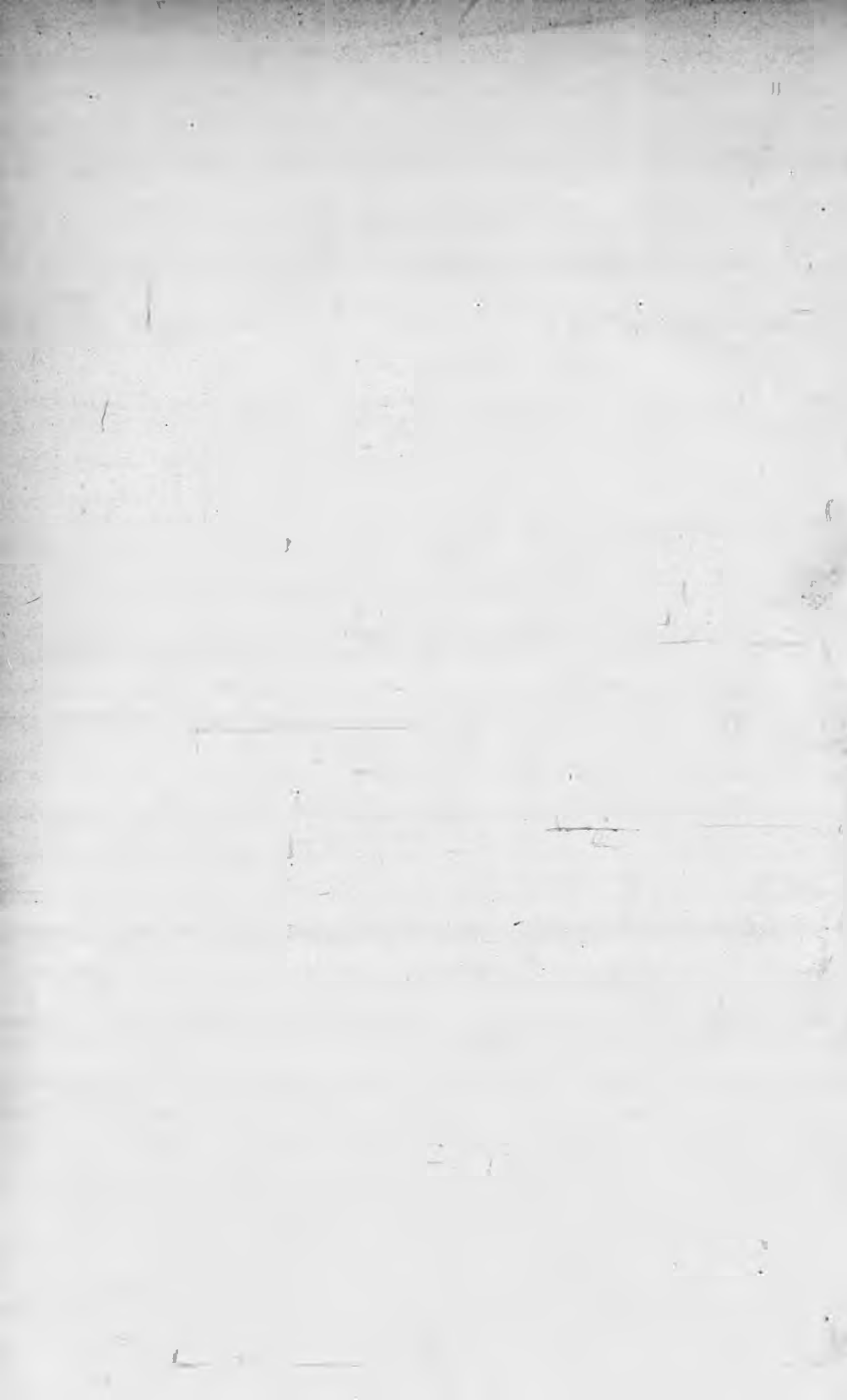




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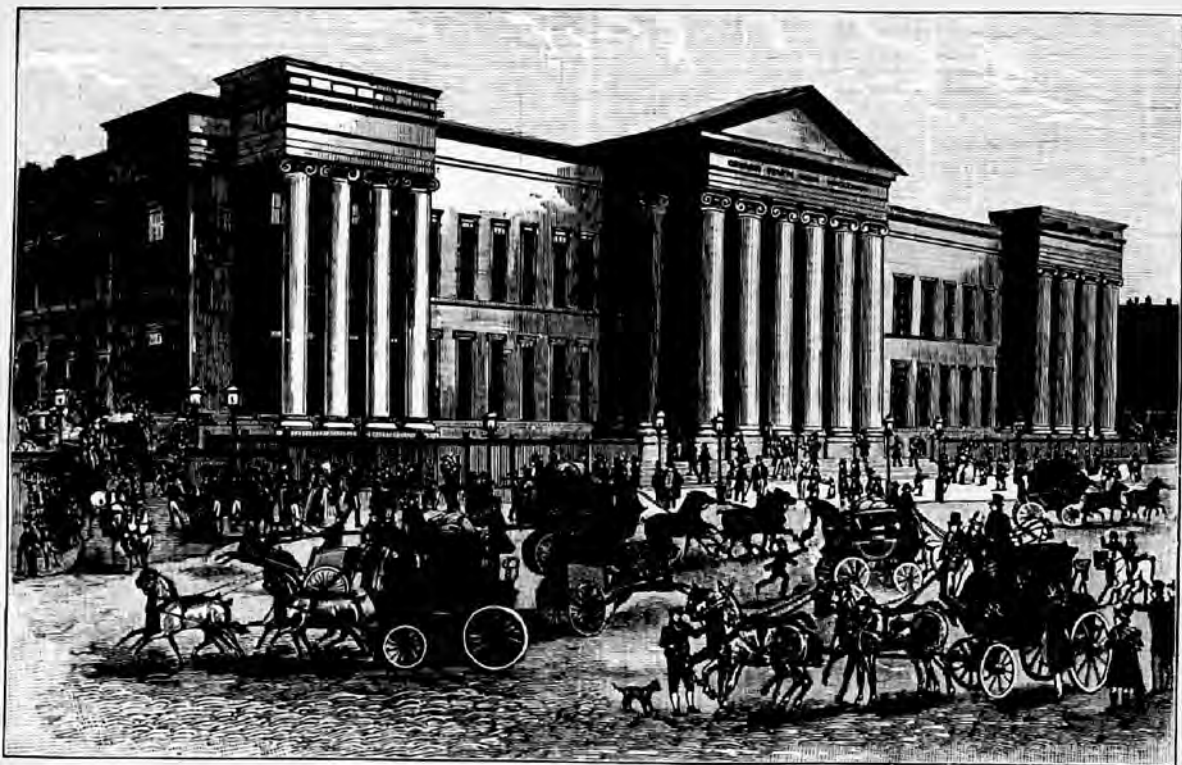


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FORTY YEARS AT THE POST-OFFICE







THE GENERAL POST OFFICE ST MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND.  
ABOUT 1830.

FORTY YEARS  
AT  
THE POST-OFFICE

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

BY  
F. E. BAINES, C.B.

SOMETIME SURVEYOR GENERAL FOR TELEGRAPH BUSINESS, ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY AND NORTHERN GENERAL OF MAILS

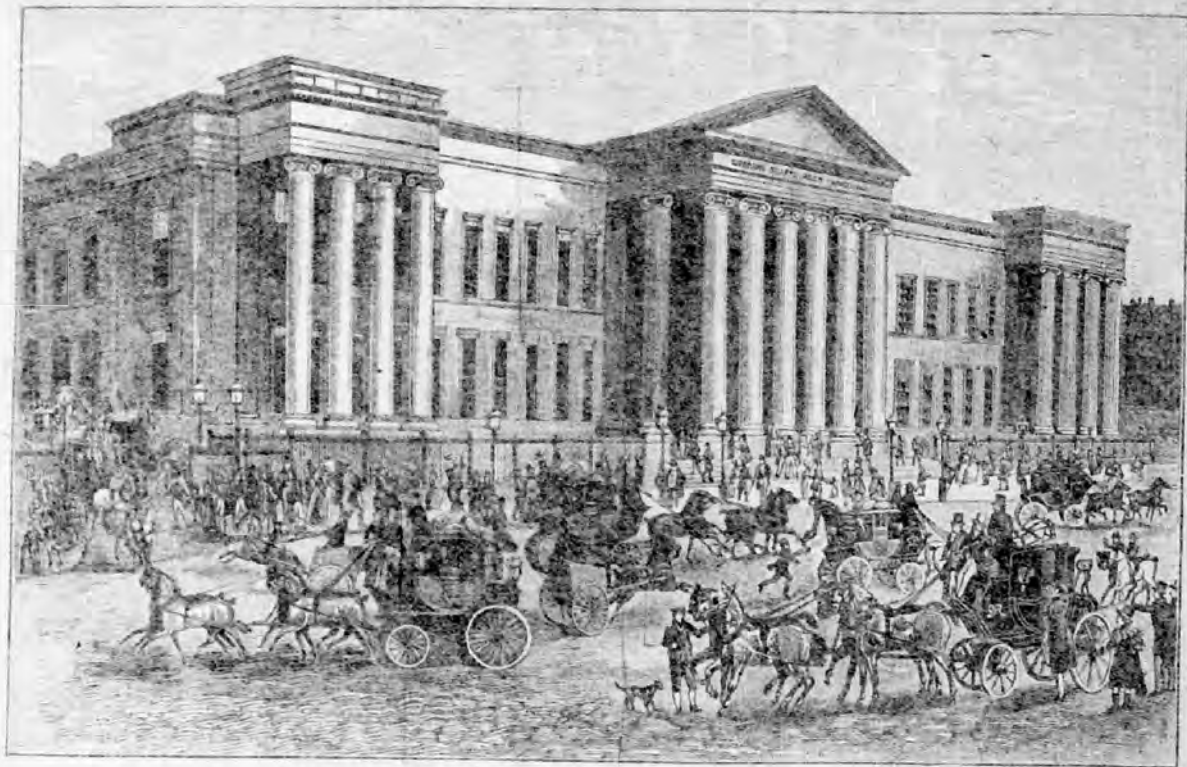


IN TWO VOLUME-  
VOL. I.

LONDON  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON  
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen

1895

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1890-1891



## P R E F A C E

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THE preparation of these volumes has enabled me, while describing the inner life of a great department of State, to dwell on a subject very near to my heart—the claim of the Post-Office, by reason of the service which it renders, to the goodwill of its master, the Public.

The headquarters of this department lie too far east of Whitehall for its permanent officials to be closely in touch with the governing bodies of the realm, a condition which may have lent strength to the tendency noticeable, certainly when the century was younger, to rate the revenue-earning branches, and therefore this one, on a lower level than the spending branches of the State.

