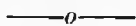


TELEGRAPHS.



HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, 19th September 1893.

REVENUE DEPARTMENTS.

Resolution 17.

"That a sum, not exceeding £1,724,010, be granted to Her Majesty, to complete the sum necessary to defray the Charge which will come in course of payment during the year ending on the 31st day of March 1894, for the Salaries and Working Expenses of the Post Office Telegraph Service."

TELEPHONES.

*Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) said, this was a convenient time for calling attention to the subject of telephones, and endeavouring to ascertain the policy of the Government on the question. It would be in the recollection of hon. Members that up to the period of the death of Mr. Raikes the Telegraph Department showed a considerable growth of revenue, even with 6d. telegrams. From that time, however, the revenue began to fall off. The Postal Authorities attributed the falling off to the increasing popularity of telephones, and in order to cope with what they seemed to have regarded as an evil, the House of Commons, at the fag-end of last Session, was persuaded to allow the Postmaster General £1,000,000 to buy up the trunk lines between town and town, leaving to the Telephone Companies the local exchanges in the cities and towns. Now it was plain that a grosser blunder was never perpetrated. It was a good illustration of the old story of dividing the oyster, the Government

taking the shell and leaving the oyster to the Companies. What could be more foolish than for the Government to construct for itself a trunk line from London to Canterbury, leaving both Canterbury and London to be supplied by the Companies? It was clear that the Government had taken over the costly and unprofitable, and left the inexpensive and remunerative system to the Companies. What he would like to know was this: Had the Government ascertained what was the proportion of profits derived from trunk lines from town to town, to the profits realised in our towns and cities? The answer was that 500 local messages would be sent to one trunk line message. All the patents, or nearly all the patents, were exhausted, and there was a great opportunity for the Government to obtain control over them. On the other hand, he was informed that the National Telephone Company were extending their operations on such a scale that it would soon be impossible to buy them out. With respect to the cost of the Service, there was much to complain of. He was informed that the cost of telephone communication in Australia was £6 per house; in Sweden only £4 per house, but in England £20 per house.

TELEGRAPHIC FACILITIES.

He would now direct attention to the administration of the Telegraph Department. He had laid it down as a principle that every person in the United Kingdom, whether near to or distant from a great centre of population, should be placed on an equality with the richest of his fellow-countrymen in the towns as regarded the enjoyment of postal and telegraphic facilities and payment for them. He thought

people should not be punished for living in the country ; and that the Post Office Authorities, with a surplus exceeding £3,000,000, and full command of the railways, should no longer punish a man with petty fines, under the name of "portage," for the remoteness of his residence, thus adding yet another incentive to the migration of the rural population into the towns. Further, he contended that subsidies, or guarantees towards the cost of maintaining local telegraph offices, should cease to be exacted from private persons, such as farmers and shopkeepers, in sparsely-peopled parishes, and that in future all telegrams, like all letters, should be delivered free, irrespective of distance.

TELEGRAPH GUARANTEES.

On the subject of guarantees, he had received the following letter from Mr. W. J. Myatt, of Myatt's Hextable Horticultural Company, Swanley, Kent :—

" March 9th, 1893.

" May I, however, suggest as an addition that the present practice of making gentlemen who guarantee telegraph lines and offices liable for any deficit in a given year, notwithstanding the G.P.O. may have made profits in previous years, should be amended by taking in account the previous profits. I, with others, guarantee the Post Office an income of £28 a year on a short telegraph line from Swanley Junction to this place, which has, for two years, turned out profitably, but if from any unforeseen occurrence there should be a loss, it would be very hard upon us. The guarantee extends over seven years from the commencement, and the Department would not put up the line unless we subscribed these onerous terms."

This shabby and rapacious system only brought in £19,000 a year to the Post Office. Although the Post Office realised such an enormous surplus, it was extremely sharp in small bargains with persons who could not help themselves. Mr. G. F. Chambers, of Northfield Grange, Eastbourne, wrote—

" You are not perhaps aware of the extremely shabby trick of the G.P.O. in calculating how a telegraph guarantee is to be satisfied. They only allow outgoing telegrams to reckon, ignoring the fact that incoming telegrams yield earnings which would not be realised but for the existence of the telegraph office which is the subject of the guarantee. . . . Consequent upon the opening in his village of a guaranteed telegraph office, a Liverpool ship-owner established the practice of having telegraphed to him rather for his satisfaction and pleasure, so to speak, a large amount of shipping news, which under the circumstances required neither reply nor acknowledgment. In virtue

this, his clerks at Liverpool spent on his behalf, in telegrams to his residence, which was in Herefordshire, many pounds, while the gentleman in Herefordshire spent only shillings at the rural office. It seems to me grossly unfair that only the local shillings for messages sent outwards should count in relief of the guarantors, and the Liverpool pounds for incoming messages be wholly ignored."

He had questioned the Postmaster General upon this subject, and the right hon. Gentleman had argued that it would be unfair to count the revenue accruing at another place. It appeared, however, to be a clear case for applying the doctrine of "betterment," so much in favour with the right hon. Gentleman's Party. If the establishment of the guaranteed office improved the revenue at other points, surely that fact should be taken into account ; just as, it was contended, the cutting of a new thoroughfare should be taken into account in rating the shopkeepers along the line of it. At all events, this keenness in small bargains contrasted strangely with the wasting of tens of thousands on such contracts as those with Messrs. De La Rue, with the Railway Companies (respecting "service" messages), and for the Calais-Brindisi service.

PORTERAGE.

Another subject of frequent complaint appeared to be the levying of excessive "portage" charges for telegrams when the addressee lived outside a certain radius. In some country districts, peopled by farmers, this charge amounted to a denial of the privilege of telegraphic communication with markets, and the outer world generally. It had been proved that a boy would often earn for the Government perhaps 10s. for "portage" in a morning, while his weekly wage only amounted to 5s. In the following case, however, the writer was a town resident :—

" A5, Exchange Buildings,
Liverpool.

" Dear Sir,—From the enclosed correspondence you will see that my residence is between two and three miles from the G.P.O. The message in question was delivered by a messenger who travelled by omnibus (fare 2d. each way, as I was informed by the messenger), and I was charged 1s. 6d. for this delivery ; so it appears the P.O. made a clear profit of 1s. 2d. on the delivery, besides the charges paid by the sender for the transmission of the message.

" Yours truly,
D. LE ROUGETEL."

Mr. Thomas Heald, solicitor, of Greenfield House, Billinge, near Wigan, said—

“I am glad you are taking action with regard to telegraph messages to villages. I live in the Local Board district of Billinge, of which I am Chairman, and for every telegram received from Orrell, three miles away, we pay 1s. 6d. for portage. We have only one delivery of letters, and none on Sunday. Take another district, Parbold, near here, the same portage is charged; and as to letters, postmen will not deliver them even 20 yards out of their seat unless paid extra for doing so.”

The following letter referred to the same subject. It was from Mr. Alfred Blomfield, of Orange Hall, Gasfield, near Halstead, Essex :—

“I have the misfortune to live a few yards over three miles (by road) from the nearest telegraph office; and although it is little more than half an hour’s walk by the fields, am charged the sum of 1s. 6d. for the delivery of telegrams. I cannot for the life of me see why we should be charged for the delivery at all. If it pays the Postal Department better to deliver the telegrams from the neighbouring town, rather than have a telegraph office in every village, let them do so; but every telegram, like every letter, should be delivered free. If not, those who live half a mile from the office should pay 3d., and those only a few hundred yards 1d., and so on. As it is, we whose business compels us to live in the country have to pay not only for the delivery of our own messages, but we also bear the cost of nearly all the telegrams delivered in the towns. It is in this way: A messenger can easily deliver a telegram here, and return to the office in an hour and a half (for which I am charged 1s. 6d.), and the rest of the day he will be delivering telegrams within the mile circle free. I happened to be in the office the other day and saw the lad take his wages for the week. I noticed that he was paid 7s., or about the same amount as would be charged for delivering three telegrams here, which could easily have been done in six hours. Other farmers are even worse off than I am. A neighbour of mine, although distant from here only about half a mile, by a good hard road, or footpath, cannot have a message delivered under 2s. 6d. There has been a good deal of talk of late about the depopulation of our villages, but this is not the way to make country people feel in touch with the towns. We should much more often get a wire as to the state, say, of the fruit and vegetable market so as to know when to send, and when not to send; but we have to tell our salesmen not to wire unless the matter be very important.”

The Department sometimes, however, caught a Tartar. Thus, the Rev. H. W. Stewart, of Lumley Vicarage, Fence Houses, wrote—

“It may interest you to know that the Post Office for 18 months charged me 1s. portage on telegrams, and, consequently, I had the distance measured. They then *invented* a

new road to my vicarage, going first in the *opposite* direction and then back again. They have now for a few months charged me 6d., without writing to me upon the subject of their decision.”

WORD COUNTING.

Those who loved a hearty laugh ought to be grateful to the Post Office for the never-failing amusement provided for them in its solemn decisions as to the charges to be levied for telegraphing proper names. Some of these might have been laid down by Dogberry himself. But the broad humour of them came out best on comparing them, and endeavouring to trace the common principle on which they had been drawn up. The ground of the decision was in each case wisely kept back. There was an Emperor who declared himself to be above the rules of grammar. But it had been reserved for the British Postmaster General to set himself above the dictates of common sense. He proposed to give a few of the conflicting Rules that had come under his notice. The following was a list of places, the names of which passed as one word:—Breeze Hill, Cabbage Hall, St. Michael’s Hamlet, Sandown Park, Toxteth Park, Druids’ Cross, West Derby, Cressington Park, Fulwood Park, Princess’ Park, Sefton Park, Stanley Park, Little Crosby, and Romney Street. The following counted as two words each:—Dingle Hill, Edge Hill, Low Hill, Mossley Hill, Old Swan, Rice Lane, The Brook, Victoria Park, Grassendale Park, Newsham Park, Shiel Park, Great Crosby, and Knotty Ash. Port Said was, by the Eastern Telegraph Company, counted as one word, in the General Post Office it was counted as two words. The British Postal Authorities counted ironworks as one word, steelworks as two words, 25½ as one word, 25A as two words, 12½ as one word, two-and-half as two words, per cent. as two words, and pro cent. as one word. Pitwood, blueblack, Ashton-on-Ribble, oatmeal, figurehead, coffee-mill, and broadcloth counted as one word; while spoolwood, blackwhite, cargo fleet, toll-end, bonemeal, angerhead, pepper-mill, and tealcloths counted as two words. West Derby counted as two words, West Kirby as one word, some time (ago) as one word, sometime (future) as two words, Madame D’Albany as two words, Madame D’Orsay as one word, fishmarket

as one word, cattlemarket as two words, Edge Hill (Liverpool) as two words, Edge Hill (Warwickshire) as one word. This list could be continued *ad infinitum*. The following letter appeared in *The Standard* :—

"Sir,—In sending a telegram from Kensington to Tulse Hill not many days ago, 'Tulse Hill' was charged as one word. I had occasion to wire to a friend to-night from a Brixton Post Office, where they charged 'Notting Hill' as two words. *Risum tenentis amici?*

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"PERPLEXED.

"June 21."

Mr. W. J. Borrows, of 18, Llanbleddian Gardens, Cardiff, wrote to him—

"I was sending a telegram of 11 words, and my initials 'W. J. B.' The official asked me for 7d. I gave him 6d., crossed out 'W. J. B.' and wrote 'Borrows,' and wondered why they wanted 1½d. for wiring three letters, when they were willing to send seven for 3d."

Any compound word which could not be shown in a dictionary to be a single word was declared to be chargeable as three words. A recent writer in a newspaper said—

"The word 'mother-in-law,' is declared to be chargeable as three words. The writer, who though at present he has not a mother-in-law, looks forward to a time when his position in this respect may be changed, is naturally anxious to know why, to the calamity of this relationship, a tax of the kind should unnecessarily be added. Possibly the frequency with which mothers-in-law figure in domestic telegrams may explain the apparent perverseness of the Department. It will be easily understood that the admission of the word into the privileged class of recognised compounds would involve a serious sacrifice of revenue."

Messrs. G. G. Gilchrist and Co., of 3, Peter Street, Liverpool, wrote—

"A telegram containing the letters 'gpo' in the text can be sent so as to count the combination as one word. If, however, a telegram is sent "Smith gpo Dublin" the abbreviation, as you will see by enclosed letter (from the General Post Office), is chargeable as three words."

Again, "mp" written small was counted as one word, while "M.P." written with capitals was charged as two words. "Upstairs" was charged as one word, and "downstairs" as two words; and "De Vere" was still charged as one word, but "De Vere Gardens" as three words. The Rev. E. Ledger, of Barham Rectory, Claydon, Ipswich, said—

"Five figures, or 914, count as one word in a telegram; but 91A is two words."

The Rev. H. W. Stewart, of Lumley Vicarage, Fence Houses, wrote—

"I have to-day been charged an extra half-penny upon the word 'Notting Hill,' which the Post Office consider two words. The complaint is made upon form T. No. 55, and is thus written by the clerk: "'Notting Hill' counted one;—the hyphen being carefully omitted. I am at a loss to understand the meaning of this charge, as 'Fence-Houses' is always reckoned one word."

MISCELLANEOUS COMPLAINTS.

The following information came from a Post Office *employé* :—

"Telegraph messages handed in at Lothbury for Tokenhouse Yard, less than a dozen yards from that office, are not, as common sense would suggest, delivered thence, but are sent by pneumatic tube to the Central Telegraph Office—12 minutes' walk—thence sent again by tube to the telegraph office in Moorgate Street Buildings, where they are copied, and then delivered."

