

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

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RETURN-LETTER SYSTEM.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 734,077, dated July 21, 1903.

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To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that we, FREDERICK H. MANN and JOHN J. COLLISTER, citizens of the United States of America, residing in Kansas City, in the county of Jackson and State of Missouri, have invented a new and useful Improvement in Return-Letter Systems, of which the following is a specification, reference being had therein to the accompanying drawings, forming a part thereof.

Our invention relates to improvements in registered return-letter systems.

The object of our invention is to provide a system by means of which undelivered letters may be first returned to a central depot and from there distributed to the different addresses to which the returned letters are to be finally delivered. Our system provides means by which the said letters may be returned to the proper address without disclosing the same to any one excepting the operator at the central distributing-depot.

Our invention provides, further, a return-stamp adapted to be affixed upon a letter or similar article and having inscribed thereon an address and an arbitrary character indicating, but not disclosing, a second address.

Our invention provides, further, a register in which are inscribed the arbitrary characters inscribed on the return-stamps and adapted to receive opposite each of said characters the second address indicated by such character.

Our invention provides, further, a book provided with two leaves, one of which is separable from the book, and comprising a plurality of parts detachable from each other, each part having inscribed thereon an address and an arbitrary character, and provided also with another detachable leaf having inscribed thereon the address and arbitrary character which are inscribed on each of the said parts, and having also inscribed thereon a second address, which is the one indicated, but not disclosed, by the arbitrary character inscribed on each stamp.

Our invention provides, further, other novel features hereinafter fully described and claimed.

In the accompanying drawings, illustrative of our invention, Figure 1 is a plan view show-

ing the return-stamps mounted therein. Fig. 2 is a similar view showing the detachable member or leaf and the rear sides of the return-stamps. Fig. 3 is a view showing a register in which are inscribed the arbitrary characters and the addresses to which they refer. Fig. 4 is a view, enlarged, of a number of the stamps undetached. Fig. 5 is a view showing one stamp enlarged and detached.

Similar characters of reference indicate similar parts.

1 indicates the book or other support, to which are detachably secured a plurality of stamps 2, each of which is provided with an address and directions to return thereto if undelivered and having inscribed also thereon an arbitrary character indicating, but not disclosing, a second address. 3 indicates a leaf detachably secured in the book 1 and having inscribed thereon the same address inscribed on each of the stamps 2 and having also inscribed thereon the said arbitrary character and the second address indicated thereby.

4 indicates the register, provided with a series of columns in which are inscribed, respectively, certain arbitrary characters and opposite thereto, respectively, the addresses indicated, respectively, by said characters. On the stamps (shown in Fig. 1) is inscribed on each the following matter: "If not delivered in 3 days return to P. O. Box 75, Kansas City, Mo. Series A—No. 300." The register 4 would have inscribed therein the arbitrary character "No. 300" and "Series A." Opposite thereto would be inscribed the second address, "John Smith," "1430 Main." The register would be kept at a central depot, and all the letters provided with the return-stamps and undelivered would be sent by the Post Office Department to such central depot, which would have the address inscribed on the return-stamp—as, for instance, "P. O. Box 75, Kansas City, Mo." The operator at such central depot would when the returned letter would be received refer to the register to the address inscribed therein opposite to the arbitrary character therein corresponding to the arbitrary character borne by the stamp on the returned letter. For instance, if the stamp had inscribed thereon the char-

acter "Series A—No. 300," on referring to the register he would find, as shown in Fig. 1, the address "John Smith, 1430 Main," opposite the corresponding character. He would then deliver the returned letter to the said party, as indicated by the register. If the stamp bore some other character, he would seek the address opposite such character in the register. For convenience the stamps in a book may form a leaf therein, as shown, and each being detachable from the other. A person in purchasing one of the books containing the return-stamps would detach from the book the leaf or member 3 and send it with his address inscribed thereon—as "John Smith, 1430 Main, Kansas City, Mo."—to the party the address of whom appears on the return-stamps. The said party would on receiving the leaf 3 inscribe on the register opposite the character—as "Series A—No. 300"—the address written on the leaf by the purchaser. Any letters thereafter received by the central depot would be delivered to the address inscribed on the leaf 3, providing such letter had a stamp thereon having the arbitrary indicating character inscribed on the leaf.