That such tendency may be some day—and with justice—corrected seems probable, because in recent years honours have been bestowed in St. Martin's-le-

Grand with no illiberal hand, and authoritative words in praise of the efforts of the department have been uttered with approval in the Council of the nation.

Statesmen of eminence have found in the Post-Office congenial responsibilities, a field for administrative capacity, and a training-ground for the highest political employment.

Viscount Canning and the Earl of Elgin went from St. Martin's-le-Grand to the Viceroyalty of India. The Duke of Argyll and the Marquis of Hartington became Secretaries of State.

The Post-Office is a carrier, a banker, and a telegraphist on the largest scale known. It controls more than 131,000 persons. Its receipts from postal and telegraph sources swell by 13 millions of pounds sterling the national collections, and add two and a half millions to the net income of the country.

These are respectable figures, which seem to imply that the men who are at the head of affairs have something substantial to think of.

Moreover, the Post-Office lives under the eye of the Public, and is in contact with it at numberless points. Hence, if by chance the vast machinery should become, however slightly, out of gear, the air would quickly be thick with complaint. That the atmosphere remains tolerably clear, leaves it to be inferred that

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postal enterprise at St. Martin's-le-Grand is conducted with some degree of skill.

The organization of the department is probably not without interest for a part, at least, of the thirty or forty millions of human beings for whom it is continuously at work. In the hope of satisfying that interest, at least to a certain extent, I have sought to draw a true picture of the Inner Life of the Post-Office, its posts and its telegraphs, as seen in our time.

WEST CLIFF, BOURNEMOUTH,  
*October, 1894.*



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# FORTY YEARS AT THE POST-OFFICE

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## *PART I.*

CHAPTER I.—THE GREAT NORTH ROAD.

CHAPTER II.—THE WEST OF ENGLAND MAILS.

CHAPTER III.—THE CELT AND THE GAEL.

CHAPTER IV.—PENNY POSTAGE.

CHAPTER V.—THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.



## CHAPTER I.

## THE GREAT NORTH ROAD.

THE story set out in these pages ought in strictness to begin in the year 1855, when I became a covenanted officer of the Post-Office, and so include thirty-eight years, or at most bring in two or three earlier years spent within its walls, from 1848 to 1851, thus raising the tale to forty-one. In 1848, however, it was not as a postal servant that employment was given to me at St. Martin's-le-Grand; the duties of an accredited official of the Electric Telegraph Company, in charge of a public telegraph office established in its midst, had brought me there.

But, in point of fact, a still earlier date than either must be the starting-point—one, indeed, as early as 1832, the year of my birth. For although a claim to a share in the doings of the Post-Office when William IV. was on the throne, and the Duke of Richmond his Postmaster-General, would be one not easy for me to make out, still, between 1832 and 1855 much happened to influence the fortunes of the

department in after-years, which it seems proper to notice.

The year of my birth is mentioned because that fixes the date when the mail-coaches approached the heyday of their prosperity; and my birthplace—the pleasant old market-town of Chipping Barnet—because the Great North Road was the most famous of all the old mail-coach roads, and Barnet probably the best known of the coaching towns upon it.

My native town, as all are aware who own polled cattle, or who, about the month of September, have horses to buy or sell, is planted 11 miles from London, high up on a breezy plateau, on the border of Hertfordshire. Through it, of necessity, passed in the coaching days the bulk of the traffic between the Metropolis and the midland counties, Scotland and Ireland. Other highways, it is true, were available—on the east by way of Waltham Cross, and on the west through Aylesbury and Banbury—along which much Northern traffic could be conducted.

For instance, two mail-coaches left St. Martin's-le-Grand every night for Scotland. As they were driven out of the yard, one was turned to the right hand, and made for the Peacock at Islington, for Barnet and Biggleswade; the other bore round to the left into Cheapside, and shaped its course for the Flower-pot in Bishopsgate Street, for Hoddesdon and Royston. These two roads through eastern Herts are never more than 12 or 15 miles apart. They unite at

Alconbury Hill, 65 miles from the Post-Office. There were, of course, many fine mail-roads out of London—the Bath road especially—still, the Great North Road, when the combined efforts of Telford and Macadam had rendered it a magnificent highway, for smoothness, easy gradients, and bustle surpassed them all.

Barnet is the junction-point of the two main branches of this ancient highway. Until the early thirties the Great North Road held its course undivided a little to the northward of the town, as far, that is, as Barnet Pillar or Hadley High Stone—a column erected by Sir Jeremy Sambrooke, in 1740, to commemorate the battle fought on Easter Day, 1477, between Edward IV. and Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. It is there the road divides. Its eastern branch runs through Potter's Bar straight for Hatfield, Stamford, Leeds, and York; the western makes for South Mims, St. Albans, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Holyhead. For the acceleration of the Liverpool and Irish traffic, this western branch was shortened in the twenties by means of a new cut from the north-western edge of Barnet town to South Mims. An old inhabitant tells me he recollects the road being made through fields at Hadley, in 1820, so abridging the distance, and avoiding the perilous angles and declivities of Kitt's End and Dancer's Hill, and the floods and miry ways of Mims Wash. But in any case the traveller would have to traverse Barnet. There he would get fresh horses, his morning 'beaver,'

his snack by the way, his night's lodging, or a lift in the accommodation van. Thus, vehicular traffic of all kinds, and wayfarers in shoals, crowded in those days the Great North Road.

The lumbering wain, the smart swift, four-horse mail, the long stage-coach crammed with passengers, the market-carts from Sandy and Potton, the meteor-like post-chaise, or the travelling-carriage, with emblazoned panels and spacious rumble, drawn by four horses (two postilions in blue or yellow jackets riding the near-side horses), the modest chaise drawn by the less imposing pair; the ostlers shouting, horns blowing, yard-bells ringing, the bleating of flocks, the lowing of herds, the squeal of a pig, the drovers' cries, and, at night, flashes from the mail-coach lamps—such was the busy life of Chipping Barnet in the thirties, when the mail followed the road.

Almost every second house in the town had some design, in the way of business, of course, on the traveller's purse: inns by the score, saddlers, harness-makers, farriers, wheelwrights, smiths, corn-dealers—every conceivable craft, in short, which could be associated with the work of the road. Even the cage stood handy to the highway, for the easier incarceration of evil-doers; and though the stocks were, perforce, relegated to a less conspicuous position, still, it was close to the main-road, on a gravelly waste, that we found it convenient to pitch them. There they are still.

Gone, however, by 1882 were the stage-waggon,



whose wheels had felloes of 16 inches width, and whose weight, when fully loaded, was 8 tons. Gone, too, was the gross overcrowding of the stage-coaches. No longer were to be seen ten passengers on the roof, three on the box, four on the gamon-board, and six on the dicky, besides the coachman and conductor—instead of six passengers only, as the law directed. The Post-Office, however, kept within the legal limit, as might be expected, and strictly watched the mail-coach bookings.

No point was lost sight of. Even the highwayman flourished, though at a period long anterior to the thirties, and the glamour of Dick Turpin still hung—in fact, still hangs—about the locality. So much for the traffic of the old trunk road, of which the mail-coach was the most picturesque feature.

Once upon a time we even burnt a heretic in our market-place; but that stupendous event, it is right frankly to own, had nothing to do with the nineteenth century or his Majesty's mails. Still, the record lifts us out of the commonplace—and that must be my excuse for preserving it.

One more relic of the pre-Macadamite age: In 1810, all the mail-bags for the line of road from Hatfield to Boston were stolen from the mail-coach at Barnet while the horses were being changed. It is so long ago that the feat begins to acquire the respectability of age. It may be in part due to these exploits that Sir Stamford Raffles, when he came to live near us, expressed himself in terms

less complimentary than frank about his Hertfordshire neighbours. We are, however, model people now.

In those spirited books, 'Old Coaching Days' and the 'Coaching Age,'\* written by my fellow-townsmen, Mr. Stanley Harris—no mean wielder of the whip behind a four-horse team, by the way—are printed facsimiles of time-bills which my predecessors in the office of Inspector-General of Mails issued while mail-coaches were in their glory. Those of to-day are modelled on lines nearly identical with the old ones—quite the same when they apply to coaches, almost the same where trains come in question. They are essential to close supervision. 'What finer spectacle could be viewed than the despatch of the mail-coaches from the General Post Office?' asks Mr. Harris in a burst of just enthusiasm. What, indeed? Or what more stirring than the procession of her Majesty's mail-coaches on May 17, 1838 (the last one of the old coaching times, by the way), when twenty-five coaches assembled in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and, with a horseman between each coach, paraded the West End, and returned through the north gate of the Post-Office yard? From the same north gate a similar procession of parcel-coaches emerged in the summer of 1887. It paraded Cheapside and the Victoria Park, to the delight of many thousands of spectators.

Although mail-coaches were the chief feature of the

\* Richard Bentley and Son, 1882.

mail-road, and usually the swiftest conveyances, they were not always so—at least not in England and Wales. Twenty-eight mail-coaches were despatched from London every night; one record says twenty-nine, but it included either the Dover or the Harwich foreign mail coach. Both started at unusual hours, and were hardly orthodox mail-coaches at all. On the Great North Road alone there were no fewer than fifty or sixty coaches of all sorts, and the double trips resulted in a coach passing, in one direction or the other, every ten or fifteen minutes through the town of Barnet.

Unlike the practice which obtains in the nineties, when almost every railway-train is available for the conveyance of a mail-bag, little or no use was made for postal purposes of ordinary stage-coaches. So at Glasgow, for example, there were only two mails a day to Edinburgh, but there were coaches every two or three hours; coaches ran every hour to Paisley, but only three posts a day.

In fact, so late as 1836 the only instance in Great Britain and Ireland in which a bag of letters was forwarded under the sanction of the Post-Office by a stage-coach was a bye-bag conveyed by the Amity coach between Stamford and Cottersworth, a distance of 14 miles.

We had the Birmingham mails (one coach, however, ran by Aylesbury), and the Chester, the Holyhead and the Manchester mails. The Manchester mail-coach proper ran by way of Derby, accomplish-

ing 187 miles in  $20\frac{1}{4}$  hours, although later performances beat this by an hour and a quarter.

There were also the Hull mail, the Carlisle mail by Grantham, and the Leeds mail going through Melton Mowbray and Nottingham.

I give the time-table of the Liverpool mail-coach, which is historic in being the first long coach to be really hit by railways. In point of fact, after July 5, 1835, there were two coaches—the mail proper, which ran by way of Barnet and Knutsford, through the Potteries; and the Chester coach, which was prolonged to Woodside Ferry and there crossed the Mersey. The former coach left London at the usual hour of 8 p.m. It was due in Liverpool next day at 4.50 p.m.—203 miles in 20 hours 50 minutes; speed, including stoppages, whether for changes or meals, 9 miles 5 furlongs per hour. On the up journey it left at 10.30 p.m., and was in London at 9.30 p.m.—23 hours, or only 8 miles 6 furlongs per hour.