He would now proceed to offer some suggestions, and to bring forward certain grievances in connection with the Telegraph Service. The words "reply paid" in a telegram should not be charged for. They were transmitted free in Australia, and other Colonies. Incredible as it might appear, there was no direct telegraphic communication between Dover and Calais. A message from Dover to Calais was first wired to London, thence to Paris, and thence to Calais. The result was several hours' delay, for want of a few miles of cable. He had questioned the Postmaster General on this subject in the House, but his reply was of a most discouraging character. St. Martin's-le-Grand would not stir a finger in the business. The following suggestion was so obviously reasonable that one wondered it should be necessary to offer it to the Authorities. Mr. E. H. Courbe, of 4, St. Paul's Place, Canonbury, N., wrote—

"I would suggest that you should add to the list of your proposed reforms a direction to telegraph messengers to ask, when delivering a telegram, whether there will be an answer, and to wait a maximum time, say five minutes, to take back that answer. A case in point occurred to me recently. A boy brought a message to me at the above address, and did not wait. An immediate answer was required, and, at some inconvenience to myself, as I was very busy, I had to go to the nearest station about three-quarters of a mile away. When I got there, at about 8.10 p.m. the office was shut. I then had to go to the Central District Office—about one and a-half miles distant, in order to send my telegram. Now all this might have been saved if the boy had only waited. I

understand they can wait if they like, but it is optional; in fact, it depends upon the taste and fancy of the boy. This seems to me to be absurd."

The Post Office plumed itself on the pains taken to deliver an imperfectly-addressed letter, for which it received 1d. The following was one of numerous complaints as to the neglect of the officials to take similar (or, indeed, any) pains to deliver a telegram, for which at least 6d. was received. The letter was from a gentleman living at Club Moor, Liverpool—

"On Saturday, July 24th, I sent a telegram addressed 'Day c/o Sullivan, 31, Broad Street, London,' from Ranalph Place Office, Liverpool. The message was accepted without demur. When I arrived home, about four hours later, I received a notice from a sub-office, stating that it had not been delivered because there were 'several Broad Streets' in London. I sent an additional address—namely, 'Broad Street, Golden Square'; and for these two words I was charged 6d. 'for re-direction.' By the time the telegram was delivered the person to whom it was sent had left London. I think you will agree with me that this was a most shameful proceeding on the part of the officials in London, as my wire was sent in c/o a well-known tradesman, and by simply turning up a Directory of London they could have instantly ascertained which Broad Street was required. . . . But that is not all. This morning another 6d. was demanded of me. I am now expected to pay for sending the extra two words from Anfield Post Office to Liverpool (two miles), and 6d. is again the charge. This I have refused to pay. I said I would in the public interest put the facts before you; and if you say I should pay, I shall do so."

REPUSAL OF COMPENSATION.

Although the Post Office paid, as justice plainly required, some compensation in case of the miscarriage, owing to the fault of its *employés*, of a letter or parcel, it refused similar compensation in the case of a telegram. Thus, the Rev. J. Phillips Dickson, of Dudleston Vicarage, Ellesmere, Shropshire, wrote—

"Having friends staying here, who were going up to town next morning, and from there abroad, I telegraphed to the livery stables which we are in the habit of using for a carriage to be here at half-past eight, a.m. I took the precaution to put the time in words, not in figures, and therefore paid extra to avoid, as I thought, the possibility of a mistake. The carriage did not arrive until 9.30, and so too late for the express train to town, which caused a waste of some hours, and untold inconvenience to myself and my party, as a result. I drove to the stables—some six miles away—and found the hour put in figures in the telegram, and the time given at 9.30.

"The Department ultimately admitted their error. After considerable correspondence they informed me, 'There is reason to believe the error is attributable to carelessness on the part of a certain telegraphist, whose services have been dispensed with.'"

"I made a claim for the additional expense I had been put to, and which, as a matter of justice, I considered I was entitled to; but, on the ground that there was no fund from which to meet such claims, it was not entertained. I was offered, however, the following very absurd consolation, which, needless to say, I declined:—'It is regretted that, for the reason given in the former letter sent to you, the sum which you claim as compensation cannot be refunded; but as the error appears to have rendered the telegram useless, instructions have been given for the amount prepaid for it to be refunded to you.' I pointed out the unjust and unbusiness-like nature of this treatment, but all to no effect. In a subsequent letter I asked to be informed how it is that loss sustained in the Postal Department can be made good, but loss sustained in the Telegraph Department is ignored. To this apparently simple question I have not been able to obtain an answer. The calm, unbusinesslike way in which such loss and annoyance are brushed aside by the Department is very trying. Under our present system I fear a Postmaster General is a mere mechanical red-tape figure-head, whose occupation of Office is too brief to permit of his instituting material reforms without strong Parliamentary pressure."

TELEGRAPH MONEY ORDERS.

Too often, however, when Parliament encouraged the Department to adopt a reform, much of the expected benefit to the public was intercepted by some pedantic requirement or unconscionable extortion. Thus when the privilege of the telegraphic remittance of money was tardily conceded, it was made to bristle with charges and commissions. A gentleman wrote from Smethwick Hall, Staffordshire—

"Dear Mr. Heaton.—Will you kindly allow me to draw your attention to a matter in connection with the Telegraphic Money Order Service, which appears to me to constitute a grievance. I had occasion to make use of the above facilities to make a remittance of £3 the other day, and paid a commission of 8d. and a 'Telegraph charge' of 6d. (1s. 2d. in all), thinking it would be delivered to the payee as an ordinary telegram would be. I found, after three days' trouble, however, that the expense of the remittance was further increased by a separate and distinct telegram having to be sent to the payee advising that the amount is lying to be claimed at their Post Office. This brings the cost of the remittance of £3 up to 1s. 8d., which seems extortionate. The 'Telegraph charge,' it seems, is simply an intimation to the Postmaster at the other end that a certain sum is to be paid to a certain person, no address being needed, as the remittance is not delivered, nor is any official

notice given that the money is waiting to be claimed. It seems to me that the 'Telegraph charge' should include the notification to the payee that the money awaits him, his address being given by the remitter. I understand that this, or a similar course, has long been in practice in New Zealand.

"H. LINCOLN TANGYE."

In India, and on the Continent, the money was sent with the telegram to the residence of the addressee. This plan not only obviated all delay, but prevented fraud, for it ensured the delivery of the money to the right person.

FURTHER GRIEVANCES.

A correspondent had recently recalled his attention to the rapacious charge (against which he had so often protested) of 2d. instead of 1d. on the receipt given for a telegraphic message. The cost of transmission of the message itself was only 6d., yet a receipt cost 2d. They should bear in mind that a 1d. stamp was sufficient on a receipt for £100 or £1,000. When a telegraph clerk made a mistake in transmission, and an important word in the message was thereby rendered unintelligible, the Department charged for a repetition of the entire despatch, instead of charging for the undecipherable word. What would he said of a cobbler who charged the price of a pair of new boots for putting on a patch? Sir Arthur Blackwood, in a recent article, was particularly severe towards those members of the public who objected to some of the established charges for telegraphic transmission. The following communication from a gentleman well acquainted with the subject would, he feared, once more stir up his wrath:—

"If a member of the public addresses a telegram to, say, Harrison, Coleman Street, London, E.C., the name will be traced in the Directory, and the message delivered. If it were addressed Harrison, 3 Coleman Street, E.C., and Harrison's were at 2, it would be charged 6d. for 'unattended address,' though well known. Thus he who first saves a ½d. gives extra trouble, and has his telegram delivered for nothing; in the other case an additional ½d. is incurred, and the Post Office charge 6d. for taking a telegram next door. On the Continent, as you are aware, the names of the streets are one with the word street. Thus 'Koenigstrasse' (King Street). These words, rightly one on the Continent, are charged on the receiver as two. If the receiver will not pay, messages coming after will not be delivered to him until he pays an inherently unjust charge. This gives rise to much indignation, and rightly so. Words that are by the officials counted one in Italy, Belgium, Holland,

Germany, &c., ought in equity to be counted one here."

He had this information from a postal official, and it could be relied upon as accurate. He appealed to the Postmaster General to cease worrying the public with these petty Ordinances and Rules. He asked him to take a broad and liberal view of the public requirements.

THE POST OFFICE.

Resolution 18.

"That a sum, not exceeding £5,140,175, be granted to Her Majesty, to complete the sum necessary to defray the Charge which will come in course of payment during the year ending on the 31st day of March 1894, for the Salaries and Expenses of the Post Office Services, the Expenses of Post Office Savings Banks, and Government Annuities and Insurances, and the Collection of the Post Office Revenue."

THE SWOLLEN ESTIMATES.

*Mr. HENNIKER HEATON said, it was with no light heart he rose to criticise the Post Office Estimates, but he could not consent to remain silent when there were submitted to them these outrageous and shameless demands of the officials. Three years ago the postmen commenced an agitation for increased pay, and Mr. Raikes, who did him the honour of consulting him, agreed to give them the enormous sum of £100,000 increase. The result of that concession was that every official, high and low, claimed an increase, and to-day they were asked for £600,000, of which £420,000 was for increased salaries. There were 70,000 permanent officials in the Post Office, and this divided would give £6 extra per head. No one would accuse him of want of sympathy for, or of liberality towards, public servants. But he was sure that hon. Members generally, even those who were least disposed to pry narrowly into the details of Public Service expenditure, had, like himself, been staggered to find that they were asked to grant a total increase of more than £600,000 on the three Postal Votes; and they were told by the Secretary to the Treasury that this increase in expenditure was far more than "could be hoped to be met by growth of Revenue." The Chancellor of the Exchequer was equally astonished. He said, in his Budget speech—

"As to the Post Office expenditure, that is an abyss which no plummet can sound."

Now, they would like to hear from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and from the Postmaster General how they intended to meet the difficulty. They confessed they had not seen the end of this increase of expenditure. What had the public got in comparison? Some beggarly concessions valued at £16,000, as against £422,000 granted for salaries. It was idle to pretend that this augmentation was inconsiderable. It would be found that the percentage of salaries to total Revenue had risen from 34 in Mr. Raikes' time (three years ago) to 39. They were, in fact, paying about £500,000 more for salaries than in 1890.

A FINANCIAL RULE.

They were told that much of this was an "automatic" increase. But he ventured to lay it down as an elementary maxim of Post Office finance, or of any other finance, that an automatic increase of expenditure must never exceed, as in this case, the automatic increase of Revenue. He had no wish to be accused of want of liberality towards the servants of the Post Office in the matter of wages, but the people of the country, who had to bear this burden, ought also to be considered. The proposed increase practically meant the addition of 1d. to the Income Tax. The normal increase of the Postal Revenue was equal to £200,000 a year, but the increased demand in the Estimates of this year was equal to three years' normal increase of Revenue. It was useless, however, to expect to cope with the question unless both sides of the House co-operated to make it one of a non-Party character. He repeated, that the automatic increase of expenditure of the Post Office should not exceed the automatic increase of Revenue. It was not a popular thing to resist the demands of the Post Office officials, but he thought the question of the increased demand ought now to be dealt with. It was said that the money given to the officials was not fairly divided, and that some got more than their share while others got less. Under those circumstances, he thought the Postmaster General would have been well advised if he had appointed a Committee of Inquiry into the matter.

AN ANGLO-AMERICAN PARCEL POST.

He proposed at this point to set out various suggestions for the improvement of the Postal Service, and to quote a few of the letters which he had received in support of such suggestions. Thousands of business men were asking, indignantly, why they had no Anglo-American Parcel Post. For a good many years he had been trying to get a Parcel Post established with the United States, but in vain. Although they had a Parcel Post to nearly all parts of the civilised world, they had none to the United States, their natural ally; and yet the Americans did 50 per cent. of their foreign trade with us. Who was to blame? The American and British Governments threw the responsibility on one another. The late Postmaster General, to justify his Department, invited him to move for the Correspondence, and he did so. It showed an utter want of the qualities required for such a negotiation on the part of the British officials. Their attitude could only be characterised as childish, and their objections as trifling and uncalled for. Judging from the American documents in this Return, he would undertake to settle the matter satisfactorily in 30 days. It was a significant fact that the United States, though unable to effect an arrangement with us, had established a Parcel Post with seven or eight of our Colonies, including Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, British Honduras, &c.

RE-DIRECTION.

He would now say a few words about the harsh rule under which, while letters were re-directed free, a charge was made for the re-direction of all other matter. To show the spirit in which it was interpreted, he might mention that the word "letter" was held not to include a letter-card. Here was a complaint—

"9 Bedford Street, Belfast,

"8th June, 1892.

"I venture to address you with regard to the re-direction of postcards, although I daresay you are probably aware of the fact that, whilst the charge for re-direction of letters has been abolished, postcards, book packets, &c. are still liable to re-direction charge when the second address is not within the same free delivery as the original. This information has been supplied to me by the Post Office here in connection with the surcharge of a postcard delivered at my house a few days since. It may, of course, be quite reasonable that for the

present book packets as well as post parcels should be charged for, but it does seem to be a rather miserable reservation that postcards should not be placed in the same category as letters."

Men accustomed to the plain, broad principles of trade could not put up with these pettifogging distinctions. Here was a typical protest—

"From Charles Moon,
"Turn Bridge Mill,
"Huddersfield.

"Having carried business on at King's Mill for about 20 years, I removed some few hundred yards to this Mill about one and a-half years ago. I gave notice to the Post Office here of my removal. I have been engaged extensively in business in this town for close on 30 years, and my name being rather uncommon, and perhaps not another family of the same name in the borough, the letter sorters could in one-half the time they occupy themselves in re-directing halfpenny stuff which is mainly refused, put these amongst my batch of letters. You will easily understand, my name having got into a number of Directories, I have a large number of Prospectuses, Circulars, &c. which are simply no earthly use to me whatever, and I have had to begin and refuse these re-directed things, and I find I am occasionally refusing invoices, &c. of importance. I thought the Post Office, being a Public Institution, would be governed by common sense and for the public benefit, but under Radical control I find it is adopting fads which are against the true interest of the public."

This rule was specially odious in the eyes of mercantile men; and one of them dealt with the history of it as follows:—

"From Mr. Leonard Dobbie,
"23, Kilmaurs Road,
"Edinburgh.

"Last July, as you are, of course, aware, the charge for re-direction of letters and their delivery at another address in any part of the Kingdom was 'subject to regulations,' after proclamation over the length and breadth of the country, abolished. The wording of *The Postal Guide* as to re-direction was altered to suit this change, but at the same time all reference to the new address, in cases of re-direction, being within the same postal delivery, was removed. Then two months later, as regards Edinburgh, and without a single word of warning, a charge was imposed on delivery, the same as the original prepaid postage, of all communications other than letters, re-directed and delivered at a new address, *even although the letter was situated within the same postal delivery*, and in my own case, even when 'after removal,' my new permanent address was only four doors off from my old one, and in the same street. The much-lauded 'concession' made with the right hand concerning letters was thus more than counterbalanced by the hole-and-corner withdrawal by the left hand of a privilege concerning all other communications of many years' standing, which, after all, is only a small privilege compared with what other civilised countries enjoy. I respectfully submit to you, however, that it is a disgrace to the British Post Office."

