Herald of joy – messenger of evil! Daily terror – hourly hope! Now, one deputed from the
 gods; and now, the envoy of pain, and poverty, and death. Each and all of these is the unconscious
 postman. In the round of one morning he may stand at fifty thresholds, the welcome bringer of blessed
 news, - the long-hoped, long-prayed for carrier of good tidings, - and the dismal tale-bearer, the
 ambassador of woe. The postman deals his short, imperative knock, and the sound shall, like a fairy spell,
as quickly call a face of hopeful gladness to the door: he passes to the next house, and his summons
 makes the anxious soul within quail and quake with apprehension. He is, indeed, a stout, a happy man,
 whose heart has never shrunk at the knock of the postman.

We meet the postman in his early walk: his a familiar object, - a social commonplace, tramping
 through mud, and snow, and drenching rain, and withering cold, the drudge of all weathers; and we
 scarcely heed the value of his toil, - rarely consider the daily treasure of which he is the depository and
 the dealer forth. We speak of treasure in its highest meaning; eschewing all notice of bank notes, and
 bills, and cheques, wherewith the postman is daily trusted; we confine ourselves to the more precious
 records of the heart; to the written communings of affection; the kind remembrances; the yearnings of the
 absent; the hopes of the happy; and the more sacred sorrows of the unfortunate. Look at that little bundle
 of letters grasped by the postman. Who shall guess the histories that are there! – histories more deep,
 more touching, than many on the shelves of libraries; writing, albeit the authorship of the poor and
 ignorant, that in its homely truth shall shame the laboured periods of fashionable quill-cutter.

Sally Robins writes home to say, that John Thomson is a very proper young man; and that, if father and mother
 have no objection, she thinks she can persuade herself to become Mrs. Thomson. Give us that letter for a
 piece of wholesome nature, a bit of simple feeling, before any set of three volumes by Lady Pickansteal,
even with the illustration of her ladyship’s portrait, built by Parris, with the hat, weeping willow, feather,
bouquet, velvet and all to match. The postman is the true publisher: his tales are verities; his romances,
things of life: besides, in his case, though penned by right honorable ladies and gentlemen, the wares he
 deals in are delivered without any improvement by foreign hands, to their reader. Thus considered, the
 postman’s diurnal budget is the history of much of human life; the written pictures of its hopes, wants,
follies, virtues, crimes; of its pettiest and most fleeting ceremonies, as of its highest and most enduring
 aspirations.

The postman’s packet is before us. In what close companionship are the lowly and the great! Here
 is a letter to his grace, and over it a missive from Molly the scullion: look we immediately behind the
duke, and we find the epistle of Dicky the groom. Try lower down: what have we here? The humble
 petition of an old constituent to a place-giving politicians, backed by a letter from Epsom, penned by a
 professor of the thimble rig! What next? Alack, the profanation! Behind the pea-and-thimble varlet, lies
 the pastoral note of the meek Bishop of Orangeton to a minister of state. In the rear of the bishop – oh, for
 a pound of civet! – lurks the agonizing correspondence of a heart-stricken opera dance. Here is a position
 – here a jumble! Oh, for a peep at the contents of only two of the last three letters! That it should be
 felony to break a seal, and in spite of such a provocation! Otherwise, what various views of life might we
 not enjoy from them? How beautifully should we find the trickery of the trading gambler relieved by the
gentleness, virtues, and political piety of the senatorial bishop! True it is, that we have a sort of half-reverence for the professor of the pea-and-thimble, on account of the remoteness of his origin. It is not generally known (except, perhaps, to losers,) that the pea-and thimble man comes from the country of the crocodile, being, as proved by the learned Mr. Lane, descended from the sons of ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, their several letters opened, we know, we feel, that we should turn with disgust from the sharper of the race-course, to melt and glow with admiration at party episcopacy – at the lordly shepherd smelling of the imperial parliament.

But we have not time to go through all our postman’s bundle; we must not dwell among the lovers, lawyers, contrabandists, merchants, gossips, philosophers (for there shall, in so thick a budget, be one or two of such rare fowl), hucksters, sharpers, moralists, quacks and dupes, peaceably bound together by the postman’s string, and each and all waiting serenely for their delivery. Looked upon as the emanations, the representatives of their separate writers, what a variety of purpose, what many-coloured means, and nearly all to arrive at the same common end! Could we have more curious reading, than by taking letter by letter, and so going through the whole Babel of contents? To light now upon the doting ravings of an absent swain, and now upon the peremptoriness of a vigilant attorney! Eternal love, and instant payment! Dim visions of Hymen and the turnkey; the wedding ring and the prison bolt! Next, to come upon the sinful secrets of the quiet, excellent, respectable man; the worthy soul, ever virtuous because never found out: to unearth the hypocrite from folded paper, and see all his iniquity blackening in a white sheet! And then to fall upon a piece of simple goodness; a letter gushing from the heart; a beautiful unstudied, vindication of the worth and untiring sweetness of human nature; a record of the invulnerability of man, armed with high purpose, sanctified by truth; a writing that, in the recollection that it leaves, shall be an amulet against the sickness of uncharitable thoughts, when judging man at his worst, remembering still the good of which he is capable. Yes, a most strange volume of real life is the daily packet of the postman!

