

Catching the Mail.

By REVILE.

THE hustling, bustling scene, "Catching the Mail," is a familiar one in almost every evening newspaper office in the colony, especially so in up-country offices where the appliances are of the crudest, and eminently unfitted for speedy production.

At a certain hour of the day a number of papers (perhaps only half-dozen copies), have to be printed, wrapped, and made up into parcels in order to be despatched by train, coach, or waggon service as the case may be. If the mail service is not punctually met, there is sure to be a row. The subscribers affected naturally growl and indite complaints to the editor, couched in the choicest back-blocks Billingsgate, about the irregular delivery of their penny rag—some even containing the ever ready threat to "Knock it off."

In turn, the worried editor becomes exceeding wrath, and passes the invective on to his staff, accusing them of bungling and every other misdeed under the sun.

The causes which lead up to this "catching the mail turmoil" are many and various. In the first place, the natural tendency to get as much copy in type as possible before the mail closes, or train departs, often proves disastrous, as it considerably limits the time for the proper arrangement of mechanical details. In some offices, there is no system or management; on some of the struggling sheets only two men and a boy are employed, and consequently, "the staff" are always working at high pressure. Bad copy, dirty proofs, typographical mishaps, breakdown of machines

(monolines and linotypes in the larger offices not excepted), sickness, &c., all contribute to the trials and tribulations of newspaper life.

As an example, we will select a bush township office, where the oft recurring "scene" is both exciting and amusing, as the following sketch will show:—

It is a blazing hot day, and the afternoon express train from Kauri-ville to Gumtown is shortly due.

The long-wooled, beery-faced, slovenly-dressed, corpulent bush-editor, canvasser, reporter, type-snatcher, etc., with streams of perspiration pouring down his frontispiece, struggles up-stairs to the composing room.

In one hand he excitedly flourishes a number of proofs; in the other, he holds a huge slice of bread and butter, which he ravenously devours in a couple of mouthfuls.

The poor fellow is so hungry and over-worked, that he cannot spare a moment to eat his meal in a dignified manner.

The hurly-burly commences by the bush-editor howling out innumerable orders.

"Now, Mooney," he shouts, "slap it together; don't wait for anything; cut it down; those wooden items can hold over; and don't bother about that Grasstown gossip! Express 'll be here in a few minutes! Tompkins swears he's got no paper for over a week! We'll lose every bloomin' subscriber if we don't catch that train today!"

Wobbling round to the printers' frames, he tears up all remaining copy, and terrifies the comps with his wild gesticulations and fiery language.