The Woodside coach, although a night mail down, running at 9 miles 1 furlong an hour, and arriving at 6.19 p.m., was a day mail up, starting from Liverpool at 8.15 a.m., and reaching London at 6.32 a.m. If all stoppages were deducted, the actual speed of this coach was  $9\frac{3}{4}$  miles an hour.

What does Bradshaw now show? The 10 p.m. mail-train from Euston is due at Liverpool at 3 in the morning—5 hours on the road instead of 20, or even 23; 40 miles an hour instead of less than 10.

Soon after nine o'clock at night, Barnet Hill was ablaze with the lamps of the down night mails. The distance from the General Post-Office to the Barnet Post-Office is computed at 11 miles and 2 furlongs. For this run, in the time-bill of the London and Carlisle mail-coach in 1836, when the latest accelerations had been effected, only an hour and eighteen minutes were allowed. A 'spanking trot' indeed this must have involved; and the busy officials who looked after the coaches of the past—Charles Johnson, George Louis, and George Stow, Surveyors and Superintendents—must have had their wits about them to keep the mails to time. Where would they have been, however, but for Telford, who improved the gradients of the Great North Road and straightened it, and Macadam from America, who made its surface smooth and solid?

This same mail-coach left St. Martin's-le-Grand at the usual hour of 8 p.m. On passing Barnet it took the Hatfield Road, leaving Hadley Highstone on the left hand. It was at Grantham next day in time for breakfast; at Wetherby, where there was a stop from 4.36 to 5.11 p.m., for dinner. There the passengers prepared for the final and most trying run to the border town.

The coach had given Leeds, its old halting-place, the 'go-by'; it called at Catterick or Greta Bridge (putting down Smike and Mr. Squeers for Dotheboys Hall, in time for stir-about and bed), and then, striking off to the westward, made for Brough,

Appleby and Penrith, a cold, long ride at the best of times. In due course they passed through Hesketh, and, hungry and worn out (saving by a deviation and quicker running 8 miles and 1 hour and 24 minutes), won into merry Carlisle before the earliest milkman was astir, at 48 minutes to 5 in the morning. So in 32 hours and 17 minutes the 'Flying Cumbrian' covered 302 miles and 7 furlongs, which means an average running speed, up hill and down dale, of, say,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles in the hour, including stoppages. In half an hour the coach for Glasgow started, this one rattling along at  $10\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour.

The Holyhead mail-coach, which also ran through Barnet, and is acknowledged to have been one of the swiftest mails out of London, took the north-western road, leaving Hadley Highstone on the right hand, if it went by Kitt's (or Kickes') End and Dancer's Hill, or, as it did when Telford's work was done, along the New Road, straight for South Mims. That coach got over the ground at the rate of 10.1 miles per hour, and accomplished the journey of 259 miles (one measurement gives 261), by way of Birmingham, Shrewsbury, and Capel Curig, in 26 hours 55 minutes. Now the mail, still leaving the Post-Office at 8 p.m., reaches Holyhead pier at 2.35 a.m., or in 6 hours and 35 minutes from London. The time-bill of this mail-train (at least, for the up journey) is the very last print issued under my signature.

From Barnet to Hatfield, through Potters Bar, the Carlisle mail had a splendid run, with scarcely a hill

to breast; the roads, too, through eastern Hertfordshire being then, as they still are, almost perfect. But from London along the Holyhead road, before Telford's time—alas for suffering horseflesh! The ill-made track under Highgate archway; the long pull up Barnet Hill—worse before a new slope was made than even now; the sudden dip by Wrotham Park; the abrupt angularities of the road beyond; the loose surface in dry weather of the gradient sinking to the Wash; and then the gruesome tug up Ridge Hill itself!

It was better running when Telford and Macadam's engineering work was completed; and those who have the curiosity to see what this notable mail road actually was before they took it in hand should forthwith repair to South Mims village. Northwards, beyond the White Hart, they will find to the west of the new road a bit of the old one, which will occasion not a little astonishment.

It is a singular fact that both these famous men, Macadam and Telford, were born within a year of each other (the former in 1756, and the latter in 1757), and died in the fulness of their labours almost at the same time, Telford—the younger man, first, at the age of seventy-seven, in 1834; and Macadam, at eighty, in 1836.

Macadam received £10,000 from national funds in acknowledgment of his services, Telford's reward being profitable employment on great works and a world-wide reputation.

Contrasts between the rate of travelling in the olden time, when the mail-coach itself was deemed to outstrip the wind, and the swift transits of the present day have not yet lost all novelty. Here are two within my own experience.

Once, on the platform at the railway-station of Stockton-on-Tees, about 1875, while waiting for the 10.43 a.m. train for York and London, the conversation of a young lady and an elderly gentleman met my ear. 'Papa, is not this quite a slow train? We do not get to London until six o'clock; we shall be more than seven hours on the journey—just think!' 'My dear,' replied the sagacious elder, 'be content; the last time I went from Stockton to London I was thirty-seven hours about it!'

Not long ago it was remarked in a journey on the Midland line from Derby to Leicester, 'How we crawl along!' As a fact, the train had left Derby at 1.35, and was then running into Leicester at 2.12; so that the apparently slow travelling was in reality a flight through the air at a velocity of nearly 49 miles an hour. The hypercriticism, as may be supposed, was the most genuine compliment which could be paid to the solidity of the rolling stock, and the sound and even condition of the permanent way of the Midland route.

A feature of mail-coach work was the monstrous size of the official way-bill, as it was styled in coaching language, or time-bill, as the department for sixty years has since preferred to describe it. In



these days the time-bill of, say, the London and Carlisle Railway night mail is printed on a sheet of foolscap 13 inches by 8; but the noble document entrusted to the guard of the Edinburgh mail in 1836 measured just 2 feet 6 inches by 11 inches. Moreover, it was a double sheet, the 'down' bill forming one leaf, and the 'up' bill the other. Now the two bills are printed back to back.

It passes comprehension how the guard managed to keep his bill tidy and entire. For in the most stringent terms he was enjoined by his instructions to see that the time-bill is 'justly dated and signed at every place.' There was no opening for a private note-book for hasty pencillings and for filling up the time-bill in peace at the journey's end. 'He is to be very careful of the time-bill,' ran George Louis's orders; 'and if torn or lost is to give immediate notice.'

The average weight of mail carried by coach out of London ranged from 345½ lb. to 463 lb. A mail-coach could, if needful, carry 1,680 lb. of mail matter, so that on most mail-coaches there was a good margin for growth of the post. One or two were, however, overloaded.

In my boyhood there was a regular weekly posting at Barnet on Sunday of newspapers, brought from London by a special cart. The explanation is that no private individual was permitted to send postal packets by the mail-coaches on Sunday from London. The publishers of London Sunday newspapers, there-

fore, had recourse to the first post-town out of London, on the several coach roads, to send copies by post to provincial subscribers. On a Sunday in August, 1835, newspapers were accordingly posted as follows : Barnet, 460 ; Hounslow, 317 ; Croydon, 11 ; Romford, 91 ; Waltham Cross, 315.

When, after 1838, the road traffic declined, there were not wanting attempts, abortive as they proved to be, to beat the four-horse coach by steam, even on its own ground. About the period of the Bedford Times being taken off the Hatfield road, consequent, it may be supposed, on the opening of the branch railway from Bletchley to Bedford, several efforts of the kind were made. Great, I recollect, was the astonishment of the Barnet townfolk one autumn evening at hearing resonant snorts and puffs in the High Street, wherein there appeared, carrying passengers, a vast machine on four wheels, urged by a portable furnace, and furnished with a boiler which emitted clouds of vapour.

This was a steam carriage, which had worked its way by road from London. It already hung out many signals of distress. Tools were borrowed to repair damages. An ingenious man named Blencowe (who afterwards submitted a plan to Government for destroying the wreck of the *Royal George*, and for confounding the Queen's enemies by explosives, on probably the torpedo principle) volunteered his services, and the machine was patched up to enable it to start on the return journey. But Prickler's Hill

sorely tried a shattered constitution; and Brown's Wells, near Turpin's Oak, on Finchley Common, must have given the steam-coach its *quietus*, for the Great North Road saw it no more.

The Manchester and Liverpool coaches, those on the Birmingham, Chester, and Holyhead roads, were naturally among the first to feel the strain of railway extension; although in 'An Old Coachman's Chatter'\* it is recorded that the Wonder, which ran between London and Shrewsbury, only ceased to cover the journey throughout when the forties had well begun.

The Bedford Times was the last four-horse coach to come off the Great North Road. It carried—what no other coach to the best of my recollection did—a time-piece on the near-side of the box-seat, and so gave true time down the road. Between forty and fifty years later it fell to me, as Inspector-General of Mails—and it was one of my latest acts of office—to revive in part coach-life on the York road by arranging the trial trip of the Royal Parcel Mail-coach which now runs from London to Bedford.

Our two chief hotels were the Red Lion, under Mr. Charles Bryant, and the Green Man, kept by Messrs. Newman and Buckle. The former hotel found me beneath its roof for the night in the spring of 1892. The morrow was the day of Harpenden races. The bustle of the road of boyish days revived,

\* Richard Bentley and Son, 1891.

and something like the coach traffic of childish recollections crowded once more the Great North Road. Fours-in-hand dashed up to the Lion and to the Old Salisbury Arms; but the days of the Green Man had long since been numbered, and the vast stable-yard rang no more with the cry for 'Two pair to St. Albans, and look sharp!'

The Duke of Beaufort states in the Badminton Series that he has seen in places—notably at Barnet, amongst others—four horses turn out, say, from the Red Lion, on a carriage coming in sight from London (they could see nearly a mile southward from the Lion door), to tempt the travellers to change there. Sometimes they would do so; at others, writes the Duke, they galloped by to the Green Man, and the Red Lion horses turned in again.

As to the Green Man, it is on record\* that on the occasion of a great prize fight in Hertfordshire, between Gully and Gregson, the amount received at the hotel on May 9, 10, and 11, 1808, was as follows:

			£	s.	d.
For posting (187 pairs) ...	...	...	141	17	10½
Bills in the house ...	...	...	54	19	0
Bills in the yard...	...	...	14	10	0
			<hr/>		
			£211	6	10½

Even before railways came into vigorous life, the position of the trustees of the mail roads had become critical. With all the toll-paying traffic which passed over them, the roads did not clear their full

\* 'Old Barnet' (Stevens).

cost. In the 11 miles between my native town and London there were, to the best of my recollection, turnpike gates across the road at Whetstone, at Highgate, south of the Archway (where, though on foot, I used to pay toll), at Islington, and in the City Road. So the road-traffic was caught at every point. Yet the trustees' finances were in a deplorable state. There were in 1838 more than 1,100 separate turnpike trusts. The trustees owed £8,500,000. Their income was upwards of £1,750,000, and their current expenditure left, it is true, a margin of £600,000. But, then, interest at the rate of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. had to be paid on their debts, and probably money put by as a sinking fund for redemption of capital. Hence they were in a bad way. Interest was £1,000,000 in arrear.