The trick was exposed in greater detail by another correspondent, who said—

"Letters, postcards, news, books, commercial papers, and samples, coming from a country of the Union, can, of course, be re-directed free. Until the 31st May, 1892, free re-direction was applicable to *all* postal articles, provided that it was effected by means of a servant of the Department, and that the new address lay within the delivery of the same office that the old one did. For this purpose the whole of the London District counted as within the delivery of the same office. On the 28th May, 1892, directions appeared in *The Post Office Circular* to the effect that on and after the 1st June letters would be re-directed free, but that the usual charges would be maintained in the cases of all other articles, with a temporary exception in favour of all such as were already the subjects of application for re-direction under the old rules, which exception was to last a year. *As* applicants who had already given notice of removal received their newspapers, &c., without charge, for a year within the same delivery. The limit of the exception held good for articles except parcels, in favour of which that which had been a temporary exception was confirmed as an established rule. This was some time in the latter half of 1892. Hence the present Rules allow free re-direction for all letters, and a localised, limited one for parcels."

Again, a gentleman connected with a well-known firm gave a case of glaring injustice—

"From J. Schweppe and Co., Limited,
"126, London Road, Liverpool.
"22nd June, 1893.

"The writer has been in the Westgate Huddersfield, and the difference between the numbers 12 and 27 is that one is very little higher up on the other side. If we had put no number on the letter it would have been delivered. We have acknowledged the Postmaster's letter, and told him we think it a gross abuse of a Regulation meant to meet quite different circumstances than those of a well-known tradesman moving his business in a *small street*."

REGISTRATION.

He now passed to the cheeseparer rule which, by the exaction of a high fee, prevented the registration of millions of letters. It was to be regretted that the Postal Authorities had fixed so high a charge as 2d. for the registration of a letter. Out of the total of 1,767½ millions of letters posted in 1892 only 12,000,000 — or 1 in 417 — were registered. With a 1d. fee this number would be at least trebled, and the heavy loss in stolen postal orders, to say nothing of the temptation to the *employés*, would be done away with. Let the House hear what a correspondent had pithily said on this head—

"The registration question is also of commercial importance. If we had 1d. registrations, and each letter registered per head, the office would gain gross £63,000: as it is, registration is at a standstill, while robbery goes ahead."

Here was another illustration of the disfavour in which the very idea of registration seemed to be held at the Post Office—

"From Herbert Bramley and Son,

"6, Paradise Square, Sheffield,

"18th August, 1893.

"We beg to draw your attention to the Regulation laid down in *The Post Office Guide*, page 11, paragraph 4, for the registration of letters, which runs as follows:—Every article to be registered must be given to an agent of the Post Office, and a receipt obtained for it; and it must on no account be dropped into a letter box. If, contrary to this rule, an article marked "registered" be dropped into a letter box, it will, if directed to any place in the United Kingdom, be liable to a registration fee of 8d., less any amount prepaid for registration, instead of the ordinary fee of 2d." And to give you an example of the working of this particular regulation when a "registered" letter is posted against the rule: On Monday last, the 14th instant, our office boy, by mistake, posted a "registered" letter marked "registered" duly stamped with the registration fee of 2d., and 1d. for ordinary letter postage, in the usual way, by dropping it with other letters into the box at the Sheffield General Post Office; and, although our firm is well-known at the Post Office, and the envelope in which the letter was enclosed bore our full names and address on the back, the letter was surcharged 6d. Had the letter been posted without having had the word "registered" on it, or with only a 1d. stamp on it as an ordinary letter, it would have been duly forwarded without surcharge, or even if the letter had been posted unstamped and not marked "registered" the surcharge would only have been 2d."

THE PATTERN POST.

Among the Regulations which seemed to have been ingeniously devised for the express purpose of worrying trade was that fixing the minimum of the Pattern or Sample Post at 1d. A book-packet weighing two ounces might be sent for $\frac{1}{2}$ d., but a sample weighing two ounces cost 1d. An enterprising manufacturer, who desired to scatter broadcast small shreds of linen as patterns, had thus to face an expenditure for postage of nearly four guineas per 1,000 shreds. He naturally shrank from submitting to such extortion, and refrained from pushing his trade. On this subject, a valued correspondent (Mr. J. H. Rawlins, of 15, Kelvin Grove, Liverpool) wrote—

"The restoration of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. sample post to the world-wide $\frac{1}{2}$ d. which we paid for two

ounces for a whole year from 1870 to 1871 is necessary for trade purposes. It is not quantity or weight that is the main object in sending samples, and two ounces are generally ample. At present, a two-ounce sample sent to the nearest English town costs as much as to the Pacific."

And Messrs. Richardson, Tee, Rycroft, & Co., manufacturers, 3, Portland Street, Manchester, said—

"By the same post we received the two letters enclosed [orders for linen goods]. Both were surcharged, on the ground that, having a pattern attached, they became liable either to the full letter-rate, or to the pattern-post rate, the lowest of which is 1d. Our contention is that the small pattern attached to an order is an essential part of that order, and cannot by any stretch make it into a letter. And that it cannot be subject to pattern post, because it is not a sample sent to induce a purchase, but merely a description in an order. One of the enclosed orders is a form, containing the printed name and address of a firm, and the words, "1 piece 48-inch apron linen to pattern 8d.—1s. 4d." It was posted in an open envelope, with a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. stamp. The envelope is marked "Liable to letter-rate pattern—1d." The other order is a similar one, and the envelope is similarly marked. In my opinion, it never occurred to the official gentlemen who framed the Post Office Regulations that anybody would wish to enclose a sample when ordering goods, and, consequently, no provision was made for such a case. The remedy, obviously, is to extend the privilege of the Pattern Post to the enclosing of patterns with orders."

Finally, Mr. A. J. Tonkin, Park Street, Bristol, wrote—

"When you are successful in getting your Committee to revise the Postal Regulations in the public interest, will you try and get them to include traders' samples of materials at circular rates? At present, a trader selling paper of any description, or cardboards, can send samples by $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate, and print prices on. But if it be a linen—as pattern enclosed—or a woollen material, it is not allowed this privilege. It seems the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate may be extended to fabrics with advantage to all parties."

"REGISTERED" NEWSPAPERS.

It was impossible to contemplate with patience the effects of the Regulations respecting the registration of newspapers. In order that a publication might be "registered," and thus become transmissible by post at the cheap $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate, two 17th century conditions must, amongst others, be complied with—

"1. The publication must consist wholly, or in great part, of political or other news, or of articles relating thereto, or to other current topics, with or without advertisements.

"2. It must be printed and published in the United Kingdom, and in numbers at intervals of not more than seven days."

Both of these absurd Rules, based upon a legislative enactment, would long ago have been abolished, with the newspaper Stamp Duty, the tax on paper, and other hateful imposts, if the Departmental Chiefs had only taken a firm stand on the question with the Treasury. The effect of them was to place a formidable obstacle in the path of those who disseminated useful and entertaining information in larger proportion than accounts of current events. A paper consisting wholly of market prices was, in effect, subsidised, while a religious, scientific, or educational periodical was fined at each appearance. Many proprietors of periodicals actually padded their columns with bald discussions of "current topics," so as to become qualified for registration. Thus the editor of *The British and Colonial Druggist* said—

"You may, perhaps, be amused to hear that, when special issues of this journal take place, we are obliged to increase the weight of each copy by about two ounces, in order that it may go at the newspaper rate. And, although this was brought to the notice of the Post Office officials by me years ago, the Regulation which compels this still continues."

Again, Messrs. Osear Sutton & Co., of Preston, said—

"It is necessary to take out the tiny tissue paper pattern that is given as a supplement once a month with *The Queen* to prevent surcharge. It is stated on the front page of *The Queen*, 'Postage without pattern ½d., with pattern, ¾d. or 5d.'"

Again—

"4, The Lees,

Folkestone.

"Dear Sir,—Another absurdity is, exacting a postage of 1d. on a monthly periodical, however small, because it is published monthly, instead of weekly. A little paper weighing only 1 oz. if it be monthly is subjected to double the impost made upon that lumbering weekly paper, *The Field*. Now, both the foregoing instances appear to be so ridiculous and devoid of any reasonable support, that I trust you will be able to squeeze them in amongst the many reforms you are endeavouring to obtain for us. When I once wrote to Sir Arthur Blackwood, to point out the inconsistency of the charge as between the weekly and monthly periodicals, I could get no explanation, beyond confirming the fact

JOSEPH ALLEN.

"J. Henniker Henton, Esq., M.P."

Once more. Mr. J. Williamson, of 290, High Street, Lincoln, October 17, 1890, said—

"I venture to trouble you with this short statement of a monstrous injustice and absurdity in a small way. I supply to the Braintree Reading Room, as per enclosed wrapper, eight

newspapers, and *Tit-Bits*, which I now for the first time discover to be not registered for transmission as a newspaper. These nine publications were in one wrapper. The four penny stamps cover the postage of the eight newspapers, and the ½d. stamp was to cover the *Tit-Bits*, which weighs under 2 oz. But on delivery the Post Office charges 6d. (sixpence) over and above the prepayment, because the *Tit-Bits* is not registered as a newspaper, and they say should not be in the same packet as newspapers, although, as stated before, it is actually within the weight. If done up separately, it is carried and delivered by the Post Office for the ½d. Therefore, the Post Office prefers the trouble of sorting and carrying and delivering two packets instead of one for the same remuneration—namely, 4½d. This is, surely, an outrageous piece of officialism and red-tape."

And, lastly, Mr. Mayson M. Beeton, of 39 and 40 Bedford Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C., December 6, 1890, wrote—

"I take the liberty of drawing your attention to the anomaly which exists in the charges made by the Post Office in the carriage of monthly as compared with weekly publications. The point is probably quite well known to you, and I think all agree that in any Bill for Post Office Reform the equalisation of rates should be one of the first things to be dealt with."

HARSH NEWSPAPER RULES.

It had been pointed out how jealously the officials watched for anything resembling a "communication in the nature of a letter" on the cover of a newspaper. In one case the matter of fact details, "published every Saturday: One penny," "Offices: 2, Bridge Street: Works: Bankside, Darwen," were printed on the cover; and for bearing this announcement, each newspaper was pronounced liable to full letter postage. Surely absurdity could hardly be carried farther. When a man paid letter rate, he paid for the privacy of his communication—there was no other consideration for the extra charge. In this case there was no attempt at concealment, and the matter printed was an essential part of the contents. The fine could not be regarded as a punishment intended to keep the address on the cover free from other matter, for it was distinctly divided from the space reserved for the address by two ruled lines. Moreover, the sender of a newspaper was already permitted to write or print on the cover "a reference to any page of, or place in, the newspaper." It seemed unreasonable that one might write on the cover: "See round seventeen of 'Great Fight,' top of

p. 4," or "See Gladstone's peroration, bottom of p. 5"; and not "published every Saturday; one penny." Again, the "name and address of the sender" might, according to *The Post Office Guide*, be inscribed on the cover. In this case the publisher was the sender, yet he was not allowed to add his address. Into this trap many an unlucky publisher must have fallen. These were the particulars of the case referred to—

"Darwen, Aug. 15th, 1892.

"Dear Mr. Heaton,—We are having some bother with the Postal Authorities, and I told the Postmaster here that I intended communicating with you. The Post Office object to the enclosed wrapper. They say we have no right to put on the second and third lines, that it is contrary to the Rules, and that they must be obliterated. There may be an objection to the second line, but to the third any objection seems monstrous. Will you kindly tell me if the Post Office objection is fatal!

C. J. L. ABBOT.

The Darwen Post.

Published every Saturday, One Penny. Offices : 2, Bridge Street ; Work : Bankside, Darwen."

The postage on newspapers sent to the Continent was a serious check on the circulation of the larger journals. Thus Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son, of 186, Strand, London, W.C., on the 25th February, 1890, wrote—

"Sir,—Our charge for supplying *The Times* on the Continent complete is £1 13s. per quarter, or with portion cut away to bring it under 4oz., £1 9s."

The next complaint needed no introduction. It would be seen that the Post Office Authorities regarded an old handbill, used for a newspaper wrapper, as "a communication in the nature of a letter," and fined the recipient 2d. Hitherto people had used such scraps for the sake of economy. The Department discouraged such thrifty notions, and required a new special wrapping sheet in all cases :—

"S. Mark's Rectory,

Strandtown.

Belfast.

June 7th, 1892.

"Dear Sir,—Knowing the good work you have done and still hope to do in connection with Postal Reform. I enclose you proofs of the petty annoyances and blackmailing we are obliged to accept at the hands of official incompetency. About 10 days ago I sent a newspaper to a lady resident in Frederick Street (or Place), Edinburgh. I used as a wrapper for this paper an old and quite out of date handbill, which I took from a waste paper basket. You will note on the companion handbill now enclosed that the

date of this emergency wrapper runs between March the 26th and March the 30th, 1892. I also enclose the piece of the actual wrapper used by me, and used afterward by the Edinburgh Postal Authorities as a means for extracting a fine from the lady who received the paper. I do not suppose this charge has been legal, but I imagine similar fines have been and still may be imposed."

This was the formal letter condemning the use of handbills—

"From Sir S. A. Blackwood,

General Post Office, London,

15th June, 1892.

"Madam,—With reference to your application of the 12th instant, I beg leave to inform you that the Rule to which your attention has been drawn applies as much to printing or writing on the inside of the wrapper as to printing or writing on the outside; and the fact of the printed side being turned inwards only makes the wrapper more difficult to examine. The use of handbills as wrappers for newspapers is clearly contrary to the Rule, and renders the newspapers liable to charge.

"I am, Madam,

Your obedient Servant,

S. A. BLACKWOOD, Secretary.

"Mrs. M. Hamilton."