The letter-carrier himself may be said to be deficient of any very striking characteristic, any peculiar recommendation as a national portrait; in himself he is, indeed, a common place; he is only for the time being elevated by our hopes and fears; only for the nonce the creature of our associations. We suffer the fever of anxiety for a letter, and the approaching postman comes upon us a very different person from him who passed our window a week ago. In the intensity of our expectation, we almost made him a party to our gladness or our suffering: he has nothing for us, and inwardly we almost chide him for the disappointment; he seems leagued against us, and in our thoughts we reproach him for his unkindness. ‘Are you sure you have nothing?’ we ask, as if almost petitioning his will to delight us; for a time, we seem to ourselves dependent upon his courtesy alone for a satisfying answer. We have a little story in illustration of the naturalness of this:

A late friend of ours had long expected a letter – it came not. Day after day his handmaiden had seen the postman pass the door. At length, the knock was heard – that heart-awakening sound, when so desired – the postman’s knock! Betty flew to the door, and as she took the letter, with vehement reproach addressed the unoffending carrier: - ‘You ought to be ashamed of yourself,’ said Betty; ‘you know you ought – good-for-nothing fellow!’ ‘What’s the matter?’ asked the postman, ‘What’s the matter, my dear?’ ‘Don’t dear me! You know you ought to be ashamed of yourself,’ was the ancillary reply. ‘Why, what I have done?’ urged the postman. ‘Done!’ echoed the maid, who then immediately crushed the culprit with
a revelation of his iniquity; ‘here have you brought this letter, and only this morning!’ ‘Well?’ ‘Well, indeed! and my poor dear master expected it three weeks ago.’ Betty felt assured that the delay rested with the postman; that he alone was chargeable with the disappointment. Wiser folks than Betty have been tempted to do the letter carrier a like passing wrong.

We have said the postman was with us a common-place; and yet, in the very regularity of his calls may we see the highest triumph of civilization. How he keeps man knit to man; what interest he upholds; how he connects and makes voluble absent hearts; how, through him all the corners of the earth hold discourse with on another! The postman with us is a daily fate; nought stops him; he walks, and walks, and for ever walks, knocking and dealing forth his many missives, in fair weather and in tempest, in scorching sun and nipping frost. In the remote habitations of man, the postman is, indeed, invested with more romantic attributes; he is not a dweller among the people but a fitful and uncertain visitor. The letter-carrier to the few denizens of a Canadian forest is of far higher mark than the postman in Cheapside. He who brings news to the wilderness, comes a more eventful courier than he who delivers tidings from the log-huts to men in towns. They are living in the hurly of life; to them there can come at best but quiet news; tidings of hewing and clearing, of corn sown, sows farrowed, and poultry hatched. To the exile in the woods the letter-carrier brings, with the news of cities, old recollections touching to dwell upon, thoughts of old habits not yet quite flung off, memories of old and early friends; with all the noise, and stir, and Goodman glittering show that once made up a hopeful existence – was once the day dream of the reader’s life. We can see such a man, can behold the emigrant in the very heart of the wilderness, leaning against a tree. The pines felled about him bear witness to his sinewy arm, and yet his hand shakes as with palsy at an opened sheet of paper. In the depth of the forest, in its solemn silence, only broken by the leap of the squirrel or the cry of the jay, in a solitude and stillness so profound and so still that there a man might hear his own heart beat, - the emigrant, gazing on the letter, sees amidst his tears the houses of England, her old remembered streets, a hundred well-known faces, and hears long since forgotten, old, familiar sounds. Is this a fancy picture, reader? Never believe it; for men of self-deemed granite, cut off from men, find, to their own astonishment, that they still are tearful flesh. We must, however, turn from all picturesque couriers; from the letter-carrier through swamps and woods; the Arab, dromedary-mounted; and the Tartar, on his arrowy steed, - to return to the wayfarer of British streets, the English postman.

Though his calling be, in truth, of the humblest sort, we do not look upon it as altogether menial. The cause of this is probably to be found in the various feelings of hope and fear which it is function at times to awaken in us. Though, indeed, nothing more than a lighter porter, still the precious things revealed to us by the little packets he is charged with for us, endow him with a consequence independent of his mere employment. He is, we know, with his masters a man of trust, but he is something more to us; he is so mingled with our happy and fearful expectations, that we wholly forget the money letters every day entrusted to him, in our thoughts of the missives beyond all purchase which he sometimes brings us.

Postmen are happy in their vocation; it secures them against all the manifold ills of a sedentary life; and their minds, continually engaged in the light, though sometimes difficult, reading of superscriptions, must necessarily be at once enlarged and strengthened by the practice. Cobblers and tailors are said to be addicted to politics and, consequently, treason; this disposition has by some philosophers been traced to the in-door habits of the craftsmen, to their sedentary and cross-legged
positions, all favourable to inward brooding, and thereby to discontent. Far different is the postman; he literally walks through life, absolutely knocks through a whole existence, transacting small government bargains, with no time to sit or stand and think of the iniquities, real or imaginary, of his political masters. We never heard of a postman being concerned in a conspiracy, whilst what tongue has strength enough to count the cobblers? Again, if the postman starts in life with a dapper figure, shall he not be slim and elegant to the last? Is he not certain of carrying to the grave his original greyhound outline? Gout shuns him, corpulency visits him not, whilst exercise crowns him with all its gifts, and claims the postman as its own.