But a Post-Office servant ought to be chary of criticising highroad management, seeing that his department claimed the right to send the Queen's mails along the Queen's highway toll free, and so brought no grist to the trustees' mill.

We who are Barnet-born cling fondly to the legend that from a bedroom window of our post-office was thrown out by the postmaster's wife to the night mail-coach, in mistake for the London letter-bag, the leathern small-clothes of the worthy postmaster. They were carried on to Highgate, says a local historian (Mr. S. Byford), who adopts the anecdote, and then brought back by the guard. But many small towns—Dunbeath, in Caithness, amongst them—

claim the small-clothes story, which is one that men's minds could swiftly grasp and husbands appreciate even sixty years ago.

In 1840 our solitary postwoman, Mrs. Child, was a cherry-cheeked bright old lady, apparently none the worse for her two-score years of postal trudges. She began her work when George III. had been forty years upon the throne, and it was well into Victoria's reign before she laid down her staff, ended her useful round of faithful labour, and ceased to draw her regulation pay.

Concerning this good soul a story is told which may bear repetition. A friend from a distance visited, early in the century, Mr. Hopewell, the grocer. He was much impressed at finding that the post-letters were delivered by a woman (Mrs. Child), whose constant cry on her rounds was: 'Letter—fou'pence!' meaning, of course, a letter for delivery, fourpence postage to pay. The friend went to Australia, spent nearly forty years in the colonies, returned at last, again visited his friend, and the first sound which saluted him on rising in the morning was the same cry from the same postwoman: 'Letter—fou'-pence!'

We have had at Barnet some admirable postmen, untiring and loyal servants of the State, who worked hard for very little money, and made the public interests their own. The son of one of these worthy men rose to distinction in the department, and became postmaster of the great

chartered town, 900 years old, of Wolverhampton. It is not easy, by the way, to find an example more striking of prosperity, measured by the postal test, advancing by the now proverbial 'leaps and bounds' than is afforded by the said town of Wolverhampton. So recently as the year before I joined the Post-Office—*i.e.*, in 1854—one person sufficed to deliver its letters; now fifty-six postmen are employed on the town services alone, and almost as many telegraph messengers in delivering telegrams; so that the force for distributing postal packets in Wolverhampton has in forty years increased a hundredfold.

What was Mrs. Child's pay is uncertain. But the scale of remuneration for the rural foot posts of the locality was frugal in the extreme. The post to South Mims, 3 miles off, cost no more than £4 9s. 3d. a year, while that to Shenley, 4 miles off or a little more, cost £6 19s. 0d. On Hadley, the beautiful village which adjoins Barnet, money was spent with a lavish hand, the outlay being no less than £7 7s. 4d. a year, but for this sum no doubt two deliveries were exacted. From Barnet Post-Office to Hadley Church is a mile; the whole round of the village, to Hadley Hurst, the Mount, and the Highstone and back, would not be less than 3 miles, perhaps 4—but say for the double journey 7 single miles. The handsome allowance of £7 7s. 4d. a year, or less than 3s. a week, would yield to the postman, even assuming that one day in seven was a

blank day (which is assuming a good deal), pay at the rate of less than a penny for each mile walked. Now, the weekly walk of a rural postman, including a Sunday in turn, is on the average 94 single miles. His wages, counting the value of clothing, medical attendance, and Sunday pay, range from £1 to 22s. a week. Stripe pay raises the maximum to 25s. a week, which amount (although wages are now calculated rather by time than distance) is equal to 3d. for each mile walked by the postman—or threefold the pay of the thirties.

In the same way that distances of towns from London by railway are not measured from one central spot but from the respective termini, so the measurement of the highroads in the coaching days was determined by a starting-point selected, sometimes in the City of London, at others on its outskirts.

When the General Post-Office was situated in Lombard Street, distances calculated from the Standard in Cornhill were practically the same as if reckoned from the Post-Office itself; and when, in 1829, the new building in St. Martin's-le-Grand was occupied and Hicks' or Hicke's Hall was the measuring-point for the Barnet road, the reputed distances from London were only about 3 furlongs short of the true distance from the Post-Office. The place where Hicke's Hall formerly stood can still be identified. In the wall of a tavern in Peter's Lane, at the corner of St. John's Street and St. John's Lane, in West Smith-



field, a tablet is fixed at about 20 feet from the ground. It bears the following inscription :

‘ OPPOSITE THIS PLACE HICKE’S HALL  
FORMERLY STOOD,  
1 MILE 1 FURLONG AND 13 YARDS FROM  
THE STANDARD IN CORNHILL,  
4 FURLONGS 205 YARDS FROM HOLBORN  
BARRS DOWN HOLBORN, UP SNOW HILL,  
COW LANE, AND THROUGH SMITHFIELD.’

Oddly enough, Paterson, in his ‘Roads,’ which book is an authority of great value, makes no mention of the famous Standard in Cornhill, although he does mention the Obelisk in Fleet Street, the Stones’ End in the Borough, Tyburn Gate, and other ancient land-marks or boundaries. His measurements are made from London and Westminster Bridges, the Stones’ End, Tyburn Turnpike, Hyde Park Corner, Hicke’s Hall, and Shoreditch and Whitechapel Churches.

The Post-Office, of course, paid for the mail-coaches a mileage reckoned from the Post-Office door, but the distance traversed continually changed because of local improvements. For instance, even as late as 1838, it was 46 miles from Taunton to Bristol; it is now 44 miles.

In 1837 the distance run in England and Scotland was 6,643,217 miles. This was 404,739 miles more than in the year previous, and 732,211 more than in 1833. So it is clear that up to the end of 1836, at any rate, the mileage was a rapidly increasing quantity.

In 1837, mail-coaches, mail-guards, and other items of expense in connection, cost £107,122; tolls paid on the mail-coaches absorbed £33,863 more, so the grand total for the year was £140,985. I must admit that the last item is not easy to explain, as mail-coaches were exempt from tolls. Perhaps in some cases a payment was made to the trustees as an act of grace.

Not for long was the magnificent road on which Telford and Macadam lavished their fruitful genius to be the thronged highway of the nation. Watt had mastered the potentialities of steam; Stephenson had built the Rocket. The year 1838 was at hand. The doom of the mail-coach was too surely foreshadowed. For the Grand Junction Railway, which was already at work between Birmingham and Liverpool and Manchester, had cut short the triumphs of the South Lancashire coaches, and so made desolate the middle ground of the North Road mails; and the London and Birmingham Railway Bill had not only received the Royal Assent, but the first sod of the new line had been cut. By July 20, 1837, even the first length of 24½ miles of the iron way was completed from London to Boxmoor.

Still, up to the summer of 1837, and, in fact, as late as April, 1838, the highroads held their traffic, being comparatively undisturbed by the rail. Some new coaches, even, were put on them. At the latter date there were 59 first-class mail-coaches at work in England and Wales, 16 in Scotland, and 29 in

Ireland. There were also 72 second-class coaches carrying mails, besides unnumbered pair-horse and three and four horse stage-coaches.

It was not for twenty years after the opening of the Grand Junction line that the actual end of the Lancashire coaches came. The very last of the four-horse mail-coaches to run out of Manchester—the last, in fact, of the Midlands—was the old Derby mail, not the same coach which in earlier years had carried the London and Manchester night mail *vid* Derby, Leek and Stockport, but that which ran by way of Buxton, Bakewell and Rowsley. It made its last trip on the first Saturday in October, 1858. But it had degenerated somewhat, and its cattle were not the blood steeds of the palmy coaching days.

A first-class mail-coach had to conform to the following inside 'sitting' dimensions. From roof to floor, 4 feet 8 inches; from roof to top of cushion, 3 feet 4 inches; from back to front, 4 feet 10 inches; from side to side, 3 feet 7 inches. Weight, it might be supposed, would have been a more important limitation.

The fastest of the 59 mails was the Liverpool and Preston coach. One would like to know how many changes there were in the 32 miles, and how long the beautiful horses which drew this swift coach, at about 11 miles an hour on the average, survived so trying a pace. Perhaps two years, or three at the most. The Post-Office paid for the coach no more than three halfpence a double mile.

But other mail-coaches ran the Preston mail pretty close. The Carlisle and Glasgow coach, as will have been seen, and the Bristol and Brighton coach (138 miles), were bound to a speed of 10·4 miles per hour. A new direct mail-coach from Bristol to Liverpool—one of the Duke of Richmond's extensions—ultimately ran over parts of the ground at a great pace; but in 1836 the contract time was no more than 9 miles 2 furlongs in the hour. Then came the famous London and Devonport mail: 10 miles 3 furlongs per hour.

After these 'fliers' of the road, three mail-coaches may be grouped together as running at 10·2 miles in the hour: the London and Bristol (121 miles), the Birmingham and Sheffield (75 miles 6 furlongs), and the Gloucester and Carmarthen (117 miles 7 furlongs). These were, of course, all four-horse coaches.

Again, there were ten other coaches which covered the ground at a speed of 10 miles an hour. The mileage rates were very various, as low as a halfpenny per mile (indeed, the Liverpool and Manchester coach took the mails for nothing; the railway, however, had been some years at work between the two cities), and as high as 11½d. for the Carmarthen and Pembroke coach, or even 1s. 3¼d. for the London and Dover (foreign mail) coach.

Epitomized, the four-horse night mail-coaches which conveyed the North and North-western mails to and from London, chiefly, though not exclusively, by the Great North Road, and which were running as

lately as April 4, 1838, are shown in the subjoined table :

Coach.	Rate and speed per hour.		Number of miles travelled.		Rate per annum of mileage and per double mile.	
	Miles.	Fur.	Miles.	Fur.	Per annum. £	Per mile. d.
London to Berwick ...	9	5	339	7	{ 922 to York	3½
Carlisle <i>via</i> Wetherby ) (Glasgow mail) ... )	9	6	302	7	{ 666 to Berwick	3
Derby.....	9	7	126	0	1787 { to Wetherby	4½
Halifax .....	10	0	195	5	790	4½
Holyhead .....	10	1	259	2	682	2½
Woodside (for Liver- pool) .....	9	6	205	0	1281	3½
Hull .....	9	6	172	5	1598	5½
Leeds .....	9	5	198	7	1083	4½
Louth.....	9	4	148	0	1234	4½
					1379	5½

The day mail to Birmingham *via* Barnet ran at a speed of 10 miles 1 furlong per hour, and for the small payment of one penny per double mile.