EMBOSSED STAMPS.

As the elephant's trunk could be used to lift a tree-trunk, or to pick up a pin, so the Post Office, which netted millions of profits, did not disdain to reap a little extra from small fines. When an envelope, or cover, bearing an embossed stamp, had been spoilt, one was not allowed to cut out the stamp and paste it on fresh paper. Thus the Post Office was in the invidious position of accepting money for a service which it eventually refused to perform. But they could cut a stamp from one telegram form and use it for another. This grievance was succinctly dealt with by Mr. J. Loder, bookseller, stationer, and printer, who wrote from Woodbridge, on March 6, 1890—

"Here is another official piece of nonsense. I spoil an envelope—I cut the stamp off and use it on another, and the recipient is fined 2d. Good, is it not?"

Of course, to the official mind such a rule was the perfection of wisdom and expediency. Thus Mr. Sifton, of the General Post Office, London, said, on 26th May, 1893—

"In reply to your letter of the 19th instant, I am directed to inform you that the Post Office Act of 1870 (Sec. 19), provides that it shall not be lawful to affix to a letter, by way of prepayment of postage, an embossed stamp cut out from the cover on which it was embossed, and the Department has, therefore, no power to

authorise the alteration which you desire. The Regulation was made with a view of preventing the use a second time of embossed stamps which might accidentally have escaped obliteration during transmission through the post, and it no doubt serves a useful purpose."

After this, Mr. Sifton might be recommended to imitate the Judge who never gave reasons for his decisions. Another case of hardship to a poor man and meanness on the part of the Post Office was this: On September 30, 1892, M. bought two halfpenny newspaper wrappers from the Post Office for 1½d. He found he had no use for them, and, wishing to send a letter, he cut the two halfpenny stamps from the wrappers and pasted them on to a letter. This was against Postal Regulations, and the receiver of the letter was fined 2d.—namely, 1d. postage and 1d. fine, and, in addition, the Postal Authorities stamped over and destroyed the ½d. stamps for which the sender had paid the Government 1½d. Mr. E. A. Phipson, Selby Oak, Birmingham, also wrote—

"It really requires a lifetime to find out all the tricks which the ingenious officials of the Post Office take such pains in devising to entrap the innocent public. Only to-day I discovered that if a letter is sent in a newspaper wrapper the embossed stamp does not count. The letter-press on the wrappers is a masterpiece of cryptography, but the most natural and common-sense meaning is that, if a letter is enclosed, full letter rate must be paid. Otherwise, why does it not state that the original stamp is not available? Yesterday I received the return half of a reply postcard with no less than two postmarks stamped on it at the receiving office so that only a small part of it was available for the reply. That this is an intentional device to limit the space is evident from the fact that no postmark was placed (over the writing) at the receiving office here."

The following insistence on the letter, while transgressing the spirit of the law, would revolt a special pleader; and the fair complainant's censure was thoroughly deserved. The letter was from Miss Isabella M. Cooper, of All Hallow's Mission House, 127, Union Street, Borough, S.E.—

"I wrapped up a parcel of magazines in a halfpenny wrapper, and as I wished them to go by parcel post I added 2½d., and took them into a post office. The officials there and in another refused to count the halfpenny on the wrapper as anything, and required the whole 3d. to be in adhesive stamps. I wrote to the General Post Office; the reply was, that was the rule. What possible difference can it make to the Post Office; for the same stamps are used for letters, books, and parcels? And the use of a wrapper is a convenient way of doing

up some parcels. I trust your efforts to make the Post Office Authorities more reasonable will be successful."

With respect to the lady's question—"What possible difference can it make to the Post Office?" he pointed out that it derived some profit from mistakes of this kind, made by the unwary. Here was another case from Dr. John Brown, of Burwood House, Baeup, June 3, 1893, who wrote on the same subject—

"The following occurred a few days ago:—My brother-in-law lost a boy, and wrote a letter to convey the sad intelligence of his death. Having no penny postage in the house, and the Post Office being closed, he cut out a penny stamp from a letter card which he had, and gummel it on. I was charged 2d., because it is not 'lawful to affix' a stamp from an embossed stamp. It is manifestly dishonest to charge me 2d. when the Post Office have already been paid 1d. My brother-in-law was ignorant of the law, and I was mulcted in 2d., but I refused the letter and wrote to my brother-in-law, and had a reply next morning. The Post Office Authorities had the pleasure of taking the letter back for nothing."

FINES.

"CLOSED" BOOKPACKETS.

He had now arrived at the subject of the innumerable petty fines imposed for slight breaches of the Post Office Regulations. Perhaps there was no Regulation which earned so little revenue and so much hatred for the Department as that prescribing a fine where a corner of the stamp or of the cover on a bookpost packet happened to adhere to the paper enclosed. Here was a specimen of the letters sent him on this subject. It was from Mr. A. H. Maxwell, of Glenlair, Dalbeattie, N.B.—

"A parcel of tracts addressed to a relative per bookpost, and weighing under 6oz., bears the following postal imprints:—'More to pay, above 4 oz. letter rate, 2d.' and 'closed contrary to regulations, N.P.R.' Now the whole affair is a falsehood. The packet is in a wrapper, and open at both ends—nothing whatever is closed. I have often in a newspaper wrapper put the stamp so that it might help to keep the wrapper on, and never heard that such adhesion was a closure; but you can judge for yourself the inference drawn. A book-packet becomes a letter, apparently because the penny stamp is partly outside the wrapper. I do not think I have ever met with a more odious attempt at imposition."

The Postmaster General seemed to think it was sufficient to urge that a Treasury Minute prescribed the fine. But the Treasury always consulted the Post

Office in such matters, and, if he chose, he could get this and many other irritating Rules abolished to-morrow. Again, Messrs. F. Charles & Co., Advertising Agents, sent a similar case of meanness—

"The following may interest you as a piece of absurdity on the part of the Post Office, which is probably unequalled in any civilised country. We get daily a large number of newspapers, among other things a copy of *The Hull Daily News*, a little halfpenny paper. In the copy delivered to us to-day, probably through hasty work in doing up, or through a damp letter bag, or by the stamp of the Post Office, one corner, measuring about a quarter of an inch, of the wrapper, slightly adhered to the newspaper itself. It was, therefore, tendered to us with the charge of 2d., as not being open to inspection. A more grotesque and wilfully malicious action on the part of the Post Office we cannot imagine. Assuming, the paper being a file copy, it were taken in by us, we should have to pay, plus the 1d. already on it, four times that sum. The chief feature of interest, however, is, that this shows that the Post Office Authorities go a long way out of their way to create difficulties, and go to an immense needless expense in the course of the year; firstly, in looking through every newspaper to see that in no case the stamp stands on the paper to the extent of a 16th of an inch, or that the wrapper of a ½d. newspaper, of which thousands are posted at a time, has not been crookedly folded to the extent of a 16th of an inch, and thus adheres to the paper; and, finally, it cannot but create dissatisfaction on the part of a sender and receiver, and all for what purpose? Simply because the Post Office are too lazy, if they want to inspect the paper, to inspect it by putting the 16th part of a finger against the little corner which adheres to the paper, and thus raising it, and gaining the inspection they want."

Again, Joseph Peacock, 31 Parliament Hill Road, Hampstead, London, N.W., on March 15, 1893, wrote—

"I recently received a single copy of *The Scottish Leader*, containing the announcement of the death of an old friend, and for which you will observe I was charged 3d. in addition to the ½d. stamp put on by the sender. I called at the North West District Post Office to ascertain why this extra charge was made, and was informed that it was because the ½d. stamp was affixed partly to the wrapper and partly to the newspaper, thus closing it against inspection and making it liable to double the letter rate. This does seem a very vexatious regulation."

OTHER FINES.

He would now give illustrations of the nice distinctions drawn by the official who prescribed to the various postmasters what fines should be levied. He thought he had cured the Post Office Authorities of the habit of fining the public for politeness, such as the use of the words "please," or "esteemed" (order) in

book-post matter. However, he had received the following complaint, which showed them to be incorrigible:—"Nearest can do to order" at the foot of an invoice would go for a halfpenny postage. "Nearest we can do to your order" at the foot of an invoice was "of the nature of a letter," and required 1d. postage, or was surcharged. "Why do the Post Office tax pronouns?" he was asked. He was unwilling to add a word to this pathetic inquiry.

DEFICIENT POSTAGE.

Another Draconic Ordinance was the one providing that double the deficiency should be exacted from the receiver of an insufficiently paid letter. Being unable to punish the real offender, the sender, the postal officials visited his negligence on the innocent receiver. So the Arab in the proverb, having been beaten by his master, revenged himself by kicking a stray dog, which, being afraid to retaliate, bit a passing child. There could be no justification for levying more than the actual deficiency. The following related to this subject:—

"Dear Sir,—As you are the recognised champion of sufferers by Post Office extortion, I hope you will soon take up the question of the unjust practice of charging over-weight double deficiency. This morning I received a letter from Christiania, the weight of which is ½ oz. plus 3-40 oz. I, the innocent receiver, am charged 5d. for the neglect of the real culprit (the sender) to affix an additional 20 öre stamp (value 2½d.). I cannot be expected to spend an additional 1d. on a foreign postcard to demand this over-charge of 5d. from the party who has let me in for it, particularly as she is my wife's aunt, who sends me the formal announcement of her daughter's approaching marriage with a young captain in the Norwegian Army. I should, perhaps, willingly pay the Post Office 2½d. for this interesting news, but why 5d.? The system of overcharging doubly for deficiency ought to be put a stop to, or the penalty laid on the real offender.

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Yours very truly, —"

"The surcharges on letters for the U.S.A. are very irritating. We have to pay some by every mail—sometimes 4s. 6d. on a single letter. Moreover a 1d. inland registration fee and a ½d. inland ½-oz. trade-price circular rate interest us in particular."

He was quite willing to agree to a fine of ½d. on inland letters, and 1d. on foreign letters, but thought it monstrous to charge double the deficiency; for, say there was 1s. short, the fine would be 2s. Every effort was made to increase a fine when one had to be paid. Colonel

Clementi, of 1, Mornington Avenue, West Kensington, January 19, 1893, wrote—

“The letter, the cover of which I enclose, was just over-weight; the deficient postage was, therefore, 20 pfngs. But how the Post Office can turn 20 pfng. into 2½d., and so charge 5d. for delivery of the letter, I cannot understand. The result is that the Post Office make, and I am defrauded of, something over 1d. by their method of calculating exchange. Surely it is time that this system of punishing receivers of letters for the errors, inadvertent or otherwise, of the writers of them, should be abolished.”

No mercy was shown in fining the recipients of newspapers insufficiently stamped. The Department would fain suppress periodical literature altogether. Thus W. H. Everett and Son, Salisbury Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C., wrote on March 28, 1892—

“Whenever by accident a newspaper gets through without the ½d. stamp being affixed it is mysteriously transformed into a book and double the letter rate surcharged, so that we frequently have to return to our customers from 8 to 20 times the amount for which originally the Post Office were willing to transmit it. We have pugged away on this question for years, the only result being that we learn that when the proprietors attend to register a newspaper they sign an agreement in which a clause is inserted that this course shall be adopted in case of omission to prepay. Any refusal to sign would of course mean that the paper would not be registered. Consequently, we have to suffer, although we are no parties to this unfair compact.”

POSTCARDS.

One of the most obstinately persistent postal perversities was the dead set made at all kinds of “halfpenny business,” as it was elegantly called. This was probably connected with the Secretary’s mistaken belief that there was a loss on all such business. Not content with refusing to Englishmen the privilege enjoyed by foreigners of sending any card of the proper size through the post with a ½d. stamp on it, the Authorities had drawn up a bewildering list of 46 different charges for postcards, the smallest being ¾d. for a single card. The term “halfpenny postcard” was, in fact, a misnomer in this country: our Post Office knew of a ¾d. postcard (the smallest and dearest in the world), but nothing so vulgar as a ½d. could be tolerated. When postage stamps were introduced, the clerks of the Department formally remonstrated against the indignity of being required to sell these

tiny adhesive labels, at 1d. each, across a counter, “like any common grocer or draper.” One would have expected this wealthy Administration, whose thousands of croupiers were raking in gold for it by millions, would have disdained to wring an extra farthing from a poor man or woman applying for a postcard. But a corporation had neither a nose to be pulled nor a conscience to be pricked. The following letters might here be read:—

“Last year 217,000,000 cards were delivered, of which thick and thin were half and half. The one weighs 4 lbs. for every 1,000, and the other about thrice that weight, and the average will be about 8 lbs. The size is the smallest of 20 offices in various countries. The actual weight of paper in the 217,000,000 cards, at 8 lbs. per 1,000, is close on 1,750,000 lbs., which, at 3d. per lb., is about £52,500. But the sum charged over postage at ¾d. for every 10 will be found to be over £66,000, or treble for the small cost of printing large sheets with the stamp, &c. It is a very large margin. The paper is, or was, entirely supplied from Germany, and the thick cards will be found on burning them, as I have done, in a platinum crucible, to contain 22½ per cent. of china clay. The thin cards are less ‘loaded,’ as it is termed in the trade.”

Mr. R. D. Williams, of Bristol, wrote—

“May I draw your attention to the fact that postcards are only obtainable in tens and at an extra charge of ¾d. or 1 per 10. This is a great hardship on poor people, to whom even the paper and envelope of a letter is an object. These cost 1d. stamp 1d.—2d.; 10 postcards, 5½d. Therefore, it is better, from a poor man’s view, to buy an envelope, piece of paper, and stamp, though one postcard, value 55d., would be sufficient.”

PRIVATE POSTCARDS.

Formerly many stationers brought their sheets of cards to be stamped as postcards (paying the Government the face value of the stamps, and a charge for stamping), and then sold these postcards to the public at lower rates than those fixed for the sale of the official postcards. As the Department made a profit on its postcards, the sale of stationers postcards was stopped by the simple process of increasing the charge for stamping them. Now, if the stationers had a right to sell their cards, the Department was clearly acting unworthily in depriving them of that right by a trick of this kind. A letter on the subject came from *The Midland Counties Herald Office, Birmingham*—

"February 27, 1891.

