always carries a small hand satchel to bring back to the office the money due for the "collected letters." In adopting this course the writers take advantage of the law, which enables any one to send a letter to any point comprised within the postal union.

In connection with the arrival of the boats carrying the mails to any part of the world the Government issues its weekly bulletin, in which each ship receives an initial letter, beginning with A and continuing through the alphabet. This letter is used to designate the mail that came by that particular boat. The same table contains in another column the exact time of the arrival of the mail at Quarantine and at New York, and the initial letter is used to trace any bit of matter that is either delayed or lost. The bulletin is, as a rule, dry, reading, but a recent issue contained the interesting statement that live bees might be shipped to the Philippine Islands under the classification of "samples."

The outgoing mails from this city are under two classifications—"close" and "open"—a "close" mail being one that is made up for direct transportation to some particular point, as, for example, from here to Bombay, while the "open" mail is via London or some other point. In the preparation of the bags for shipment the letters are assorted with reference to this distinction. Every business man in New York is aware of the fact that any letter intended for a foreign port must be placed in the postoffice thirty minutes before the closing of the mail, and the average number of letters received in the last moments is from six to eight thousand. This apparently unmanageable mass of mail is handled by eight people. Passing from the drop where it is received, the letter goes to the cancelling machine, which can by the aid of a single man cancel, stamp and stack 35,000 letters an hour. From this machine the letters are given to the separators, who distributes them first with reference to the country to which they are addressed and, second, according as they are for open or close mail. At the last moment the way bill must be made out and in duplicate. This way bill contains an accurate and detailed statement of the number of letters, points of destination and the central offices in this country from which they come and the weight of the entire mail, and when it is verified and properly checked on the European side it is the only receipt which the office has for the mail that had passed through the department. The length of time allotted for this important job, at the outside, fifteen minutes.

The letters from this country to Europe are of course carried to other countries under contracts made by the Government, and the report of the office at New York is the basis upon which payment is made. This is true of all mail handled at this port with the exception of the mail from Canada, which merely passes through the office in transit.

In all calculations the Foreign Department uses the gramme as the standard of weight and the centime as the standard of value, and the convenience of this system, especially where weight is concerned, may readily be seen from the fact that each letter is supposed to weigh ten grammes, so if the amount of weekly mail was, as it happened to be one week during this month, 6,237,170 grammes, the number of letters would be 623,717. This thumb rule is used only for rough estimates, for the United States mail is as accurately accounted for as though each letter were a fortune in itself, and the letter bill which accompanies the mail of the outgoing steamer is lettered, numbered and marked in such a way as to indicate the exact number of bags, newspapers, letters and registered letters. The latter are inscribed "red bags," and before any part of this mail can be removed from the official who has charge its exact detail must be verified and approved.

To facilitate the immediate delivery of mails to important European cities such as Naples, which is en route to the general delivery of Modena-Turin, the Naples mail is placed in a sack within a sack and at the proper station is thrown on the platform while the main mail goes to the central point of the distribution.

To prevent the loss of the mail bag every possible precaution is taken and each tag that bears the address is in duplicate. These tags are printed on the stoutest linen and are so tied that if the outer address becomes torn off or lost there will still be on the inside bag its counterpart giving the necessary information. The corps of the foreign department is more stable and changes less frequently than any other of the postal service, and this is largely due to the fact that without experience it would be utterly impossible to master the intricacies of a business which presents as difficulties not only an infinite amount of technical detail and the reading of foreign tongues, but a knowledge of exigencies which may arise at any moment and are determined solely by the condition of winds and waves.

A vast number of letters is distributed on the steamers themselves by employes who are known as "sea P. O.'s." This experiment has proved a complete success, and on each of the boats there are two clerks and an assistant. How large an amount of matter is thus made ready for immediate transition may be inferred from the fact that they frequently work during the entire passage from sixteen to eighteen hours per day.—New York Herald.

### Horrors of a Convict Colony.

The Vladivostok, a newspaper published in Eastern Siberia, gives a terrible account of the sufferings of the Russian convicts of the penal settlements on the island of Saghalien. It says: "A warden named Khanoff and some of his assistants, who at one time were convicts themselves and had been raised to the rank of jailers, have been removed from their posts. Khanoff's treatment of the prisoners was so abominable that a number of them crippled themselves, cutting off fingers and toes, in order to be treated as invalids and to be freed from his terrible cruelties. Others fled to the impenetrable forest, where they suffered all the horrors of hunger. In a satchel belonging to a fugitive convict, who had been hunted down, were found some pieces of human flesh. Investigation revealed that this man had been one of a party of four, and that only one of them now remained. The others had been killed and devoured by their comrades. Similar cases of cannibalism are, according to the Siberian journal, not infrequent."

### Tears and Nerves.

My medical friend explains: As the muscular power that extends or flexes a finger is at a distance from the part moved, so the excitement to tears is from an irritation in a distant nervous center, and is removed when the nervous center is either soothed or exhausted. The relief comes, not from the mere escape of tears, which is only a symptom, but from the cessation of the storm in the nervous chain. If the storm be calmed by soothing measures—as when we soothe a child that is weeping from fear, annoyance or injury—we quiet the nervous centers, upon which the effect ceases. In children the soothing method succeeds, and sometimes it succeeds in adults, although in adults the cessation of tears is more commonly due to actual exhaustion following a period of nervous activity.—Boston Globe.

### Cleaning Buildings by Sandblast.

The exterior of buildings are now cleaned by the sandblast instead of the hose. The front is covered with stags, and the blast is applied by a system of pipes and nozzles carried by the workmen. The stream of fine sand issuing from a nozzle removes a layer 1-34 inches thick from the surface of the stone, and a square foot of surface can be cleaned in ten minutes. The sand can be employed over again.—New York Dispatch.