From the date of the opening from London of the first considerable section of the Birmingham railway, the fate of the highway was sealed; for then began this fell opponent to sap the long traffic of the Great North Road. Section after section was thrown open to the public—as far as Tring by October, 1837; as far as Denbigh Hall (48 miles) by the following April, when the upper ground lost the four Birmingham night coaches altogether. They were all put on trucks at Euston Grove, and sent by rail to Denbigh Hall. The exact position of Denbigh Hall Station is doubtful; but tradition has it that the

rails, at the period mentioned, ended abruptly near a little inn a mile or two north of Bletchley, just where they touched the Great North Road. This, no doubt, was Denbigh Hall Station.

At length the railway was opened throughout from London to Birmingham, a distance of  $112\frac{1}{4}$  miles, on September 20, 1838. The procession of mail-coaches on her Majesty's birthday wended its way through London for the last time; coach after coach was withdrawn; no more guards were appointed by the Post-Office.

Then the London and Birmingham Railway Company united their fortunes with the Grand Junction Line, which had already carried the mails from Birmingham to Liverpool and Manchester; the Midland Counties Railway Company cut a line from Rugby to Derby and Leeds; and away, at once and for ever, were spirited the glories of the Great North Road between London and Barnet, of the North-western Road from Barnet by Birmingham, and practically of the York Road through Potters' Bar.

Her Majesty's mails, with one exception, no longer swiftly bowl along the High Street of Chipping Barnet; but, as a survival of the past, there still remain on the walls of the General Post-Office the names of the 'roads' under which the mails going North are to this day grouped. The 'Chester Road,' the 'Preston Road,' the 'Carlisle Road,' all tell of the stirring years when the Birmingham Tally-Ho, the Shrewsbury Wonder, and the Manchester Tele-

graph were the pride of this great Northern highway.

In 1830, the legend goes, the Independent Tally-Ho, one of three Birmingham Tally-Ho's which ran along the Great North Road, covered on a special trip 109 miles in 7 hours 39 minutes—a feat which seems almost incredible. The Greyhound, another coach which passed through Barnet, performed also a special trip (but this was in 1838) from London to Shrewsbury at the rate of 12 miles an hour.

In the West of England, as in Scotland and in Ireland, mail-coaches yet flourished for a season; but the spoiler's hand, taking the form of railway extension, was soon to be raised against them.

If the final touches were given to the English mail-coach service when Lord Lichfield was Postmaster-General, yet to the Duke of Richmond no small credit is due for the improvements effected under his administration.

For two or three years, about 1832, the Post-Office was full of energy. Sir Francis Freeling was yet at his desk, and the Duke of Richmond was making his mark. No fewer than thirty-nine principal improvements were effected at that period. At the same time, and for some years later, Commissions of Inquiry were sitting on the Post-Office, and reporting with amazing fulness and frequency. They overhauled the mail-coaches, the packets, the establishments — nothing escaped their searching eyes.

The mail-coaches throughout the United Kingdom were generally accelerated, especially those to and from Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, the principal commercial districts, and the main cross-posts. Twelve new mail-coaches were established, and many old ones were extended and improved in their time-tables. Lord Lichfield completed the work by tightening up the running all round.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE WEST OF ENGLAND MAILS.

THERE is much vitality in old titles and old phrases in the Post-Office; and so, although, as the thirties faded, the rail superseded the road, the good old designation of Mail-Coach Office survived at the General Post-Office until 1854.

In two cases, at least, if not in three, the Mail-Coach Office drew its head from the West. Mr. George Louis, an officer who is described as having a 'thorough knowledge of the details of the service,' had been Surveyor of the Western District from 1824. In 1835 he was appointed, in succession to Mr. Charles Johnson, formerly chief clerk in the Secretary's office, to be Surveyor and Superintendent of Mail-Coaches. When he came to the head of the Mail-Coach Office, Mr. George Stow (a name which is preserved in the Post-Office to the fourth generation) succeeded to the West of England surveyorship.

Daniel William Stow, father of George Stow, was Superintending President of the Inland Office in 1835. He was one of the two proprietors (Mr. Watts

being the other) of the money-order office as then in operation. These two gentlemen found the necessary capital, charged 8d. in the pound as commission, which realized £2,000 a year, and shared the proceeds with the Postmasters. The annual profits of the money-order business were variously estimated by the proprietors at from £446 to £672, but £533 seems to have been the exact average. Mr. D. W. Stow died about 1835. His grandson retired a few years ago from the post of Metropolitan Surveyor, and his great-grandson is an officer of the department.

On the resignation of Mr. Louis in July, 1838, Mr. George Stow in turn took charge of the mail-coaches, until his death in 1852. He had been followed in the West by Mr. G. H. Creswell, father of the Secretary of the Post-Office in Ireland, and at St. Martin's-le-Grand by Mr. W. T. Wedderburn. But by 1852 mail-coaches had been entirely played out; and in August, 1854, just before my own appointment to the Post-Office, the Mail-Coach Office was abolished, and a new branch was established under the title of the Mail Office, which lasted for about fifteen years, then grew unwieldy, and was in its turn also abolished.

Over the Mail Office was set my earliest predecessor in the title of Inspector-General of Mails, the late Mr. Edward John Page. Many old railway servants will still call to mind the attractive presence and trained intelligence of this brilliant official. On his retirement, the late Mr. Arthur Benthall was ap-

pointed Inspector-General of Mails, and in 1882 the post was conferred upon me.

When George Louis was made Superintendent of Mail-Coaches, and removed in 1835 to London, he left the Western roads in the full glory of that admirable mail-coach system of which John Palmer of Bath, at the close of the previous century, had laid the solid foundation. There were, it is true, some accelerations to come, but the system practically was in its prime.

Out of London at night the Post-Office despatched the mails for the West of England by two great thoroughfares, partly by that to Uxbridge and Oxford, but mainly by the Bath road, which traverses Hounslow. The latter is of so much interest in connection with the West of England mail-coaches that a short account of this famous highway and its principal branches will probably be acceptable.

From Hyde Park Corner through Brentford to Hounslow, the first stage out of London, is 10 miles. There the road for Salisbury and Exeter bears off to the left hand, the Bath road inclining to the right hand. Both go over the original Heath. Let us follow out the Bath road proper.

It passes through Colnbrook to Maidenhead, where it throws out a spur, which forms a second route to Oxford, almost as direct as that of the Uxbridge road and High Wycombe. From Maidenhead the road proceeds to Reading and Marlborough, and there enters on those wide-spreading Downs which abound

in barrows and other memorials of early British days. From Beckhampton on the Downs the Bristol coach pursued the even tenor of its way to Chippenham and Bath direct; but the Bath mail proper turned aside and swooped round by Devizes, so as to take in that town and Melksham. So far the Bath and Bristol road. Let us revert to Hounslow.

It is at the tenth milestone from London that the Exeter road branches out of the Bath road. It makes straight as a dart for Staines, over ground where galloping was habitual in the old days, and then runs through Bagshot and Hartford Bridge Flats to Basingstoke, Whitechurch, and Andover. Here is an important point. Exeter lies 110 miles ahead; virtually there are three roads to choose from, all of which again unite at Honiton, 16 miles short of Exeter, viz. : (1) by Salisbury, Blandford, Dorchester, and Axminster; (2) by Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Yeovil, and Chard; and, quickest of all, (3) by Amesbury (leaving Salisbury some miles to the left hand), Wiley, Mere, Wincanton, Ilchester, and Ilminster.

Because of its position on the Bath and Exeter roads, Hounslow was of no mean importance as a coaching town. As at Barnet, the Red Lion welcomed the wayfarer, and with the George, the Prince Regent, and the Marquis of Granby, shared the posting. The mail-coach horses stood chiefly at Mr. Chaplin's own stables (where in 1835 he kept 150), or at the Crown and Cushion Inn; which latter,

altered somewhat, still exists. Chaplin, the younger, it is said, owned altogether 1,300 horses; in April, 1835, he certainly had 1,200. He owned also the great coaching-house of the Swan with Two Necks in Lad Lane.

But the highwayman who meant to rob the Exeter mail probably stabled his thoroughbred, or at least primed himself with a final cup, at the Bell Inn, which is still in its original condition, standing exactly as it stood when Hounslow Heath extended to its very water-trough, and when the timid, going westwards, began to quake as the cheerful light of its bar parlour waned on the view, and they neared the solitary part, to the right of the site of the powder-mills. At least six or eight mail-coaches passed through at night in each direction, and they were a mere drop in the ocean of vehicular traffic. The day-coaches, which left London before noon by the Bath road, were eighteen in number; so that the double journeys of mail and day and night stage-coaches alone through this important town could hardly have been fewer than sixty per diem.

Fine as was the condition of the Bath road in the prime days of coaches—so fine that parts were complained of as being too good, and tending to make coachmen careless—there was a time, even in this century, when a great coaching-master said he had known the road to be two feet deep in mud across Hounslow Heath. Of the London and Brighton road, it was alleged that ‘it spoilt the breed of coach-

men,' so excellent was its condition. Experts expressed the opinion (but surely they went too far!) that on the twenty-four Brighton coaches an 'artist' was scarcely to be found, all the difficulties of the roadway, which developed skill and resource on the box, having been smoothed away.

Bath, as was proper, had the use of two mail-coaches with London. It was still the great watering-place of the West—even of the whole country—for the fame of its curative waters and its gaieties, though dimmed somewhat since the days of Beau Nash, were yet attractive to the rich, and a large correspondence had to be provided for. Moreover, Bath was the point of junction of no fewer than six great mail-roads, and if the London and Bristol coach was overloaded, there was the Bath coach proper, which broke out of the London road at Beckhampton and ran through Devizes, and afterwards made for Wells and Bridgwater and Exeter to relieve it.

If Bath took the palm for writing more frequently than other towns letters closed by seals enriched with armorial bearings, the citizens of Bristol had, from the mercantile point of view, the more important correspondence. They knew what it was to pay 2s. on a letter from Jamaica or New York, and 3s. on one from Egypt; and to write by the Flanders mail every Tuesday and Friday to the Continent, monthly to the Brazils at a postage to Rio de Janeiro of about 3s. 6d., and monthly to North America.

Bristol being the head and centre of the sugar

trade, its foreign and colonial correspondence was large. Such letters were usually enclosed in brass-labelled white leather bags, touching which a story may with some reserve be repeated.

During the war in the East, in 1854, white leather bags were also used for Government despatches. A consular servant obtained possession of two empty bags of this sort, which he forthwith converted into commodious small-clothes for personal use and adornment. The theft remained undiscovered until, one hot summer's day, the wearer mechanically threw off his coat. Then, as he turned his back on the spectators, the boldly stencilled inscription, 'G.P.O., London,' betrayed him to English eyes.

Nor was Bristol behind Bath as a junction point. Four great coach-roads came to a focus there, and mail-coaches, to say nothing of rides to places nearer at hand, ran to and from London, Exeter, Birmingham, and Portsmouth, and Cardiff, Swansea, and Hobb's Point, in Milford Haven. The coach for the last-named place crossed the estuary of the Severn at New Passage. The Post-Office allowed an hour for crossing. Now the Severn is passed by means of the Tunnel in a few minutes.

