

THE POST OFFICE.

The twenty-eighth annual report of the Postmaster-General presents many statistical matters of general interest. The number of letters passing through the Post Office at a given time—for instance, during the Christmas week nearly 12,500,000 letters and packets were dealt with in the central office, which included 43 tons of registered letters, against 11,500,000 and 4 tons of registered letters in the previous year. The number of valentines dispatched from the central office, which had in recent years shown a large falling off, increased to 1,634,000, while in 1880 the number was 534,000. The total estimated number of letters, post-cards, book-packets, newspapers, &c., received in the United Kingdom from abroad during 1881-2 is roughly calculated at 69 millions; while the number dispatched from these shores is reckoned at about 87 millions. The number of telegraph messages was 31,345,861, being an increase of 1,933,879 over the previous year. Respecting postal orders, it seems that within the twelve months no less than 4,462,920 were issued, amounting to £2,006,917; and the classes of orders most in demand were the 1s., 6s., 10s., and 20s. The gross revenue for the year was over £9,028,374, and the net revenue £3,100,475, being, notwithstanding a heavy increase of expenditure, an increase of £32,356 on the previous year.

The difficult question of an Inland Parcel Post has at length been arranged. The rates of postage and limit of weight are as follows:—For an inland parcel of a weight not exceeding 1 lb. 3d.; exceeding 1 lb. and not exceeding 3 lb., 6d.; exceeding 3 lb. and not exceeding 5 lb., 9d.; exceeding 5 lb. and not exceeding 7 lb., 1s.

It is proposed to link the Inland Post with the International Parcel Post. A Reply Post-Card has also been introduced, at an additional cost of a halfpenny.

The Telegraph Department is, it appears, the only department not in a satisfactory state as to the revenue at the present time; and this state of things has arisen from the culpableness of a former Government, and the carelessness of the House of Commons, in permitting the country to pay 3½ millions to the companies more than they were worth. This was shown by the startling rise in the price of shares the moment it became known that the Government were about to buy them up. In some instances, the shares actually rose as much as 300 per cent in value. If these undertakings had been bought at their actual value—7 millions, instead of 10½ millions—the Telegraph Department of the Post Office would have been working at a profit, and even a reduction in the price might have been made. Greater facilities have, however, been given for using the Telegraph; and it is, perhaps, not sufficiently well known that by affixing the amount in stamps to the message it may be posted to the nearest telegraph station overnight, when it is desirable to send off the message in the early morning, or at any other time, and without the trouble of going to the office.

RATES OF POSTAGE.

The rates of postage on inland letters prepaid are as follows, viz:—

For a letter not exceeding 1 oz.	1d.
Exceeding 1 oz., but not exceeding 2 oz.	1½d.
“ 2 oz., and less than 4 oz.	2d.
“ 4 oz., and less than 6 oz.	2½d.
“ 6 oz., and less than 8 oz.	3d.
“ 8 oz., and less than 10 oz.	3½d.
“ 10 oz., and less than 12 oz.	4d.

A letter exceeding the weight of 12 oz. is liable to a postage of 1d. for every ounce, beginning with the first ounce. A letter, for example, weighing between 14 oz. and 15 oz. must be prepaid 1s. 3d.

A letter posted unpaid is chargeable on delivery with double postage; and if insufficiently prepaid is chargeable with double the deficiency.

No letter may be above 18 inches in length, 9 inches in width, or six inches in depth.

Letters for the Country posted in London or the London Districts on Saturday too late for the ordinary Evening Mails, but in time for the last Evening Collections are delivered next morning, if for places within the range of the Midnight despatches; if for places beyond that range, they are delivered on Monday. The late fee charged for posting inland ordinary letters, after the time of closing the boxes for the dispatch of a mail, is extended and reduced to a uniform rate of a halfpenny.

All Post Offices in the London District are closed on Sundays, with some few exceptions, which are open for the receipt and dispatch of telegrams during the hours stated in Postal Guide.

On Bank Holidays the Postal and Telegraph arrangements in London are of an exceptional character, and due notice is given of them by means of Notices to the public exhibited at Metropolitan Post Offices.

Inquiries for Missing Letters, &c., should be made at the Secretary's Office, New Buildings, between ten a.m. and four p.m. (Saturdays between ten and one).

The Returned Letter Office is in Telegraph-street, Moorgate-street. The Money Order Office is at No. 1, Aldersgate-street. The Post-Office Savings Bank is in Queen Victoria-street, E.C.

LETTERS “TO BE CALLED FOR.”

There is a Poste Restante both at the General Post Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, and at the Charing-cross Post Office, where letters “to be called for” can be obtained between the hours of nine a.m. and five p.m. No letters (except communications from the Savings Bank Department) are taken in “to be called for” at the other district or branch offices, and any so directed are sent to the Returned Letter Office to be returned to the writers.

COLONIAL AND FOREIGN LETTERS.

Full particulars of the rates of postage on letters to the colonies and foreign countries will be found in the British Postal Guide, published quarterly, price Sixpence.

No letter for any colony or foreign country may be above two feet in length or one foot in width or depth. Neither must it contain gold or silver money, jewels, or precious articles, or anything liable to Customs duties, can be sent, even if registered, to any country of the General Postal Union.

INLAND BOOK POST.

The postage is one halfpenny for every 2 oz. or part of that weight.

A packet posted wholly unpaid is charged with double the book postage; and if posted partially prepaid, with double the deficiency.

COLONIAL AND FOREIGN BOOK POST.