"Until the Postmaster General reduced the price of quantities of postcards issued by the Post Office the Inland Revenue Department printed 'private cards' at 9s. per gross of boards—that is per 6,048 cards, as 42 cards are printed on each board (42 by 14 equals 6,048). But simultaneously with the announcement of reducing the price of postcards issued by the Department, the Inland Revenue charge for printing 'private cards' was raised from 9s. per 144 boards (a gross) to 15s., a most monstrous charge, as we trust we shall be able to show you, and this has practically put a stop to the printing of 'private cards.' We are large printers, and we do good work, and we are prepared to guarantee that we would print official postcards sent to us in quantities at 1s. per gross (please observe the official price for printing 'private cards' is 15s. per gross); but as once the blocks from which the printing is done are 'made ready,' the actual cost to the Department, with a large profit, ought not to exceed 1s. per gross, which would yield a profit of 30 per cent. on the operation of printing. We should be very glad to undertake this work at these prices, and would give all necessary guarantees for the work being properly done."

A second letter was from Messrs. A. Ritchie & Son, 51 York Place, Edinburgh, on June 14, 1892—

"For many years we have been in the habit of sending cardboards to Somerset House, London, to be impressed; these boards contain 42 post cards on each, and the charge for printing the Government stamp has been at the rate of 1s. 6d. for 24 boards, in addition, of course, to the ½d. for each stamp. They now demand 2s. 6d. for every 24 boards, which raises the price considerably. We may mention that we print various forms upon these cards, and that we use a large quantity annually. Some time ago Government reduced the price of postcards from 8d. per dozen to 6d. for 10. They also issued an order requiring, as to all stationers who had been in the habit of sending cards to be stamped, that in future they must procure a licence. All this action seems to point to a complete monopoly, forcing us to use their cards and preventing us from meeting the requirements of our customers who desire a cheaper card. We would respectfully urge that this is against the principles of free trade, and an interference with the traders' rights. We have been in the habit for many years of sending various printed forms, such as receipts, &c. to be stamped, for which no charge is made, and we fail to understand why in the matter of stamping cards so prohibitive a charge should be made. What we desire is, that the old price for stamping—namely, 1s. 6d. for 24 boards—be charged, which seems more than sufficient to reoup them for actual cost."

FOREIGN POSTCARDS.

He next gave a typical instance of what he called (borrowing from Sir A. Blackwood's vocabulary) "Post Office meanness." It would be seen from the following correspondence with the late Post-

master General that our Postal Authorities, not content with an annual profit exceeding £3,000,000, had contrived to turn an honest penny by clipping the postcards which they supplied for transmission to foreign countries. To clip a postcard—the poor man's only vehicle of communication with his friends in the Colonies—was, to his mind, hardly less hateful than to clip the coin of the realm. The British postcard to send to foreign countries or the Colonies was sold to them (or was until lately, he was told) composed of 30 per cent. of clay; and it was at once the smallest and dearest sold in the Postal Union.

"House of Commons.

"Dear Sir James Fergusson.—A number of correspondents have written to me complaining, in more or less indignant terms, of the action of the Postal Authorities in reducing the size of the Postal Union 1d. postcard. I send you three of the letters. May I ask whether there is any difficulty in restoring the postcard to the size sold in foreign countries, or at least in keeping on sale a certain number of the larger size for those who specially wish them; and whether any advantage has been gained by reducing the size?—I remain, most obediently yours, J. HENNIKER HEATON."

"Post Office.

"Dear Mr. Henniker Heaton—In reply to your letter of the 19th instant, I should remind you that, until recently, three different rates of postage were chargeable in this country for postcards sent to places abroad—namely 1d., 1½d., and 2d. In carrying out the scheme of uniform postage to all places abroad, it was decided to abolish the 1½d. and 2d. postcard rates and make the 1d. postcards available to all destinations; but it was found necessary to accompany the concession with a slight reduction in the weight of the cards, the payments for the transit of cards through foreign countries and the Colonies being made by weight. In the two months of April and May during which the cards have been in use, six individuals have written to the Post Office on the subject of the reduced size; and the answer given by the Department has apparently been accepted as satisfactory, for nothing more has been heard from them. I am rather surprised, therefore, that you should have received many indignant letters on the subject. The size of the new cards was, of course, fixed with due regard to the reasonable requirements of the senders in the vast majority of cases. There is no reason to doubt that they satisfy those requirements. These explanations were given in answer to Mr. Webb in the House of Commons on the 12th instant, and I do not see my way to alter the size. The enclosure forwarded in your letter is returned herewith.—Believe me, yours sincerely, JAMES FERGUSSON."

"House of Commons.

"Dear Sir James Fergusson—In your letter on the subject of reducing the size of foreign postcards, you express surprise at my having re-

ceived many letters on the subject, and mention the fact that, during April and May, only six persons wrote to the Department, complaining of the change. This fact mentioned by you does not surprise or impress me. Some years ago, I called Mr. Raikes's attention to the numerous complaints as to the large number of missing illustrated and other journals posted for Australia and India. He retorted that only two complaints had reached the Department on the subject during a whole year. A few days afterwards I asked, from my place in the House, the actual number of illustrated and other newspapers posted to Australia which had been, on one ground or another (chiefly through being insufficiently stamped), stopped in the British Post Office and destroyed during the year in question. The reply was, 25,000! Yet the Postal Department officials said there were only two complaints. This might be interpreted as showing that the public, when annoyed by an oppressive Postal Regulation, recognises the futility of complaining to the framers and defenders of such Regulation. (At the same time, to my knowledge, the victims have, in frequent instances, made oral complaint at their local offices.) But the impression is generally prevalent that any complaint to the Secretarial Department at St. Martin's-le-Grand will merely produce one or more of those courteously worded, but inflexible, printed Circulars with which we are all so familiar. To obtain redress, or reform, public opinion must be brought into play. Your letter puts forward two explanations of the reduction in the size of these postcards. In one place it is stated that the size was fixed with due regard to the reasonable requirements of the senders, the inference being, that the Department knows the requirements of the public better than the public itself, which complains of the reduction or clipping of the cards. Elsewhere it is admitted that the real reason of the change was the desire to reduce the weight of the cards and so to lessen the payments, calculated according to weight, for the transit of the cards through foreign countries. I confess I do not appreciate this objection. Even if the weight of the old and favourite card were to affect the payments for carriage to any notable extent, they might surely have been brought down preferably by employing a lighter material, or, better still, by inducing Foreign Governments to revise their scale of transit charges. In the case of a post card, the space for writing is so limited, that any diminution of it largely impairs the usefulness of the card. And I would urge, with much deference, that the Public Service should be the paramount consideration, and that the convenience of the public should not, in the smallest detail, be sacrificed in order to effect a petty economy.—Believe me, yours most sincerely,

J. HENNIKER HEATON."

CARDS WITH ADHESIVE STAMPS.

He had long urged the Department to permit the transmission through the post of any card whatever of the Regulation size, bearing an adhesive halfpenny stamp. By adopting this plan the Post Office would save many thousands a year,

since they would be free from the necessity of providing postcards, the manufacture of which cost £283 per million. On this subject he read the following letter, one out of a great number, to the same effect :—

"Dunmore, County Galway.
"Sir,—I perceive by the Parliamentary Reports in the daily papers that you are making a determined fight in the interests of the public with the Postmaster General, and that, in one instance at least, there is a possibility of his yielding to your pressure—namely, to allow the use of private postcards with an adhesive halfpenny postage stamp attached. About 12 months since it was freely mentioned in the newspapers that the Postmaster General had sanctioned this concession, and on the face of such statements I got a large parcel of cards printed for my own commercial use. (I enclose you a specimen card.) In so doing I was sadly doomed to loss and disappointment, as the Postal Authorities declined to allow them to pass. Thanking you for your efforts to remedy this vexatious grievance,

"Yours faithfully,

"M. McDONNELL."

Mr. Rawlins, of 15, Kelvin Grove, Liverpool, said—

"As a paper-maker, I can state that the material of the 217,000,000 cards, averaging 8lbs. to the 1,000, only costs the Government £22,000. But they receive (for thick and thin cards) £66,000. The thick cards contain 22½ per cent. of china clay."—Mr. Rawlins's letter to *The Liverpool Mercury*.

"The size is the smallest sold by 20 offices in various countries."—Mr. Rawlins's letter.

Why, he asked, should the Government make a profit on selling stationery? They made £20,000 a year by selling postcards above their face value.

ANOTHER UNJUST RULE.

The Post Office would not allow a slip of paper to be gummed on the face of a post card, though a slip with the address might be gummed on the back. How could a slip be objectionable on one side, and not on the other? Mr. C. Inman, of 4, Park Hill, Richmond, Surrey, said—

"24th June, 1893.

"It frequently happens to me, and most likely to others, that there is a short paragraph in a newspaper you would like to communicate to a friend or relative, but you cannot cut it out and gum it to a postcard, for it is 'Contrary to Regulations,' though you may print as much as you like. An extract on a postcard would be much less weight than a newspaper for their servants to collect and deliver."

Another person was fined for gumming a chess problem cut from a newspaper on to a postcard.

POSTAL ORDERS.

The most urgent reform in connection with Postal Orders was to prevent thefts of them while in course of transmission. In his opinion this could best be accomplished by adopting the *Mandat-Carte* used on the Continent, and recommended by the Postal Union. By this system the remitter purchased a card endorsed with the amount required: and that amount was delivered, together with the card, at the addressee's door. There was accordingly no risk of delay, fraud, or mistake. It should be possible to transmit Postal Orders from one part of the Empire to another. This reform, which was urgently needed in the interests of trade, and of the poorer classes here and in the colonies, seemed to be highly obnoxious to the Postal Authorities. The Colonial Governments would willingly agree to adopt a uniform type of Postal Orders such as was used throughout the United Kingdom. There was no great difficulty in the matter, for we already received and paid Postal Orders from at least seven British Possessions, including India. British orders were payable at Malta and Gibraltar. He pointed out also that while it cost only 1d. to remit 10s. from Hong Kong, India, or Newfoundland to England, it cost 6d. to remit 10s. from England to Hong Kong, India, or Newfoundland. The following letter puts the matter in a nutshell. H. J. L. wrote from Slough—

"Sir.—Postal Orders can be sent from India, Strait Settlements, Hong Kong, and Newfoundland to England, but not from England to those countries—see *Postal Guide* for July 1892. Time occupied for a letter from Hong Kong is about 40 days, and from Singapore to this country is about 36 days—not much less than from Sydney or Melbourne to justify the refusal of their use between Australia and England when it is granted to the other countries mentioned. One great security for the sending of Postal Orders would be that the issuing officer should write in the name of the town where alone it is payable, and if any alteration should be made in such name it should be refused payment until proper inquiries had been made respecting it."

At a great conference of Australian Postmasters General this year, a memorial was drawn up to the English Postmaster General asking him to establish

Postal Orders between Australia and England. A peremptory refusal was given. The only reason assigned was the fear of forgery, which reason would equally prevent the circulation of Bank of England notes. It was pure obstruction on the part of the English officials. Mr. Alfred R. Wallace, Parkstone, Dorset, sent the following sensible suggestions:—

"I have been reading with interest and approval your article on Post Office Reforms, and wish to suggest for your consideration two other cases in which the present system seems to me irrational and needlessly complex. 1. In Postal Orders the cost and trouble to the Post Office is exactly the same in all sums from 1s. to £1. Why, then, should a different charge be made? The money is paid in advance, and balances from unclaimed or delayed Postal Orders must be constantly in the hands of the Post Office. At all branch Post Offices the receipts and payments of orders must average about the same, and I can see no sense whatever in making three separate charges—½d., 1d., and 1½d.—for sums between 1s. and £1. If ½d. covers cost of Postal Orders for 1s. 6d. it must do so for all amounts. If not, then the uniform charge should be 1d., and that should cover all amounts (to even sixpences) between 1s. and 20s., whether made up by one, two, or three orders. For Money Orders also the charges are most extravagant. They should be uniform—say, 2d. or 3d. for all sums from £1 to £10."

There was one common feature in all the diversified petty tyrannies practised by the Post Office on the public—they all tended to swell the Postal Revenue. The dodge exposed in the next missive was particularly neat, and specially profitable. A. M. W. wrote—

"As one of the many thousands who are already very grateful to you for your efforts for Postal Reform, I venture to acquaint you with a piece of 'sharp practice,' as I consider it, by which it seems the Department makes a gain by its own negligence. My servant yesterday at Charlbury Post Office asked for a Postal Order for 3s. They said they had none, and persuaded her to take one for 2s. and one for 1s. and pay 1½d. poundage, thus gaining ½d. As it was their fault, not hers, they should either have given her two for 1s. 6d. each, or, at any rate, not charged more than 1d. This is not the first time this trick has been played there. In your most amusing list of negligences which the late Postmaster General ought to have signed I do not think this particular grievance was mentioned. Though Parliament is not sitting, I give you the information to do what you like with."

On this he pointed out that it was to this day more expensive to send 9s. 6d. by Postal Order than 10s., and dearer to send 19s. 6d. than 20s. For five years the

country had been complaining of this needless anomaly. He had also vainly urged the Postmaster General to issue guinea Postal Orders, which he declined to do. Very great convenience to the public would result from the adoption of a suggestion by Mr. Ernest Pitman—namely, that permission should be given for the remittance of stamps up to the value of 11d. by sticking them on a postcard, to be afterwards removed and used, or cashed by the addressee. The commission on these small sums would be saved, and no trouble given to the Post Office. Mr. William Wicking, of 54 High Street, Sevenoaks, wrote—

“I would suggest that a useful change in the size of Postal Orders would result from reducing them in width to the size of this paper (large post 8vo). This could easily be done by increasing the depth very slightly. To business men this would be of value, as 90 per cent. of them use this size—consequently the order would just fit, instead of leaving the odd piece to turn in. I send this to you instead of the Postmaster General.”

A SHARP REMONSTRANCE.