To go behind the year 1832, and glance at Bristol, fast approaching its thousand years of corporate life, at the period when it was the second port in the kingdom, is irresistible;

Even in 1671 it had a post-office—at any rate, an office for letters. In fact, as far back as 1600 a

Bristol postmaster is spoken of; but he, no doubt, had post-horses rather than post-letters to attend to. In 1700 Henry Pyne—who may have been the postmaster—built a new office in Small Street. That one lasted until 1738, when it was pulled down, and Thomas Pyne—who certainly was the postmaster, and possibly a grandson of Henry—established himself in Corn Street, where Post-Office Chambers stand. There the office remained for a hundred and twenty years, when—that is, in 1868—it was moved back again to Small Street, to the new building which now houses the department.

During the hundred and twenty years of the sojourn in Corn Street not a few changes had been seen, among them the rise and fall of the mail-coaches and the end of the high rates of postage. The Bristol Post-Office sixty years ago delivered fewer than 20,000 letters in a week, or about 1,000,000 in a year; now in a year the Bristol postal district delivers 32,000,000. Fifty years ago the staff consisted of a postmaster and five clerks. It now consists of 800 established officers; in fact, if the sub-offices and mail-drivers be included, it gives employment to 1,365 persons.

Bristol had long enjoyed a local penny post. In the thirties that post covered a wide area, from Thornbury in the north, and Wotton-under-Edge, to Temple Cloud, Cheriton, Mendip, and even Oakhill, in the south; eastwards to a point near Box, and westwards to Portishead.



When uniform penny postage came, in 1840, the citizens found it was no cheaper than before to send a single letter to Chew Magna; but a light enclosure could be put in without extra charge, though the weight had to be brought down from four ounces to half an ounce, and, at any rate, 1s. 6d. had no longer to be paid on a letter to Elgin. Mail conveyances in local use were of primitive order, one for Shirehampton being drawn by a dog.

In 1855 the amount of postage collected at Bristol in the year was £28,510. Now, the total collection cannot annually be less than half a million of pounds, part of which, however, is, of course, merely a deposit, such as foreign telegrams and savings banks, money order and postal order transactions, necessitate.

From Birmingham in the north-west to Exeter in the south-west, the great highway which the Bath road struck into midway was thickly studded with posting towns. St. Aldate's Square at Gloucester saw daily the mail-coaches starting at various hours for Worcester, for Hereford, Gloucester and Bristol, Monmouth and Carmarthen, Oxford and London, not to speak of the mail rides to Chepstow, Minchinhampton, Newent, and Cheltenham. At Taunton, North Devon and South Wilts joined hands across; at Exeter six mail-coach roads were at work. A passenger could 'coach' from Falmouth to Glasgow, from Portsmouth to Holyhead, from Barnstaple to Berwick, with changes and stoppages, it is true, but by a continuous mail-coach road, without passing

through London. The country resounded with the blast of the horn and the rattle of pole-chains.

Bridgwater, 33½ miles west of Bristol, and on the direct road from Bath and Bristol to Taunton and Exeter, although a town of note before the Norman Conquest, had in 1840 certainly not more than 10,000 inhabitants. At all events, at the previous census it contained only 7,807 persons. Yet, at the moment when the West of England mails still held the road, it was supplied with no fewer than fourteen coaches, showing, in the case even of a town of moderate dimensions, how active was that part of the road work which provided for the movement of the population by coach. Bridgwater's wants were also fed by seven waggons and twenty-six parcel carts and other carriers' conveyances.

If Bridgwater, a roadside town with a population of 10,000 persons, could make so brave a show, what might not Exeter, the capital of Devon and the gate of Cornwall, do in the way of coach accommodation for its 80,000 inhabitants?

In the early and mid thirties, it is computed by one writer that on an average seventy coaches left Exeter daily; and a well-informed correspondent is of opinion that they were even more numerous.

The New London Inn, known as 'Pople's,' was the main point of departure and arrival. The Old London Inn shared the work. The coaching—the posting perhaps included—gave employment, it is said, to about 3,000 persons in the parish of St. Sidwell alone.

When King William IV. came to the throne, his Majesty's mails from London to the West followed this course: The Falmouth mail went by Salisbury, Dorchester, Exeter, and Launceston. It left London at 8 p.m., was at Salisbury at 6.12 a.m., at Exeter at 4.2 p.m., and reached Falmouth at 6.44 a.m. on the third day. Time and distance: London to Exeter, 176 miles in 20 hours; to Falmouth, 273 miles in 34 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours. This was the old Exeter mail.

Through Salisbury and Yeovil ran the Devonport mail. It left London at eight o'clock, kept as far as Sarum slightly ahead of the Falmouth coach, reached Yeovil at 8.56 a.m., and was, by the shorter route, at Exeter at 2.14 p.m., and at Devonport at 7.42 p.m. Time and distance: London to Exeter, 170 miles in 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours; to Devonport, 219 miles in 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours. This was the famous Quicksilver mail. As yet the Amesbury and Wincanton road was not used for mail-coach purposes.

But there is nothing new under the sun. On August 12, 1814, thirty years earlier than the Quicksilver's best achievement by Yeovil, the subscription coach from London to Exeter, with nine passengers and three hundredweight of luggage, performed the journey in 16 hours and 55 minutes.

There was a third route, which was really a prolongation of the London and Bath mail, *via* Devizes. It went through Wells to Bridgwater, and so got on to the Bristol and Exeter road. The mail by this route left London at 8 p.m., was at Bath at

7.54 a.m., at Taunton at 2.22 p.m., at Exeter at 6.45 p.m., and at Devonport at 12.25 midnight. Time and distance: London to Exeter, 195 miles in 22 $\frac{1}{4}$  hours; to Devonport, 245 miles in 28 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

A local service between Devonport and Falmouth allowed through passengers to have a short night's rest at Elliott's Royal Hotel, in Devonport. Going on again at 7 a.m., they would reach Falmouth, through St. Austell, at 4.22 p.m. Distance, 66 miles more, or, from London, 311 miles; time, 44 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

At her Majesty's accession, the time-bills of the two routes to Falmouth, *i.e.*, by Dorchester and by Bridgwater, remained virtually unchanged, but notable alterations were made in the service to Exeter and Devonport along the roads which lay between.

A new coach, starting at 8 p.m., went from London to Exeter, *via* Salisbury and Yeovil, and arrived at 2.12 p.m.—18 $\frac{1}{4}$  hours from London. This was the new Exeter mail; distance, 170 miles.

It was with the Exeter mail, through Yeovil, that a brother officer of mine, Mr. Moses Nobbs, the mail guard, met with a sad experience. He started from London with the down night mail in the usual course. At Hounslow the coachman proved to be intoxicated. Mr. Nobbs made him exchange places, strapping his colleague in the guard's seat, and he himself taking the reins.

At Whitchurch, on the London side of Andover, the coachman, apparently sobered, unstrapped himself, and resumed the box-seat and the whip. A few

miles further the coach jolted over a heap of stones ; the coachman fell between the horses and was killed on the spot. The old Exeter mail-coach, which ran through Salisbury, following shortly after, found the body of the hapless coachman, and a mile further on the bruised and shaken guard. The horses, driverless, had broken into full gallop, and Mr. Nobbs, in endeavouring to regain control, himself had fallen from the coach. The horses ran in good order, got down a steep hill without damage to the coach, and pulled up in Andover at the usual place. The plucky guard went on with his bags to Exeter. He had another, and, if possible, still more memorable experience, which shall be related further on.

The famous Quicksilver was next taken through Amesbury and Wincanton, so avoiding Salisbury and Yeovil altogether, saving, perhaps, three or four miles. It was then especially that this coach won its laurels. The object was to get to Devonport, as though no other town on the way was of the least account. And it went like the wind.

The coach started from the Old White Horse Cellar, in Piccadilly, at 8.30 p.m., the mails being conveyed from St. Martin's-le-Grand by cart, drawn by blood horses, to the coach. It was at Bagshot, 29 miles from the Post-Office, by 10.45 p.m., figures which give an idea of the rate of travelling. To cover 26 miles from Piccadilly in  $2\frac{1}{4}$  hours meant, of course, a speed of nearly 11 miles an hour. The coach was in Exeter at 12.34 the next forenoon—*i.e.*, in  $16\frac{1}{2}$

hours from the Post-Office—and was due at Devonport at 5.14 p.m. It left the New London Inn, at Exeter, on the return journey at 2 p.m., *viâ* Ilminster and Wincanton, reached London at six o'clock in the morning, and the mails were at the Post-Office by half-past six.

An effective drawing—belonging, I think, to the late Mr. Gould, Clerk of the Works at the General Post-Office—represented the Quicksilver attempting with six horses to keep time through the deep snows of the winter of 1836, post-boys riding the near leaders.

If the pride of the road was the Quicksilver, it had a rival in the Telegraph, a day coach. The appearance presented by these famous coaches as they stood at the Old White Horse Cellar, or Nelson's Office, equipped for the first stage out of London, has been referred to by a well-known writer in lively terms of high professional appreciation: 'Four blood chestnuts, with ring snaffles, no side-reins or check-reins, no crossing or lapping of traces, no throat-lashing the leaders.' It is nearly sixty years since, but the picture appeals to the imagination as forcibly as ever.

The Telegraph had run the famous mail very close. 'Superior travelling,' says an advertisement of April 7, 1832, 'by the "Telegraph" Patent Safety Coach from Exeter to London in one day. Leaves the Old London Inn every morning at 5, and arrives at Nelson's Office, 52, Piccadilly, punctually at 10

the same evening, whence it proceeds to the Bull Inn, Aldgate.'

But on July 22, 1837, the time for the Telegraph was still 17 hours, while the Quicksilver was doing the same journey in 16 hours; yet the Telegraph had had the honour of showing the mails the way across country for a long time, for while prior to August 23, 1836, they had taken, at least, 20 hours from London, *viâ* Dorchester (reaching Exeter at 4.2 p.m.), and 18½ *viâ* Yeovil, the Telegraph, as will have been seen, had proved itself the swifter coach by an hour to three hours, at least four years earlier. But it ran by day and the others by night.

As regards the Quicksilver, it is said that on one occasion an amateur whip, Captain Sheriff, drove the mail from London to Devonport, a feat which my informant, writing from Exeter, alleges has never been surpassed. But if history tells true, this achievement pales before the performance of Captain Barclay, whose fame as an expert coachman was fifty years ago on every lip. He, it is said, drove the Edinburgh mail all the way down from London, 400 miles, without a break. It is difficult to realize the great physical strength and endurance which this feat implies, although, of course, there is an approach to it in that of any outside passenger who sat still for 42 hours without being overpowered by fatigue.