The limit of size for a book-packet addressed to any place abroad is 24 in. in length and 12 in. in width or depth. For postage, see Post Office Guide.

FOREIGN CARD POST.

Foreign post-cards may be sent to Canada and to all the countries comprised in the General Postal Union, with the exception of British India.

The postage of a card is in every case one half the rate for a single letter. Foreign post-cards with an impressed stamp of 1d. and 1½d. each are sold at that rate, and are transmissible to the majority of the countries of the Union without extra charge, but reference should be made for exceptional rates to the Post Office Guide.

REGISTRATION (INLAND AND FOREIGN.)

The fee for registering a letter, newspaper, or book-packet passing between any two places in the United Kingdom is twopenny.

The fee chargeable for registration to Colonies and Foreign Countries is variable. See Post Office Guide.

Every letter to be registered should be presented at the counter, and a receipt obtained for it, and should on no account be dropped into the letter-box. If, contrary to this rule, a letter marked “Registered,” be dropped into the letter-box, it will, if directed to any place in the United Kingdom or the British Colonies, be liable to a registration fee of 4d., instead of the ordinary fee of 2d.

INDIAN PARCEL POST.

1. Persons wishing to send parcels to any part of British India can do so through the Indian Parcel Post Agency—established under authority of the Director-General of the Post Office of India—at 122, Leadenhall-street, E.C.; and (Branch Office) at 25, Cocksspur-street, S.W.

2. The charge for parcels is 1s. per lb. or fraction of a lb. (prepayment optional), covering transit from London to destination in India. Insurance may be effected, if desired, at the rate (to be prepaid) of 1s. up to £3 value, 2s. 6d. up to £10 value, and 5s. up to £20 value. Indian Customs duty (if chargeable) will be realised from the addressee.

N.B.—Parcels containing books, or articles treated as books under the British Inland Book Post Rules, are charged 6d. per lb.

COLONIAL AND FOREIGN PATTERN AND SAMPLE POST.

There is a Pattern and Sample Post to certain colonies and foreign countries, but it is restricted to bona fide trade patterns or samples of merchandise.

MODES OF PREPAYMENT.

Inland letters, newspapers, and book-packets cannot be prepaid in money but must be prepaid by means of stamps, either adhesive or embossed or impressed. This rule applies also to registered letters.

Exceptions.—At the Chief and District Post Offices, and at the Charing-cross and Lombard-street Post Offices in London, as well as at the Head Offices in Edinburgh and Dublin.

POSTAL ORDERS.

Postal orders, for certain fixed sums from 1s. up to £1, are issued to the public at all post offices at which money order business is transacted.

The following are the amounts for which postal orders are issued, together with the poundage payable in respect of each order:—

Amount of Order.	Poundage.	Amount of Order.	Poundage.
1 0	...	7 6	...
1 6	...	10 0	...
2 6	...	20 0	...

The person to whom a postal order is issued must, before parting with it, fill in the name of the person to whom the amount is to be paid, and may fill in the name of the Money Order Office at which the amount is to be paid. The person so named must, before payment can be made, sign the receipt at the foot of the order, and must also fill in the name of the Money Order Office, if that has not been already done.

POST-OFFICE MONEY ORDERS.

The regulations which came into operation Oct. 1, 1880, with respect to postal orders enacts that the following poundage be paid:—1s., ½d.; 2s. 6d., 5s., or 7s. 6d., 1d.; 10s., 12s. 6d., 15s., 17s. 6d., or 20s., 2d.

The postmaster may require the person to sign his name on the order before payment is made, although it has been already signed. A postal order may be crossed to a particular banker, and the banker to whom it is crossed may cross it to another banker or agent for collection; and when so crossed specially a postmaster shall refuse to pay it, except to the banker to whom it is crossed.

POST-OFFICE SAVINGS BANKS.

The usefulness of this department to the working classes goes on extending. There are now more than ten millions of depositors. Much has been done during the year to encourage thrift.

Post-Office Savings Banks are established at all Money-Order Offices in the United Kingdom, and are open for the receipt and payment of money and for the transaction of Government Stock business daily during the hours appointed for Money-Order business.

Any person desirous of saving one shilling by means of penny contributions, for deposit in the Post-Office Savings Bank, may do so by purchasing with every penny so saved a penny postage-stamp and affixing it to a form to be obtained at any post-office. When twelve such stamps have been so affixed, the form may be taken to any post-office savings bank in the United Kingdom, where it will be received by the postmaster, and one shilling be allowed for the stamps, which shilling will be accepted either as the first deposit in a new account then to be opened, or as an ordinary deposit if the owner of it has already opened an account. If the stamps affixed to the form are defaced, or in any way damaged, they will not be received by a postmaster.

INLAND TELEGRAMS.

The charge for telegrams throughout the United Kingdom is 1s. for the first two words, and 3d. for every additional five words or part of five words. The names and addresses of the sender and receiver are not counted.

The charges for press telegrams are 1s. for every hundred words or portion of one hundred words handed in between six p.m. and nine a.m.; and 1s. for every seventy-five words or portion of seventy-five words handed in between nine a.m. and six p.m.; with an additional charge of 2d. per hundred or 2d. per seventy-five words, as the case may be, for every additional address.

The cost of a reply, not exceeding forty words in length, may be prepaid; and a Reply Form will then be delivered to the addressee, who will be at liberty to send his reply, from any Telegraph Office, at any time within two months after the date of the original telegram.