

THE POST OFFICE.

From the thirtieth report (1884) of the Postmaster-General we gather there had been a slight decrease in the net revenue, compared with that of the previous year. The decrease was £374,648, and this arose from having to spend, by order of the House of Commons, £180,000 in preparing for the introduction of cheaper 6d. telegrams, and £170,000 for supplying plant and equipment for the parcels post. The gross revenue actually increased more than £450,000, as against £264,000 last year. And the increase in correspondence is 3·2 per cent more than the previous year. The number of all postal missives per head of the population compared with that of intervals of ten years is:—In 1854 the number of letters per head was 15; in 1864, 22; in 1874, 30; and in 1884, 37. It is a curious fact that the increase has been almost exactly at the rate of seven letters for every ten years; and this might at first sight suggest that the more recent thorough diffusion of education has not materially increased correspondence. It is to be borne in mind, however, that post-cards were introduced in 1870, and have perhaps diminished the number of letters. There are now four post-cards sent annually for each person, thus raising the total number of written communications to 41 per head, or nearly double the average number of 20 years ago. In no other country does correspondence reach such a height. In 1882, the last year for which statistics were available, 21 letters per head were sent in the United States, 17 in Germany, 16 in France, 7 in Italy, and 5 in Spain. It is interesting to observe that our descendants across the Atlantic, though a very bad second, come next to us in the race, while the two leading nations of the Continent are close together. The average number of postal missives passing through the central office in a week is estimated at 13 millions and a half. At Christmas, 1882, an additional 14 millions of letters and packets passed through the office; and last Christmas the number increased to 15,400,000. It may be imagined therefore that a large extra force was necessary to cope with this exceptional pressure. Last Christmas 1200 additional hands were employed, the total number on duty at the central office being thus brought up to 3000.

With regard to the parcels post service, this was brought into operation without causing the slightest delay in the delivery of letters. Although it was impossible to obtain trustworthy data, it was estimated that the number of parcels to be carried would be about 27 millions a year. In the first weeks of the parcels post the number carried was at the rate of 15 millions a year. Gradually the number increased to the rate of between 21 and 22 millions, and this represents the number carried at the present time. After some experience it was found possible to effect many simplifications and economies, and in many instances accelerating the delivery of parcels. Without venturing to predict whether the parcels business of the Post Office would be large or small, Mr. Fawcett is confident that the working expenses can be adjusted to the number of parcels carried, thus securing the revenue against loss. The most effectual way of securing economy in the parcels post working, it has been found, is to amalgamate it with the general postal service of the country. So far from supplanting private enterprise, the railway companies and other carriers have been stimulated to introduce a cheaper and better parcels service.

The increase in the gross telegraph revenue in the past year was not nearly so great as that of the preceding twelve months, probably a much surer index of the state of trade than the increase or decrease of correspondence. The minimum price of a telegram has hitherto precluded its use for private purposes by any but the well-to-do, and even in business matters the telegraph is out of the habitual use of retail tradesmen. The promised reduction of the tariff will be a change of a far-reaching character, and it will be interesting to note its effects. In the meantime, communication by means of the telephone is increasing in large towns and business circles, although here again, as the instrument is at present worked, only the upper middle class can participate in the advantages of the invention.

The Savings Bank afforded the same remarkable proof of an adaptation to the wants of the population. Nearly a quarter of a million of additional depositors had recourse to the bank during 1883, one in every nine persons in England and Wales being a customer. In the last ten years both the aggregate amount deposited and the number of depositors nearly doubled, the sum in the custody of the bank being nearly 42 millions and the number of depositors over 3,100,000. Nor does this represent a mere withdrawal of accounts from other banks, for the business of the trustee savings banks showed no falling off. With regard to the jealousy of the Post Office by private bankers, it has been found to supply a want to persons of small means. In the county of Cambridge, for instance, with a population of 190,000, there are only ten places rejoicing in the privilege of a bank, whereas there are forty-seven towns and villages possessing a post-office transacting Savings Bank business. On the other hand, it may be anticipated that the saving habits induced in childhood through the possession of an account in the Post Office will in after life tend to the benefit of the private banker, who should therefore be the friend rather than the foe of so admirable a nursery of thrift. With regard to recent changes in the Postal Order arrangements, by an alteration of the denominations of orders and by allowing stamps to the number of five, to be affixed to the back of an order, any broken amount up to a pound may now be sent by means of two orders at most, while at the same time the poundage has been reduced so that in no case will the cost of sending such an amount exceed two-pence or two-pence halfpenny. The Postmaster-General reports that this change has already increased the circulation of orders by 50 per cent; the number issued being at the rate of 18 millions and a half in the year.

GENERAL POSTAL RATES.

The rates of postage on inland letters prepaid are as follow, 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.
 Too Late Fee.—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 an 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 certain hours.

Double or reply inland post-cards are sold at the following prices:—
 Stout Cards—1, 1d.; 2, 2½d.; 3, 4d.; 4, 5½d.; 5, 6½d.; 6, 8d.; 6s. 8d. for a parcel of 60. Thin Cards—1, 1d.; 2, 2½d.; 3, 3½d.; 4, 4½d.; 5, 6d.; 6, 7d.; 11s. 8d. for a parcel of 120.

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).

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. The postage is 1s. a pound.

FOREIGN CARD POST.

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 twopence. 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, Cockspur-street, S.W.

2. The charge for parcels is 1s. per lb. or fraction of 1 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 only, 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.
1s. 0d.	½d.	7s. 6d.	1d.
1s. 6d.	¾d.	10s. 0d.	2d.
2s. 6d.	1d.	20s. 0d.	2d.

The person to whom a postal order is issued must, before parting with it, 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.

MONEY ORDERS.

The commission on Inland Money Orders is:—
 For sums under 10s., 2d.; 10s. and under £2, 3d.; £2 and under £3, 4d.; £3 and under £4, 5d.; £4 and under £5, 6d.; £5 and under £6, 7d.; £6 and under £7, 8d.; £7 and under £8, 9d.; £8 and under £9, 10d.; £9 and under £10, 11d.; £10, 1s.

POST-OFFICE SAVINGS BANKS.

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.

INLAND TELEGRAMS.

The charge for telegrams throughout the United Kingdom is 1s. for the first twenty 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 PARCELS POST.

The following are the general conditions in regard to weight, dimensions, rates, and time of postage:—

FOR AN INLAND POSTAL PARCEL of a weight	The rate of postage, to be prepaid in ordinary postage-stamps—
Not exceeding 1 lb.	0s. 3d.
Exceeding 1 lb. and not exceeding 3 lb.	0s. 6d.
" 3 lb. " " 5 lb.	0s. 9d.
" 5 lb. " " 7 lb.	1s. 0d.