Three fine old coachmen of the past can yet testify to the glories of the Quicksilver: Mr. William Lake, of Exeter; Mr. Killingly, of Crosslands, Wellington;

and the well-known Mr. C. S. Ward, of Brompton, who drove on the middle and lower ground. On one occasion Mr. Ward took the Quicksilver from Exeter to Devonport in  $3\frac{1}{4}$  hours, and for some months did not exceed 4 hours on the journey. The distance being 50 miles, the rate of travelling ranged from 12 to 14 miles an hour.

There are not many men who, having served the Post-Office in conveying its mails in 1832, are still engaged in that important work in 1894, yet in 1832 Mr. Lake, who is now a mail-cart contractor at Exeter, drove the mail-coach between Exeter and Falmouth in connection with the night mails from London, the journey from London to Falmouth occupying at first as much as 48 hours. In Mr. Lake's latest years on the box the journey from Exeter to Falmouth occupied from 7.30 p.m. of one day to 4.30 a.m. the next, the coach passing through Crockernwell, where a stable of forty horses was kept, to Okehampton, thence to Launceston, Five Lanes, the Jamaica Inn, Truro, and Falmouth.

The mail then maintained a speed of 10 miles an hour between Exeter and Falmouth, inclusive of all stoppages, and admirable time was kept in reaching its destination. The private coaches were continually entering into rivalry with the mail-coaches, and hence it was that the journey each way was every year accelerated.

The old Exeter mail by Dorchester, adds Mr. Lake, was partly engaged in carrying convicts from the



south and west, and therefore obtained the name of the Transport. The convicts were sent for imprisonment in Dorchester, or for hard labour in Portsmouth Dockyard. A penal establishment was maintained at Devonport, such prisoners as were enduring short terms of punishment being kept in hulks. Thus Mr. William Lake, of Exeter.

The fame of the Quicksilver had been established while the coach still followed the old road through Salisbury and Yeovil to Exeter. That the coach took even another road before the diversion to Amesbury (or 'Ambresbury,' as Paterson has it in his index) and Wincanton is established beyond a doubt by the following letter of the Duke of Beaufort, which his Grace was kind enough recently to write to me on the subject :

'I am not going to say that the Quicksilver mail never ran *via* Amesbury and Wincanton, but I do say, and will give you proof positive, that it did run for many years through Amesbury and Salisbury. It was at Winterslow that the lioness escaped from a menagerie and killed one of the leaders of the Quicksilver mail. That lies between the Golden Ball and Salisbury. The Golden Ball is on the Down and going from Salisbury, past Winterslow Hut, a public-house where the mail changed horses. Here the roads fork, the right-hand one going to Stockbridge (where it forks again, right to Winchester, left to Basingstoke), the left to Andover.

‘Little Simpson drove the Quicksilver over that ground. One night, very dark and snowing, no passenger inside or out, going from Andover, when just through the village (Mullen Pond), where the brook runs through and there are now some small ironworks, he sprang the horses up the hill out of the village; suddenly he saw the leaders bob to the near side, and the shaft of a waggon coming down the hill went into the chest of the off wheel-horse, killing him instantly. At a gallop Simpson, who barely weighed nine stone, was shot clean over the heads of the leaders, and the guard was sent flying through the air and snow and landed on the dead wheel-horse. With the help of the two men with the waggon, they put one leader in, off-side wheel, and drove pickaxe to the change, which was Winterslow Hut. Old Simpson, who was for forty years stud-groom to the late Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, has often told me the story.’

The escape of the lioness and her attack on the horses of the Exeter mail caused at the time a great sensation in the public mind—next only to that occasioned by the shooting of a well-known elephant in the menagerie at Exeter Change, in London.

The Dorchester route lay through Blandford. The Post-Office maintained a branch ride to Sturminster—12 miles off the mail-road—and no doubt took care that the way was made commodious and safe. But improvements of the thoroughfares were not entirely

to local taste. It was with respect to the latter road, perhaps, that the famous remark of the Blandford waggoner applies: 'Roads have but one object,' said he, 'waggon driving—I require but 5-foot width in a lane, and all the rest may——' Here the anecdote breaks off.

At Exeter, in Paul Street, 'four horses harnessed for the road and two post-boys awaited,' says Mr. Cossins,\* 'any emergency.' If the mail-coach had left for London on the arrival of the homeward mail, *vid* Falmouth, away from Exeter went the express; a mounted messenger galloping ahead with Government despatches, a chaise-and-four following with the mails as hard as the boys could ply the whip. The sights were stirring for the villagers along the road as the expresses rode through them.

Once, at Exeter Post-Office, which was then a single room, now a registry, in Catherine Street, part of the outward West India mail was left behind. The packet had been detained at Falmouth for four days awaiting the upshot of a Parliamentary debate on the all-important question of the duty on sugar.

At last the vote was taken, and the latest letters came down. The Exeter Office closed the mail, and, as they thought, forwarded the whole of it. Four hours and a half later, when the mail-coach was midway between Okehampton and Launceston, the night porter at Exeter rubbed his sleepy eyes, and the alarming sight of a large brown leather

\* 'Exeter Fifty Years Since,' 1877.

object brought him to his feet. It was the portmanteau containing despatches and instructions from the Colonial Office and other Government offices, for the governors, agents and consuls in the British and Foreign West Indies. Then was proved the value of the practice of keeping horses saddled in their stalls, and riders booted and spurred. In a twinkling a man and horse shot forward, like arrow from the bow, to warn all the posting-stations right away along 97 miles of road to Falmouth. At breakneck pace followed, from the New London Inn, a chaise-and-four with the overlooked despatches. A start of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours was formidable enough to face, but what was that to Devon and Cornwall put upon their mettle? Like a whirlwind went the express to Crockernwell. There they changed horses, and on with fresh energy they flew through the pleasant Cornish towns—through Five Lanes and Bodmin, by ‘Indian Queen’ (is that existent still, I wonder?), and so through Truro and Penryn to the waterside. They made up four hours in the 95 miles, for the coach was not yet running at full speed, but the half-hour unredeemed had admitted of embarkation and despatch. There was still a chance. They flung the portmanteau into a boat and chased the packet. Pendennis Castle probably fired a gun; the flagstaff ran up a signal. The packet heard, saw, and hove to, and the feat was accomplished of overtaking the mail and putting the portmanteau on board, a fact which ought to have condoned oversights at Exeter.

When Stow in turn had left Exeter to take up the London appointment, and the selection of Creswell to succeed him had not been finally settled, Major Byng Hall was put in command. He soon let it be understood that grass did not grow under the Acting-Surveyor's feet in the West of England. 'Sir,' wrote he from Torquay on December 28, 1838, to the postmaster of Exeter, 'as it is highly desirable that the public should be made acquainted with the time of arrival and departure of the different mails, I desire that the following notice may be printed and posted up in a conspicuous part of your office-window.' The Major proceeded to descant on the proposed use of the Bristol Estafette. It was an ordinary stage-coach, and the employment of such for mail purposes was a novelty. It made off from Exeter at 8.25 a.m., with mails only for Scotland, Ireland, and the North of England.

Then were in full operation in the West those exceptional accelerations for which, it is to be feared, horses paid full dearly. For although careful driving, short stages, good roads, fair weather, and light loads do, no doubt, admit of a high average rate of speed, yet what about bad weather, stiff hills, and the roadway soft and spongy from frost and wet? At all times such a run as that of the Liverpool and Preston mail must have severely tried the powers of even four horses. But, whether hilly or level, foul weather or fine, a pace which should greatly exceed 8 miles an hour—the rate of travelling of the

parcel mail-coaches of the present day—must have meant heaving flanks and exhausted cattle at every change, and could not be long maintained, unless under very short stages, except at serious cost of animal life. Although I do not claim to possess any special knowledge of the subject, gained from experience on the road, yet it is only necessary to read the evidence of the great horse-masters of the past to be convinced that the average life of the coach-horse of the mail-coach period—even of those beautiful and high-couraged animals described as half-blood horses—was regrettably short.

On the other hand, so high an authority as Mr. C. S. Ward informs me that the well-bred horses which he drove at so great a pace lasted for years. Sometimes hunters were in summer put to the coach, worked over the short stages, and found fit to hunt with the hounds again as the season came round. But even Mr. Ward inclines to 8 miles an hour, and 14 miles a day as the amount of work proper (with occasional rests) for keeping a sound, well-bred, well-fed coach-horse in good health. I gather that such is not far from being the opinion of the Duke of Beaufort, too; and this concurrence of view seems to me to settle the point.

The ride from Leominster to Aberystwith was 73 miles long. It went through Rhayader and Pentre, and so over a part of Plinlimmon. Such a ride in winter was one that few would care now to face. The drivers or the riders of the cross-posts in

the thirties were welcomed at every stage. For instance, Mr. Eyers, formerly postmaster of Westbury, Wilts, recollects in 1832 the post-boy coming in with the mail from Melksham, out of the down London and Bath night mail-coach—colours streaming from his hat, and his horse's head adorned, as though the young Herminia had spared bright ribands 'from her own gay attire'—because of great political tidings, such as the satisfactory upshot of the agitation for a Reform of the Parliamentary Franchise.

As time wore on, the chief mail-gigs were replaced by mail-coaches. In 1836, besides the old-established fours-in-hand from Gloucester to Carmarthen at 10 miles 2 furlongs per hour, and Bristol to Milford Haven, the Cheltenham and Hereford and Cheltenham and Aberystwith coaches had long been at work. A mail-coach from Kingsbridge still survives, except that it now runs not to Totnes, as in the thirties, but to Dartmouth. Still some long cart-rides remain, such as that from Bath to Westbury, which has kept its time-table for thirty-six years, being due daily now, as it was in 1858, at 4.50 a.m. This ride goes on to Steeple Langford,  $29\frac{1}{4}$  miles from Bath, and despite its early start (2.20 a.m. from the night mail train up, due at Bath at 1.3 a.m.), it arrives there at 6.30 a.m.

Taunton stretches out two long arms, touching the English Channel on one side and the Bristol Channel on the other. It serves Bridport with its London

night mail by train to Ilminster (11¼ miles), and thence by mail-cart 22 miles further. Similarly, Minehead receives its letters out of the London night mail down by pair-horse cart from Taunton, a distance of 25 miles, by 6.40 a.m.

At the Jubilee *Conversazione* of Penny Postage, held at the South Kensington Museum on July 2, 1890, an address of welcome from old officers of the Post-Office was delivered into the hands of her Royal and Imperial Highness the Duchess of Edinburgh by Mr. Nobbs, as the last of the mail-coach guards. He had already served the Post-Office for fifty-four years, having commenced coach-work so early as 1836 as guard of the London and Stroud Mail. He was still on active duty in 1891.