The Post Office was rich and powerful enough to be able to acknowledge a blunder, and offer fair compensation; but this duty was only discharged in the most grudging and ungracious manner, and in no case without compulsion. The following letter from Mr. S. Watson, of 11 Dale Street, Liverpool, was addressed to the Postmaster General by Mr. Watson from Carlsbad:—

“Sir,—I have received here a Post Office Order from the London Chief Office for £3 8s. 8d. This represents a Post Office Order for £3 9s. 0d. I sent to my son in Freiberg, Saxony, about 12th July last, which, however, never reached him, owing to some mistake on the part of the Post Office. In the letter handing the Order you say—‘In compliance with your application, I enclose herewith a new order (less the usual commission) in exchange for the order transmitted by you.’ This may be the official mode of covering a blunder, but it is not the fact. I asked for no new order, but simply a return of my money, owing to your error; and on this plea of ‘exchange of order’ you have the temerity to charge me a commission of 4d. As the mistake was purely that of the Post Office, and so admitted by the officials in Liverpool, I see no reason why I should be mulcted even to this small extent. I therefore claim back the 4d., and in addition 1s., the original commission charged for Order to Freiberg, as you did not fulfil your undertaking, and consequently did not earn it. Further, the non-receipt of the money was a matter of great inconvenience and expense, for my son, who was expecting it to cover part of his expenses home,

had to telegraph the non-arrival, was detained a day or two, waiting for it, and I had to wire him what to do. In addition, therefore, to the 1s. 4d., I claim from you the cost of the wires to and from the Continent—14 words—which, speaking from memory, I think is 2d. a word, 2s. 4d., or say in all 3s. 8d. My case is so plain that I have no doubt you will recognise the justice of it at once; and I may observe that on mentioning it to Mr. Henniker Heaton, who is stopping here, he has kindly undertaken to take note of it, in case I am troubled with any of the curious excuses or peculiar tactics of the Post Office.”

He believed the average time taken by the Department to deal with a complaint of this kind was one month. In this case, however, the sum claimed was sent without demur within three days.

MONEY ORDERS.

Our Post Office was content to leave us without the means of remitting small sums to several important countries. Thus, *The British Quarterly Trade Review* said—

“There is no exchange of Post Office Orders with Argentina, Brazil, Greece, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Spain, and several other countries which do a considerable trade with England. As an instance of the delay and costliness of the existing arrangements, it may be mentioned that it usually takes from four to six days to transmit from the Continent the amount of the annual subscription to this journal, and at a cost, exclusive of postage, of from 10 to 15 per cent. of the total sum. The trade journals of this country have between them several hundred thousand foreign subscribers who are unjustly taxed in this way.”

We might bear with equanimity the losses of foreigners here referred to, but, unfortunately, the evil cut both ways, and our own people suffered still more than the foreigner.

He wished now to direct attention to a rule plainly based on the theory that the public convenience was as nothing compared with that of the postal staff. A postal order could be obtained at any time while a post office was open; but a money order could only be had between the sacred hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The reason seemed to be that certain mystical entries and “advices” were required in the case of money orders. But this reason was a poor one. In the majority of cases the same clerk performed the money order business and the other business of the office, and was perfectly able and willing to issue money

orders up to the last moment ; but the clerk was bound hand and foot with red-tape. Of course, the result was that a great demand was created for postal orders, and the temptations to dishonest sorters and letter carriers were multiplied. He asked a question on this subject, but could obtain no promise of amendment.

FOREIGN AND COLONIAL ORDERS.

In yet another instance our officials lagged behind the age. He alluded to the unnecessarily high charge made for commission on foreign and colonial money orders of small amount. The smallest fee which the Department condescended to accept was 6d., which covered the transmission of a sum not exceeding £2. Now it frequently happened that a person residing in this country wished to order a newspaper or other small article from a foreign country, or some place in the Colonies ; or, as in the case put by his first correspondent on this subject, he might wish to ask a question and prepay postage on the reply. He had to pay in commission six times the price of the desired newspaper, or if he wished a sixpenny magazine, the commission increased the cost of it by about 100 per cent. The effect of this fleecing was to kill small trade of the description alluded to, and to place a further obstacle in the way of the circulation of the best colonial and foreign literature in this country. That it was sheer rapacity which prescribed these heavy fees was proved by the simple fact that very much lower—in fact, quite fair and reasonable rates—were charged by France in such cases. A second writer pointed out how injustice occurred in another way—by setting up a faulty standard of exchange. F. M., Boulogne, wrote—

“ I wish to direct your attention to the excessive commission charged by the Post Office for small sums sent by Post Office Order abroad and to the Colonies. The commission remains the same whether the money order be for 2d. or £2 : it is 6d.—rather a high rate to pay, 10 per cent. on a 5s. order ; for small sums it is an official swindle. Fancy someone in England requiring an answer to a letter from Japan having to obtain a Post Office Order for 3d. and have to pay 9d. If I sent you 5s. from here it would cost me 6f. 30c., plus 10 cents (6f. 40c.—5s. 1½d.) the commission charged between France and other countries (with the exception of one or two), which I suppose is in force throughout the Union on the Continent at least, being at the rate of 1 per cent. It is an impost levied solely by the English Office, to which the

Foreign Office is no party, nor does the latter benefit.”

C. H. Bradford wrote—

“ In the United States and Canada the commission on foreign money orders is 10 cents ; in this country it is 6d. For Spain exchange is reckoned at 25 pesetas or francs per £, whilst exchange is quoted at 40³/₄d. per duro or pesas of 5 pesetas or francs, a depreciation of 15 per cent. I can buy Spanish books from Spain direct (at less than) half the price at which they can be bought here. If I buy here, my choice is limited to the publication of one Leipzig house, mostly one author, and even here my choice is limited to perhaps half-a-dozen volumes. If I go beyond these, I must order unseen, and do not receive them more promptly. My opinion is, that the new measure only subserves the interests of a few dealers—plays into their hands. If this be the situation in Bradford, what must it be in other towns ? No wonder the study of languages is in a backward state, where obstacles are met with at every turn.”

RAILWAY LETTERS.

If the public hit upon any device for accelerating the delivery of correspondence, not bearing the official *imprimatur*, it was promptly tabooed. Thus a gentleman wrote to him from the Carlton Club—

“ Formerly I used regularly to send a stamped letter to the railway station, and 1d. with it, which was handed to the guard, and the guard took it straight on to his destination. Now a Regulation has been issued against this, and I have to pay 2d. to the railway authorities, besides the 1d. on the stamped letter, and they put a ticket on it, and it goes into their parcel office, and is often not delivered till several posts afterwards. In France and Germany, in all through trains there is a railway letter-box. Why cannot we have such a convenience attached to all our trains in this country ?”

He went farther, and asked why should we not have a letter-box on every tram-car and omnibus, to be cleared at the terminus ? The incredibly absurd Regulation referred to by the next correspondent would be found at page 35 of *The Post Office Guide* for July, 1893. The Rev. E. Ledger, of Barham Rectory, Claydon, Ipswich, wrote—

“ One cannot send a letter by train with 1½d. on it to be posted, say, at Liverpool Street, and catch evening mails—*i.e.*, one cannot put the extra ½d. on : it must only have 1d. on. Nor may I send a letter with, say, 2½d. on for a foreign country—though such a privilege is just what might make it worth while to pay 2d. for the railway carriage.”

The privilege of sending a letter by railway, so as to save initial delay in sort-

ing, &c., was largely impaired by the exaction of a fee of 2d. in addition to postage. A well-informed correspondent, Mr. H. J. Luff, of Arbour Vale, Slough, wrote on this subject—

“Respecting railway letters. There is one point I am desirous of mentioning—namely, that when I was striving many years ago to get the system brought into use, I adopted 1d. as the compensation to the railway. My reason was that they carry single copies of any newspaper between any two stations, irrespective of distance, for ½d., which must be prepaid by the sender affixing a stamp to the paper; and I thought if ½d. was sufficient for a newspaper, surely double that amount should be ample for a letter weighing not more than one ounce.”

The existing arrangements between the Post Office and the Railway Companies should be inquired into; especially those referring to the remuneration of the companies for the conveyance of mail matter, and their right of sending any number of telegrams from station to station without payment. What had been done in this direction? Did the old contract apply to new lines of railway?

THE “CASH ON DELIVERY” SYSTEM.

He would next devote a few words to a reform which had been of unspeakable value to business men in various parts of the world—the Cash on Delivery system. The Postmaster General would render a vast service to trade if he would persuade the Chancellor of the Exchequer to sanction the institution of this system. Under this, the postman who delivered a parcel of goods at the same time received the price of them, which was then paid over by the Post Office to the tradesman who sent them, a small commission being deducted. Every shopkeeper would hail the introduction of this plan, which was in full force in several great countries, including India. In Egypt, indeed, the Post Office actually collected bills and debts on commission. The advantages were obvious. Here was a picked, trained, trustworthy Civil servant passing every door in the Kingdom at least once a day. He was accustomed to the collection of fines for deficient postage, under Rules which rendered mistake or fraud impossible. All that was required was an extension of this existing system to the Parcel Post, and in a moment five-sixths of our tradesmen would be made independent of vans, porters, messengers, and carriers; while customers would receive their purchases more quickly. A

post card would convey an order to a shop, and by return of post the book, or other article demanded, would, without further trouble to him, be laid on his table. No one would question that the Post Office Revenue would be largely swelled by the adoption of this reform; but there was a disposition among the officials to be alarmed at the possible growth of postal transactions, in this and other directions. So long as it was remunerative business, however, there was no need for alarm. He believed that in 1839 a postal official objected to Inland Penny Postage that the building at St. Martin's-le-Grand would not be large enough to contain the correspondence that might be expected. “Then it must be enlarged,” was the reply.

RURAL DISTRICTS.

If there were one direction in which, by general consent, the authorities had neglected their duty, it was in the postal service of rural, and especially out-lying, districts. From all directions complaints poured in of the neglect with which country residents were treated. Letters took a day to reach them from London, while London letters reached Paris or Brussels in eight hours. There were but one delivery and one collection a day, always at the most inconvenient hours. Thus he knew of one case in which the outgoing post started 20 minutes before the incoming one had arrived, so that nobody writing to that village could expect a reply until the next day, or third day. It was unwise to add to the disadvantages of provincial life. We all lamented the crowding of country folk into the congested centres of population; and here was the Post Office doing its best to drive the remaining population of our hamlets and farmhouses into the towns. Its policy should be to diminish the sense of isolation which now weighed on the countryman; to bring him into close connection with the intenser life that flowed through our streets, and to give him a greater share of the benefits which steam, electricity, and human energy had enabled the Post Office to confer. He should not, in a word, be punished because he voluntarily remained in a position wherein he rendered the State greater service than if he joined the swarms that over-

burdened the Metropolis and the great manufacturing boroughs. There was, moreover, a growing tendency in the postal administration to neglect the less remunerative branches of the Service. It seemed to be an established rule, for instance, that remote and sparsely-peopled localities should not be supplied with a telegraph office, unless the householders would guarantee the Department a certain sum per annum, and the consequence was that nobody who wished to keep in touch with the markets, or to feel the pulse of trade, would reside in such districts. Such a policy intensified the discomforts incidental to residence in out of the way places, kept away capital, and drove the labouring population into the towns in search of work. It was a policy unworthy of the country to which the world owed the electric telegraph, and of a Department which drew a clear profit exceeding £3,000,000 per annum from its business. He gave a few words from a country rector about this matter—

“Avering Rectory,”

“Stroud, Gloucestershire.

“Dear Sir,—

“May I ask if you can kindly give me any facts, or other information, which would help me in an application to the Postmaster General for a telegraph office in this parish? We have a population of 894, mostly within a mile of our village office, and yet we have to send a distance of three miles for a telegram message, a savings bank, or a money order, while our own Post Office close at hand could afford us all these needed facilities. The Secretary of the General Post Office requires a guarantee of £28 before he will grant us a telegraph office. But the residents in the village decline to give the guarantee, on the ground that the General Post Office should give us this facility without a guarantee. Three of our residents have houses in London, from which they pay largely in telegrams. The Government make large profits out of the telegraph wires in the towns, and we think they should give our neglected villages the benefit of a slight share of those profits in a wire at Avering. Having heard that you take such interest in the working of the Post Office, I have not scrupled to trouble you with this letter.

“Yours faithfully,

“F. DE PARAVICINI.”

COUNTRY PARCELS.

The following letter called attention to another example of the mischievous effects of Post Office blundering. It would be seen that, owing to the excessive charges made for the conveyance of parcels over small distances, trade was diverted from small country towns to the

Metropolis, and the Postal Revenue was, on the whole, a loser. His correspondent's pathetic picture of the half-ruined tradesman seeking half-bricks, not to throw at his persecutors, but in order to make his parcels more ponderous, and so defeat the Regulations, ought to touch the hearts of the magnates at St. Martin's-le-Grand. Mr. G. W. wrote to him—

“Seeing your name so often in connection with reforms in the Postal Service, I have ventured to address to you a few lines with regard to a grievance which exists in the rural districts, particularly in connection with the Parcel Post. I am a tradesman in a country town, which is the centre of a large agricultural district, and, of course, what affects me in this respect affects my fellow-tradesmen in this and other small towns, and, probably, in large towns, too. I will give you one or two instances of how the Parcel Post works with us: Our customers in agricultural districts are widely scattered, extending, in most cases, as far as the limits of the rural postal district—say, six, seven or more miles in each direction. Supposing a customer of mine wants a particular article which can be got either from a local tradesman or from London—a 7 lb. parcel would cost 1s. in coming from London. In this case the Railway Company would get 55 per cent. of the 1s., the remainder going to the Post Office. If the customer sent to the local tradesman—say, six miles—it would cost 1s.—just the same amount as from London; but the Post Office would get the whole 1s. This is, however, not the only difficulty, for the customer would receive the parcel from London as soon as he would from the local tradesman, because the letters or orders brought by rural postmen to the town are not delivered until next morning, after the rural postmen have left the town on their day's journey, and thus a day is lost; and the London tradesman, who will receive his letters at the same time, is on a level with tradesmen living only a few miles off. The following two cases happened to me last week: I had a parcel about 7 lbs. to send to a customer three miles away. The mail cart passes the door, but I could not send it for less than 1s. It so happened that the article was returned next day for a slight alteration, which cost another 1s., and had to be sent again after the alteration, costing still another 1s. The second case was similar in all respects, except that it was another postman, who said that if I would make it over 11 lbs. weight with a brick or stone he would take it for 3d. I could give you more cases, but hope these will give you some idea of how the Parcel Post works for country tradesmen. Previous to the Parcel Post being established, the rural postmen carried parcels—as many as they liked. Since the Parcel Post was started, it has been the custom here for the younger men to run the risk of carrying parcels under 11 lbs.; the older men have not dared to do so, on account of the risk of losing their pensions, but would carry them if made over 11 lbs. Lately, however, an Inspector has been here and given strict orders that all parcels under

11 lbs. must go through the post. It cannot be called anything but an imposition to charge 1s. to carry a parcel six miles, and carry the same parcel 300, 400, or 500 miles for something less than 6d., which is the Post Office's share after paying the Railway Company. Besides, why should tradesmen be put to the trouble and annoyance of having to seek bricks and stones to over-weight parcels? We are handicapped in the race with large centres like London, Manchester, &c. Uniformity of rates, as of everything else, is very beautiful in theory, but does not always work so well in practice; and this, I venture to suggest, is a case in point. Are the Post Office people the masters of the public, or are they the servants of the public? If the latter, I think it a great shame that in all these years there has not been, so far as I know, the slightest inquiry made into the working of the Parcel Post in rural districts, although it has been brought under the notice of the Inspectors. I hope, Sir, if we can only enlist your interest in the matter, you will be able to waken them up a little. I think it ought not to be a very difficult thing to adopt a local rate for short distances—say, where a parcel does not touch the railway, make the rate one-half of the present rate; have two prices for local parcels to make it more simple: carry a 6 lb. parcel for 3d., and 12 lbs. for 6d.; and also arrange for a delivery of letters after the rural postmen return from their journeys. The most ridiculous part of the present system is, however, that the postmen can carry a parcel, no matter what weight it is, if only above 11 lbs., for 2d. or 3d."