Our invention may be very advantageously used by large concerns having many departments. Each department could be supplied with stamps having a certain number peculiar to it. The many letters received by the concern and provided with the return-stamps could be assorted and sent to the proper departments for attention without it being necessary for all the letters to be first opened and read and then distributed. Each department would thus attend to its own mail-matter, affording a great saving in time and labor and requiring only that the number of the return-stamp on a letter be observed prior to sending it to the proper department.

The stamps are preferably gummed on the backs and made in the form, collectively, of a sheet perforated in two directions, the perforations extending clear around each stamp, so that it may be detached readily. 5 and 6 indicate, respectively, the said perforations disposed at right angles to each other in the same manner that sheets of ordinary postage-stamps are perforated.

The register 4 may be of any desirable form that will appear most convenient to the user. In the form shown in Fig. 3 the different arbitrary characters—such as "A—300," "B—100"—are disposed on transverse lines 7, extending across the register and in vertical columns, (indicated by 8.) Vertical columns 9 and 10, respectively, are provided for the insertion of the name and address, which are written on the spaces opposite the arbitrary characters pertaining to them.

The shape and style of lettering on the return-stamps is not material, nor is the shape of the stamps important.

Having thus described our invention, what we claim, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

1. The combination with a register provided with a plurality of different arbitrary characters, of a plurality of stamps for affixing one each upon a letter or similar article, all the said stamps having inscribed thereon one address to which the letters to which the stamps may be affixed are to be returned, and each of said stamps having inscribed thereon an arbitrary character different from the character inscribed on any of the other of said stamps and corresponding to one of the arbitrary characters provided in the said register, substantially as described.

2. The combination with a register provided with a plurality of different numbers inscribed therein, of a plurality of stamps for affixing one each upon a letter or similar article, all of the stamps having inscribed thereon one address to which the letters to which the stamps are affixed may be returned, and each of said stamps having inscribed thereon a number differing from the number placed on any of the other of said stamps but corresponding to one of the numbers inscribed in the said register, substantially as described.

3. The combination with a stamp for affixing upon a letter or similar article and having inscribed thereon an address and also an arbitrary character indicating a second address but not disclosing the same, of a register provided with an arbitrary character corresponding to the one on the stamp, substantially as described.

4. The combination with a stamp for affixing upon a letter or similar article and having inscribed thereon an address and also a number indicating a second address, of a register provided with the said number, substantially as described.

5. The combination with a plurality of stamps each having inscribed thereon an address and also an arbitrary character indicating a second address but not disclosing the same, of a register provided with an arbitrary character corresponding to the one placed on each of said stamps, substantially as described.

6. The combination with a suitable support, of a plurality of return-stamps detachably secured thereto and each having inscribed thereon an address and an arbitrary character indicating but not disclosing a second address, and a detachable member secured to the said support and having inscribed thereon the address and arbitrary character with which each of said return-stamps is provided, and having also inscribed thereon, the said second address, substantially as described.

7. The combination with a suitable support, of a return-stamp detachably secured thereto and provided with an inscription giving a certain address and having also inscribed thereon an arbitrary character indicating but not disclosing a second address, and a member detachably secured to the said support and having inscribed thereon the address inscribed on the return-stamp and having also

inscribed thereon the said arbitrary character and the second address indicated by such character, substantially as described.

5 8. A book provided with two leaves detachably secured therein, one leaf comprising a plurality of separable parts each part having inscribed thereon a certain address and an arbitrary character indicating but not disclosing a second address, and the other leaf having
10 inscribed thereon the same address and arbitrary character inscribed on each of said parts of the first-named leaf and having in-

scribed also thereon the second address indicated by the said arbitrary character, substantially as described.

15 In testimony whereof we have signed our names to this specification in presence of the two subscribing witnesses.

FREDERICK H. MANN.
JOHN J. COLLISTER.

Witnesses:

WARREN D. HOUSE,
R. E. HAMILTON.