MORE COMPLAINTS.

It must be unpleasant for the Postmaster General to receive such letters as the one that followed. It was addressed to his predecessor, on June 1, 1891, by the Rev. C. H. Brocklebank, of Bolton Hall, Gosforth, Cumberland. After giving a list of delayed and missing letters, he proceeded—

"We have no post-box nearer than Gosforth, more than a mile off—a long way to have to send the letters every day. Telegrams are sent *via* Seascale—portage 1s. At several of the farmhouses and cottages near here the letters are not even delivered. It is impossible to get one's Sunday letters even by sending to the Gosforth Post Office for them."

Or take this case. Mr. M. Robertson, of Crabble House, River, near Dover, wrote—

"In a Berkshire parish (Suthamstead Abbots) only seven miles from Reading, where I have recently been living, we were two days' post from every place except those on the main Great Western Railway between London and the West, and even so from some places within a drive. We were also three miles from a telegraph office, the messages from which often reached my house one and a-half hours after they had been received at the office, because, as they said, they only had one boy."

A correspondent at Plymouth called his attention to another grievance. Without giving his letter he would briefly state that the Post Office charges for the despatch of parcels to India were 8d. per pound, and to Australia 9d. per pound, while the shipping agents only charged 3d. per pound. The only possible explanation of such an excess charge was, that the Post Office would rather not be troubled with parcels for the Colonies, although it was worth the while of private firms to advertise for the carrying of such parcels. A parcel of shells was sent from Brussels to the British Museum for 2d., to be examined. On returning the parcel, the Museum authorities had to pay 1s. 6½d. The French Government allowed 320 gr. to be sent for 2½d.

THE EXPRESS SERVICE.

He now approached the subject of the Express Letter Service, which was forced upon the Postal Authorities by public opinion, and which they undertook with about as much grace and cheerfulness as a bucking horse displayed while being saddled and mounted. Not only were the portage charges, as in the case of telegrams, far too high in comparison with the wages paid to the messengers, but the service was hampered with the necessity of filling up a complicated form, writing certain words on a particular part of the cover, and, above all, attending at some post office to hand the message over the counter. This last provision was puerile and vexatious. Why could not an express letter be stamped with a special crimson stamp, or a stamped crimson envelope used and posted in the nearest pillar box overnight, so as to be delivered the first thing in the morning, as in a country where common sense governed the postal administration? He appended an envelope so posted, on which a fine was charged, and also a pregnant note from a correspondent—

"The White House,

"Chelsea, London, S.W.

"Sir.—Having occasion to post an express letter I found it much more difficult than in Belgium, besides being 300 per cent. dearer. I enclose the two methods for your own use.—Yours truly,
A. MACKENZIE ROSS."

"England :

I sent express letter addressed to 'City,' found nearest P.O., did not forward express letters; had, of course, to take it to

one that did, which was some considerable distance away. Had to pay 1s. postage."

—Belgium :

Express letter would only require to be posted in first bus passing. Postage 3d."

Another complaint was that an express letter sent from here to France or Belgium on Saturday evening was delivered on Sunday morning. But a letter from France to England posted on Saturday evening on business of life and death was not delivered until Monday morning.

JEWELLERY FOR THE CONTINENT.

The next case was not one of extortionate charges, but of neglect to secure the same privilege of registration of valuable parcels for Englishmen which foreigners enjoyed. Mr. F. Powell, of Iddlesleigh Villa, Egham, wrote—

"18th June, 1893.

"Sir,—I am a lapidary, and have to maintain a severe struggle with the Swiss and French cutters, who work somewhat cheaper than we handicapped English cutters can, and who send large parcels of cut stones to London by post every day registered. I, however, possess a little special skill, which induces a few even of the best French houses to send their stones to me to be cut; but, after cutting and presenting to the Post Office as a foreign registered packet, I am told my unset stones come under the head of 'Jewellery,' and cannot be sent per post. Consider, Sir, how this operates against the unfortunate English in favour of the foreigner."

COLONIAL AND FOREIGN STAMPS.

Here was another legitimate grievance. A person ordering a small article from the Colonies, or desiring a reply to a letter, could not buy in our Post Offices two or three stamps of the country of destination to send to his correspondent. The subjoined was a case in point, from Mr. Barlow, 21a, The Crescent, Salford—

"Whilst writing you upon the matter of surcharges, may I also bring under your notice the great convenience that would result if postage stamps of Canada—Australia in particular—could be obtained at the general offices? It is constantly coming under my notice that persons corresponding with places desire to prepay replies by enclosing the necessary stamp; and disappointment is often expressed. It is very general not to receive replies from the person or firm written to from this cause. I am sure advantage would be taken of such a boon, not only in this country, but by the people of other countries; and it would be the means of greatly augmenting correspondence with these countries."

"PUNISHMENT FOR POLITENESS."

The Post Office would not use its despotic power to soften and refine the manners of the people; and anything in the nature of politeness introduced into a paper sent by book-post was pounced upon as a pretext for a fine. Such a document must contain only the skeletons of sentences; it must demand a debt with brutal frankness, and convey descriptions of quality and indications of route with military brevity and mathematical precision. The subjoined was a case in point—

"Deptford, London, S.E.

"Dear Sir.—Referring to your letter in *The Times*, re Post Office punishment for politeness, we are very pleased to see you have taken this matter up, and it may interest you to know that some few years ago we had printed at the foot of our invoice forms the words 'The above sent to your esteemed order per' The Post Office Authorities objected to our invoice form being sent at circular rate, on the ground that the above printed words were regarded as of the nature of a letter. We could put simply 'Sent per' (which we now do), and it would be allowed to go at circular rates. We think you will agree with us that the authorities made a distinction without any real difference, we only putting it originally in a more polite manner, but for which same politeness we found our customers had to pay a fine of 1d. in each instance. —Yours faithfully,

FREDERICK BRABY & Co."

PRINTED MATTER FOR THE COLONIES.

Here was an instance of the way in which our Post Office regarded the exchange of literature with our Colonies: A person sent 10 copies of "Homer's Penny Series" (each of them a thin pamphlet) to Australia, and the postage was 10d. At another time he sent 20, the cost of which was 1s. 8d., and was charged 2s. for postage.

INDIA.

Mr. Wedderburn Maxwell, Glenair, Dalbeattie, N.B., wrote—

"Dear Sir.—Could you not get the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Indian and Australian postage single letter weight increased to 1d. oz.? It would be a matter of convenience, as regards using decent paper instead of flimsy stuff, and as steamboats and railways carry the bulk of the mails the extra weight would not be a burden. Weight does not seem to come in, when heavy letters are charged at less comparative postage rates, in this country. The public are deeply indebted to you for your successful toils in getting reduction of postage, the loss on which will doubtless be recouped in time."

On this subject also the Rev. F. T. Cole, of 38 Burlington Gardens, Acton, W., February 17, 1893, said—

“Let me call your attention to the cheap Indian postage. A letter is conveyed to any part of India, 2,000 miles, for half an anna, in reality $\frac{1}{4}$ l. The Government sell embossed envelopes for $\frac{1}{4}$ l. and post cards for quarter of an anna, *i.e.* one farthing.”

Mr. E. O. Walker, C.I.E. (late of the Indian Telegraph Service), of 144, Queen's Road, Bayswater, W., wrote—

“In India, where I have served for many years, one can send a letter equal in weight to half a rupee (or tola) for half an anna to any part of India or Burmah—perhaps over 2,000 miles. Again, letters, papers, cards, book-packets and parcels are re-addressed over and over again, without additional charge. My argument is, that if these concessions can be made in a country where the distances are so vast, there should be no difficulty in making them in the British Isles. Newspapers, parcels, book packets, and printed papers, legal and commercial documents—in fact, all articles and communications dealt with by the Post Office should, as well as letters, be re-addressed free of charge.”

Mr. Ivor Phillipp (Junior Army and Navy Club) said—

“The Indian Government conveys a letter from Peshawar or Quetta to Calcutta (1,500 miles by rail), then to Rangoon (3 days by sea), and then to Bhamo (700 miles) for $\frac{1}{4}$ l. ($\frac{1}{4}$ anna); or a postcard for $\frac{1}{4}$ l.—3,000 miles.”

DAY AND HOUR POSTMARKS.

He now turned to the subject of postmarks. Some time ago he presented to the then Postmaster General a Memorial signed by 210 Members of Parliament, asking that the hour as well as the date of collection, &c., might be stamped on all postal matter. This was done, with much advantage to the interests of business, in several British Colonies and foreign countries, and was formerly done in England (to 1818). The Postal Authorities, however, refused to make this concession, the reason of their refusal doubtless being that it enabled the public to trace, check, and control the movements of correspondence—in other words, to bring home unerringly to the officials any negligence of which they might have been guilty. As a correspondent lately wrote to *The Times*—

“Any lawyer or man of business can testify to the importance of postmarks. I enclose some of the colonial and foreign postmarks for your inspection, and would call special attention to their clearness and legibility, as contrasted with the blurred smudges too often found on British letters.”

AN AGRICULTURAL PARCEL POST.

With the great towns sucking the population from our rural districts, and paying £30,000,000 a year to the foreigner for dairy and garden produce which British cultivators might supply, it would seem good policy to furnish exceptionally cheap postal facilities to our own country. He had proposed an “Agricultural Parcel Post” rate of 1d. a pound, but the postal officials exhausted themselves in finding objections to it. A correspondent, farming 4,000 acres, wrote—

“I believe that, if properly worked, an Agricultural Parcel Post would do more than anything to make small holdings profitable.”

And others pointed out that when the present postage had been met, the price secured for the articles referred to did not cover the cost of production. A collection of these letters would be found in *The Mark Lane Express* for May 18th, 1891. Before leaving this subject he urged that an Agricultural Parcel Post would be a wonderful auxiliary to make profitable small allotments and holdings.

STILL MORE GRIEVANCES.

He now referred to another subject of irritation. At some post offices the fee for a private box was £2 2s., as the fee went to the Crown. At others it was £1 1s., and went to the Postmaster. There should be a uniform charge, not exceeding £1 1s.

Several correspondents complained of the double charge for double weight on foreign letters. Now, he maintained that the chief items in the cost of letters to the Post Office being sorting, despatch, and delivery, it was absurd to charge double postage for double weight. This was recognised as regarded inland letters, but not for foreign. Why not? The half-ounce was often necessarily exceeded by a trifle owing to an enclosure; the cost to the Post Office, owing to the extra weight, could not be more than $\frac{1}{2}$ d. additional, yet we were charged 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., or the receiver 5d. Surely, if it was necessary to restrict the foreign letter to the half-ounce for the single postage of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., it should increase only by $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per half-ounce. This was the more reasonable, as printed matter was carried abroad, as at home, at

½d. per two ounces. Hon. Members would agree with him that the fine for each inland letter should not exceed ½d., and for a foreign letter 1d.

The heavy hand of the British Post Office fell even on such harmless and graceful sciences as that of conchology, as witness this racy protest from a gentleman of more than European fame whose letter was written before the institution of the uniform 2½d. letter rate to the Colonies)—

“Budleigh Salterton, Devon.

“Dear Mr. Henniker Heaton,—A foreign *arrant* lately sent me a box of shells for my identification, as they are New Caledonian species. He is publishing a splendid work on them. He paid about 2s. I replaced the shells in the box, reversed the paper, retied the string, so the weight was the same, and had to pay 1s. postage, besides being called upon to fill up and sign two declarations of value, contents, name of sender, and address ditto of consignee. &c., &c. Now, is not this too absurd? I am writing to all my old shell correspondents giving them my address. I have paid different postages—2½d., 3d., 4d., 5d., 6d.; and, I think, 3½d. Every other country seems to have an uniform postage of 2½d. There must be something rotten in the state of England if we cannot do the same. More power to your elbow!—Believe me, yours faithfully,

“E. L. LAYARD.”

OBVIOUS RULES.

It was abundantly clear, from what had been said, that it would require the memory of Porson and the acuteness of an old special pleader to have dealings with the Post Office without infringing one or more of its multitudinous Rules. And a curious point was, that where one of these Rules had an exception, the exception was sure to contain a new trap for the public. The following instance would suffice to show their insidious character. Messrs. Day & Co., 21A, Berners Street, London, W., wrote—

“We are allowed by the Postal Authorities to send batches of letters and circulars unstamped to the head and different district offices provided that the postage does not amount to less than £1, and then they are stamped in red as on enclosed envelope. The postage in England and everywhere else all over the world being alike for book packages, in addressing from various lists we no longer separate the foreign from the English addresses, with the result that the authorities take our money for the postage, stamp our circulars as paid, and then return them because the payment is not made in stamps. If instead of sending the circulars to the Post Office to be marked as paid we put ½d. stamps on them, the same ½d. stamps would cover them everywhere, so that in the

case I refer to the stamping of the foreigners cannot enable the authorities to keep any special account of them.”

Messrs. Dick Radclyffe, Limited, of 128, High Holborn, W.C., wrote that the Post Office accepted a sum of money to stamp the payment of postage in ink on a bundle of circulars. The officials afterwards altered their minds, and required adhesive stamps to be affixed, but declined to return the money first paid. A curious system was in vogue that only circulars for the United Kingdom could be stamped “postage paid.” What was the objection to having this done for circulars to be sent abroad? The next communication irresistibly recalled the story of the conscientious Scottish inn-keeper who would only supply small glasses of punch on Sundays, sternly replying to all remonstrances—“We dinna sairve large glasses on the Saw-bath.”

“6, Wedderburn Road,

“Hampstead, N.W.

“Dear Sir,—The Post Office is open all Sunday for sale of stamps, &c. I asked there this morning (Sunday) for a packet of reply post-cards, and was told that ordinary post-cards were sold there on Sundays, but no reply post-cards! Wishing you success in your efforts to make our Post Office arrangements more sensible,

“Yours truly,

“JOSEPH KING.”

What explanation could the Postmaster General offer for this stupid Regulation? He would now ask, when would the Postmaster General issue a popular *Post Office Guide*? When should we have a *Post Office Guide* written in the interests of the public? The Regulations were now obviously drawn up in the interests of the Department as a collector of Revenue. The principles of interpretation ordinarily adopted were reducible to two: (1) Read the regulation as unfavourably as possible to the public; and (2) Never alter a decision once pronounced. In the *United States Guide* 40 pages were devoted to suggestions to the public to guard them against error and fines.

Mr. T. R. Bridson, of Rock End, Torquay, wrote—

“I have spent three winters at Pau, during which my solicitors have frequently occasion to send me by post, deeds, leases, &c., which had also to be returned. I will give one instance. A package weighing 11½ ounces reached me from Liverpool. On this the British Inland Postage would be 4d.; the French Inland Pos-

tage fees, 3.60, or a little under 2s. 11d.; total, 3s. 3d. But the postage charge at Liverpool was 5s. Thus the cost of transit from Dover to Calais was 1s. 9d."

HINTS.

A very reasonable suggestion was, that letters should be received at the London District Offices on Sundays, for transmission by the evening mails. Letters posted at the General Post Office, the West Strand Telegraph Office, and the various railway termini were so forwarded, an extra fee being charged; and there could be no reason why residents in other parts of the Metropolis, as well as those living near the favoured spots, should not be similarly accommodated, as very little extra labour, of man or horse, would be involved. A man staying at an hotel in Northumberland Avenue had merely to walk round the corner and despatch an urgent letter; whereas millions of Londoners were miles away from the nearest point at which such letters were collected for despatch on Sunday.

Turning to Northern Australia, he commended to the authorities the following letter from Mr. Edwin Luxton, of Port Darwin:—

"Allow me to inform you that in this part of the world we receive our goods before we get advice of them. And as it is a great disgrace to the British Post Office that such a state of things should exist, I trust you will pardon me addressing you on the subject, knowing well, with everyone else, that you take great interest in postal matters. The General Post Office could easily make up a bag for this port, and send it *via* Hong Kong or Singapore, as we now have three lines of steamers running to these ports."

THE CALAIS-BRINDISI SCANDAL.

He had still to complain that a series of extravagant bargains had been made with the Governments of France and Italy respecting the conveyance of our mails between Calais and Brindisi. Under these agreements we were paying about £60,000 a year more than the market price of the service, which money went as a kind of subsidy from British to French and Italian taxpayers. Yet the Post Office loftily refused even to communicate the existing contract to Parliament. Where was our control of expenditure if the officials could render us liable, on a secret contract, for any

amount they pleased? The Postal Authorities positively declined to lay the contract on the Table. He maintained that they were acting illegally in declining to do so.

THE POSTMAN'S BAG.

Next, he met with a piece of brilliantly red-tape. It would be seen, from the official letter annexed, that a person could not drop an important letter into the bag of a postman who had just emptied a pillar-box. He must march to the next pillar-box a yard in front of the postman, and drop in his letter just before the latter came up. The actual facts of this case were that a gentleman asked a country postman returning from his round to take a letter for him to the post office, as there was no messenger available. Of course, in view of the Regulation, the postman declined to run any risk. He could not see why a postman should not allow his bag to be used, on emergency, as a collecting receptacle for letters—

"Chiddwall Lodge, Wavertree.

"Sir.—Pray excuse my bringing the enclosed under your notice as a very energetic Post Office reformer, to whom we all owe much. I asked a Post Office official going to the General Post Office, Liverpool, to drop me a stamped letter in the box there. I was, perhaps, distant a short quarter of a mile. He said he could not do so. I drew the postmaster's notice to the occurrence, saying that doubtless it was according to some Regulation, and of course I in no wise blamed the man, but I added I hardly thought the Regulation could be meant to apply to such a case, and if it was so intended I hardly thought it worthy of a Department claiming to be progressive. His reply I enclose. Pray don't trouble yourself to reply or to return the enclosed. I simply draw your attention to a fact, and beg you to accept my apologies for thus intruding, as a stranger, upon your notice.—Yours truly, ARTHUR EARLE."

Here was the reply from Mr. J. D. Rich, Postmaster, Liverpool, to the complaint of his correspondent—

"Dear Sir,—With reference to your letter of the 26th ultimo, I beg leave to state that the postman concerned acted in strict accordance with the Regulations in declining to take the letter which you offered to him in the street on Thursday last. The Rule on the subject is as follows:—"A postman is forbidden on pain of dismissal to carry or deliver, either singly or in parcels, ordinary letters of any kind, whether stamped or unstamped, which have not been regularly posted."—I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully, J. D. RICH, Postmaster."

THEFTS FROM PILLARS.

He had long been impressed with the necessity of adopting some means of preventing the numerous thefts from pillar-boxes and letter-boxes. Some mechanical check for this purpose was required. Such a contrivance, of simple yet effectual construction, had been shown him by Mr. Wilberforce, and a second invention of the kind had also been brought to his notice. The Post Office had refused to make a trial of either.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, &c.

He commended to the Postmaster General another suggestion on the subject of the trouble and delay so often experienced in the registration of births and deaths. A correspondent sent a suggestion, which was well worthy of consideration. Humanity dictated that we should render the duty of registering a death as easy as possible to the relatives of the deceased. His correspondent wrote—

“Town Hall, Charlton-upon-Medlock,
“ Manchester.

“Sir,—Your success and efforts for further facilities for the public lead me to ask your assistance for the purpose of throwing open the post offices of the Kingdom for the Registration of Births and Deaths. The present system is out of date, and costs £80,000 a year, which might be saved. It is monstrous that the occupiers of country districts should have to walk 10 or 20 miles to register a birth or death, when this State duty might be performed in five minutes at the village post office. To say nothing of the great inconvenience, waste of time and money to the public, it is very unwise to impose delay of interment in cases of infection, or where, as in the labourer's cottage, accommodation for the living is restricted. Can you help in this desirable reform?—Yours, &c.,

“G. BENNETT.”

THE ONLY SOLUTION.

There were a number of other suggestions to be considered. He could not hope to see all these reforms carried out by the Postal Authorities, and he therefore, as a means of solving the difficulty, advocated the passing of the following Motion:—

“To call attention to the friction, obstacles, and delays invariably attending any effort to procure the acceptance by the Postal and Telegraph Authorities of reforms, or changes in their rules and methods, called for in the public interest; and to move, That there be established a Postal and Telegraphic Consultative Committee, similar to that existing in France called ‘La Commission Consultative des Postes et des

Télégraphes,’ to consist, as in France, of 26 Members, selected from the Members of both Houses of Parliament, Presidents of Chambers of Commerce, Chairmen of Railway Companies, and representatives of the principal commercial, industrial, and social bodies, the Postmaster General to be President of such Committee. That it be the duty of such Committee to invite, consider, and report upon suggestions for the improvement of the Postal and Telegraphic Services.”

A LIST OF REFORMS.

In conclusion, he should like to sum up briefly the chief reforms and improvements of the Postal and Telegraph Services for which the public was waiting. He would do this by enumerating the various subjects to which the Postmaster General should devote his special attention. They were as follows:—

“1. That a Parcel Post should be established between this country and the United States.

“2. That the public be allowed to supply its own postcards, adhesive halfpenny stamps being affixed, as in other countries.

“3. That the ‘foreign’ postcard should be restored to its former dimensions.

“4. That letter-boxes should be attached to all through trains.

“5. That the rule against the use of discarded printed papers for newspaper covers should be abolished.

“6. That postmen should be authorised to allow mail-matter to be dropped into their bags.

“7. That excessive ‘portage’ charges for telegrams should be abolished or greatly reduced.

“8. That 1d. should be charged on the receipt given for a telegram.

“9. That conventional terms and phrases of courtesy in circulars, statements of account, &c., should not be taken to be ‘of the nature of a letter.’

“10. That the weight of a letter carried to India, Australia, and the Colonies generally, should be increased to one ounce for a single stamp.”

“11. That an ‘Agricultural Parcel Post’ should be established, at special low rates, for dairy produce, poultry, vegetables, fruit, &c.

“12. That where a post office is at present open on Sunday all articles sold there on week days shall be obtainable during the hours of business on Sunday.

“13. That the rules requiring a registered newspaper to be published at intervals not exceeding seven days, and to contain a certain proportion of news and articles of a particular character, shall be abolished.

“14. That postal officials shall undertake the registration of births and deaths.

“15. That the tariff of charges for the transmission of telegrams shall be purged of such anomalies as have been exposed.”

"16. That any written or printed or type-written matter which merely states the price, size, or place of publication of a newspaper shall be allowed to appear on the cover of such newspaper.

"17. That the fine for insufficient postage should not exceed the deficiency.

"18. That the Express Letter Service should be simplified; and that 'Express' envelopes should be sold, which may be posted in any pillar box by day or night.

"19. That the minimum charge for the sample post should be $\frac{1}{4}$ d. (for 2 ozs.)

"20. That the charge for the registration of a letter should not exceed 1d.

"21. That more postal and telegraph offices, and more frequent collections and deliveries, should be provided in country districts.

"22. That letters addressed to the Colonies or foreign countries should be stamped in batches on payment of the postage, without the necessity of affixing adhesive stamps.

"23. That postcards and stamped envelopes should be sold, as in other countries, at the face, or nominal, value.

"24. That the Parcel Post Service in the country towns should be improved and accelerated, and the charge for short distances reduced.

"25. That Postal Orders should be freely transmissible, at a moderate commission, between all parts of the Empire.

"26. That the commission on postal orders should be reckoned on the total amount purchased, and not calculated at so much for each order.

"27. That in the carriage of outgoing mails the most direct routes and swiftest steamships should be employed.

"28. That the parcel rates to the Colonies should be reduced.

"29. That the commission on foreign and colonial money orders should be reduced.

"30. That money orders should be obtainable at any time when a post office is open.

"31. That it should be permissible to trim the edges of a postcard so as to allow of its being enclosed in an envelope.

"32. That the chief office in each district should be open until the latest possible moment for the receipt of letters with an extra fee on Sunday.

"33. That the wording of the Regulation as to inserting the name of the page in a postal order shall be amended so as to make it clear that the name of a firm or company may be so inserted.

"34. That the 'mandat-carte' system of Switzerland shall be substituted for the inland postal order system, the money being delivered with the 'mandat' at the payee's residence.

"35. That naturalists' specimens shall be conveyed through the post at a nominal rate.

"36. That the hour of collection should be stamped on all documents posted, so as to enable the public to check, control, and trace the movement of correspondence.

"37. That when a mistake is made in telegraphing a word, that word only, and not the entire message, shall be repeated.

"38. That it shall be permissible to cut out embossed stamps and use them for postage.

"39. That the Post Office arrangements with the Railway Companies should be revised.

"40. That the charges on telegraphic money orders should be reduced, and the money sent with the order.

"41. That the charge for a private box at any Post Office should be £1 1s.

"42. That the 'Cash on Delivery' system should be introduced.

"43. That the arrangement under which the French and Italian Governments pocket some £60,000 a year, over and above the actual cost of transit, for the conveyance of British mails between Dover and Calais shall be revised, and the contract submitted to Parliament.

"44. That Imperial Penny Postage should be instituted from the United Kingdom to the Colonies.

"45. That our Government should propose the employment of an International stamp for transmitting mail-matter or small sums of money, and should keep on sale the chief foreign and colonial stamps.

"46. That all Post Office expenditure for sites and permanent improvements should be carried to a capital account, and spread over several years, instead of being defrayed out of one year's income.

"47. That privately-printed postcards should be stamped at cost price.

"48. That 'query' postcards (for question and answer on one card) and letter-cards should be introduced.

"49. That one-guinea postal orders should be supplied.

"50. That the Continental system should be introduced of placing a locked box in each postal pillar, with a perforation adjusted to that in the pillar, so that the postman has only to collect the boxes, and cannot touch the letters.

"51. That 'cartes-télégrammes' should be introduced (*i.e.*, correspondence should be transmitted from one part of a city to another through pneumatic tubes).

"52. That the Post Office accounts should be kept in a businesslike manner, and that full and clear estimates for all expenditure, without exception, should be submitted annually to Parliament.

"53. That full accounts should be annually published of foreign and Colonial correspondence.

"54. That registered Benefit Societies should be permitted to open current accounts at the Post Office Savings Banks.

"55. That the names and addresses (not exceeding eight words in all) of the sender and addressee of a telegram and all compound names should be transmitted free.

"56. That the right to advertise on the back of the 300,000,000 telegram forms annually consumed should be sold, the money so raised to be devoted to increasing the salaries of postal and telegraph officials.

"57. That direct cable communication should be established between Dover and Calais.