Mr. Nobbs relates many anecdotes which throw up in high relief the hardships—nay, the perils—of the mail-service in the coaching age. I have already mentioned one of his experiences while employed as guard on the Exeter mail. Here is another, told in his own words, of a catastrophe which happened nearly sixty years ago in Mid-Wales :

‘In 1838 I was transferred to the Cheltenham and Aberystwith mail, leaving Cheltenham at 7.0 a.m., and arriving at Aberystwith at 9.0 p.m. I worked this mail for sixteen years—from 1838 to 1854—and this was the most eventful period of my career. The road ran through a fearful country, and we had to go over Plinlimmon Mountain, the top of which is



about 2,000 feet above the sea-level. We had many accidents and adventures with this coach. For example, we left Hereford one market day, the wind blowing a hurricane. When we reached St. Owen's turnpike-gate I saw that the gate was closed, and blew the horn for the gate-keeper to open it. He threw the gate wide open, when it rebounded and struck one of the leaders, which so frightened the team that they got completely out of hand, and galloped down the road as fast as they could lay feet to the ground. The coachman was a very nervous man, and, finding he could not control the horses or pull them up, he threw himself off the box into the road, with the result that the back part of his head was dashed in. The horses, now at full gallop, ran into a donkey-cart in which an old woman and her daughter were going home from market, and doubled it up completely. The daughter heard the noise of the approaching coach, and jumped out in time to save herself, but the poor old woman was kicked to death before I could cut the harness to release the leaders, which had fallen and got mixed up with the remains of the cart. I had the bodies of the old woman and the coachman placed on hurdles and carried to the infirmary. Meanwhile the leaders had broken loose from the coach and galloped on for about two miles. They did further mischief by running into another cart, but without doing any serious damage.'

And yet one more anecdote, which records the most

wonderful escape from utter destruction I ever remember to have heard of :

‘On another occasion on the Cheltenham and Aberystwith mail we escaped with our lives in an almost miraculous manner. This happened in passing over Plinlimmon. It was a fearful night. The snow had been falling for hours before we got to the top of the mountain at Stedfa-gerrig, and after going for about a mile downhill we found ourselves enveloped in a dense fog and snowstorm. We completely lost our way. We had a post-boy in front as guide, but unfortunately he missed the road, and took us over a precipice about sixty feet deep. The coachman and I, without any effort on our part, performed the acrobatic feat of turning two complete somersaults before we reached the bottom. I remember distinctly that my one thought was how I could avoid being crushed under the falling coach. We both escaped this, however, and, owing to the depth of the snow, were quite unhurt by the fall, though much shaken, of course. The two inside passengers were cut about a good deal by the glass of the windows, and two of the horses were killed. The next thing was to right the coach and get the living horses loose, which was an extremely difficult thing to do, as the snow was very deep at the bottom. It took us two hours to get things together again, and fortunately we discovered that there was an old Roman road near where we were ; so at last we got started, and made up a good deal of time before we

got to Cheltenham, arriving there just in time to catch the up London mail.'

Some details of the road are worth preserving. A mail-coach weighed between 17 and 18 cwt. It cost £140. The best mail-coach which Lacy, the great Manchester contractor, ever built weighed 17 cwt. 2 qrs., The swiftest coach out of London, swifter even than the Shrewsbury Wonder, was the Manchester Telegraph. The vehicle itself weighed between 16 and 17 cwt. by one account, and between 17 and 18 by another. For 'business, lightness and elegance' it is said to have been a model for mail-coaches. The life of a coach was only five or six years.

Quick coaches had five lamps; one had even six—*i.e.*, a tail lamp, as well as five front lights. Unless well lighted they could not keep time. Six lamps cost £47 8s. a year for oil alone. Of course, more than one coach was wanted to work a long road. The London and Gloucester mail, which ran 108 double miles daily, required three coaches; the Manchester Defiance (187 double miles), five.

A good coach needed an establishment of nearly, if not quite, a horse per mile, which cost for maintenance a guinea, sundries 4s.; total, 25s. per week.

Government duty was a formidable item, *viz.*: 2d. a mile, as well as £5 for an annual license. The elder Chaplin, with not quite 800 horses, paid £25,000 a year; Finch Vidler, who provided coaches, £20,000. The latter did things on so large a scale

that he kept in stock as many as 300 sets of wheels.

For coachmen a drive of 70 miles a day was deemed sufficient. Captain Malet, however, tells us of a man who drove the Norwich mail 112 miles daily without missing a journey. There must have been in those days giants on the box. As for mail-guards, Mr. Louis testified that twelve were employed on the London and Edinburgh mail-coach, which, taking the round trip at 800 miles, would give a daily spell of rather less than 70 miles per guard. But some guards worked over much longer distances, and they, no doubt, had then a day off. For example, Mr. Nobbs went through from London to Exeter, 170 miles, without a break. He rested the next day, as a matter of course, and another guard worked the up journey.

Before Collinge took out his patent for improved axles, wheels were secured to the axletree by lynch-pins. Once when Mr. Frederic Hill (who for a long time was Assistant-Secretary in the Post-Office) was travelling by coach, out came the lynch-pin, off went the wheel, and over went the coach. No one, however, was the worse for a somersault.

Mr. Robert Nelson, of the Belle Sauvage, had 400 horses. He found by experience that, in order to keep up an average speed of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour from end to end, it was needful to run at the rate of 10 between the stages.

Tolls varied with the road. A coach which ran

daily — *i.e.*, seven days a week — from London to Cheltenham paid £65 a month, if it were not a mail and exempt from toll under the Postal Act.

W. Chaplin changed one-third of his stock every year; in other words, a mail-coach horse remained fit for work not more than three years. In the country, with light roads and pure air, they did better. November, in London, during mild foggy weather, was an exceedingly unfavourable month. Horses attacked by epidemic fever were carried off at once.

Horne, Chaplin and Sherman were men of such honour that John Waude, coach-builder, declared before a Parliamentary Committee that, in dealing with them, he would as soon take their word as their bond.

The first note of the swan-song of the West of England mail-coaches was sounded by the opening of the Great Western Railway from London to Maidenhead on June 4, 1838. In 1839 the iron road had got as far as Twyford; by 1840 to Faringdon Road (now Uffington) Station; in fact, by the end of the year it reached Wootton Bassett, 83 miles from Paddington.

Meanwhile, the line had been completed and opened (August 31, 1840) between Bath and Bristol; but the heavy work of boring the Box Tunnel delayed the joining together of the isolated sections. At last, on June 30, 1841, the length from Wootton Bassett to Bath was completed, and on that day trains ran

through without a break, 118½ miles, between Paddington and Bristol.

Bit by bit, as the railway progressed, the Bath road had been shorn of its splendours; the traffic on the upper ground had grown thinner and thinner. The London mail-coaches at length vanished into space. The Tally Ho! the Royal Blue, the Monarch, the Hero, even the Night Regulator, lighted their lamps and polished up their pole-chains no more; the post-boys cracked their short-handled, thick-twisted whip-lashes for the last time, and the highway was soon abandoned to farm-carts and the turn-pikes.

Not on the Bath road alone, but everywhere else, when the forties were born, coach after coach was withdrawn or shortened its journey. The list of mail-guards had long since begun to shrink. In the year of her Majesty's accession 52 new mail-coach guard appointments are stated to have been made; but in 1843 there was only one such new appointment. Yet in the latter year some traces of the vitality of former days existed, as 327 mail-guards were still doing duty; but their course, all the same, was run.

The Dukes of Manchester and Richmond, Lord Maryborough and the Marquis of Conyngham, as Postmasters-General, between 1830 and 1835, beheld the mail-coaches in full splendour. So for a time, did Thomas William, Earl of Lichfield, but between 1838 and 1841 he saw also their decline and fall.

Just fifty years later the horn of the mail-guard

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once more sounded on the Great Western road between London and Reading, as the heads of the Post-Office conducted over its broad level surface the trial trip of the new four-horse coach now working the Royal Parcel Mail between London and Oxford. On that road, as an echo of the stirring past, the cheerful blast may still be heard at midnight at Maidenhead.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE CELT AND THE GAEL.

FROM a very early time indeed in the history—at any rate, the modern history—of the Post-Office efforts have been directed at frequent intervals to shorten the period of transit of the mails, and improve generally the means of communication between London and the capitals of the sister-kingdoms.

When I entered the Post-Office, Rowland Hill was framing and giving effect to schemes with this view. When the appointment of Inspector - General of Mails was conferred on me, my earliest work was in this direction. My latest work, too, was to carry out a new packet service to Ireland, and to propose, though not to accomplish, ameliorations of the postal service elsewhere.

The lines of traffic remain much the same as they were fifty or sixty years ago. The Milford Haven route to Waterford has perhaps lost some of its postal importance, because of improved transit by way of Holyhead and Dublin to the south-west of Ireland. But except that Kingstown replaces Howth



and Larne Donaghadee, the various routes between Great Britain and Ireland are practically unchanged.

One might go back a very long way indeed to trace the rise of regular postal communication between Ireland and Great Britain—as far back even as 1729, when a lighthouse was built on the Skerries, six miles west of the extreme point of Holyhead breakwater, by a private gentleman, and the Postmaster-General of the period paid £50 a year to him in consideration of the benefit it afforded to the mail-packets sailing between Holyhead and Dublin. This lighthouse, by the way, was bought by the Trinity House in 1845 for the enormous sum of £445,000.\*

The transit was tedious in the extreme. Edgeworth, passing from Edgeworthstown to England, waited at Dublin for more than a week for a fair wind, his eyes fixed on the weathercock. Woodfall, Lord Mornington, and his brother, in crossing from shore to shore, had plenty of time for political conversation, as they were three days at sea. A passenger who took the packet at Holyhead to go to Howth or Dublin on one occasion found himself landed near Carlingford Lough, which is nearly the same thing as though a passenger for the North Wall nowadays was blown by the winds to Greenore.

However, it was not until the legislative Union of the two countries had taken place, in 1801, that

\* 'Proceedings of Institute of Civil Engineers,' May 12, 1863 (paper by William Watson, M.A.).

public attention was aroused in earnest. Then the official tongue was loosened. Public Commissioners and Committees of the House of Commons presented no fewer than twenty-four reports on the subject of the Irish mail service within ten years.

It was not all talk. Something came of it, but hardly before the twenties, when money was spent with a lavish hand.

The Channel passage was an almost insoluble problem. How to quicken it was the difficulty. As long as sailing cutters were the order of the day the case seemed hopeless. It is not easy to make way due west if the wind blows steadily in the eye of the east.

The average passage between Holyhead and Dublin had taken about fifteen hours in one direction and twenty in the other. Then, not without grave forebodings from those who knew the Channel, the Post-Office resolved on the use of steam power. Experienced commanders alleged that 'no vessel could perform the winter service but sailing cutters.' Yet, with the boldness and energy which marked Freeling's administration, the department early in the twenties built, by Evans, the steamers *Meteor* and *Royal Sovereign*, one a little over and the other a little under 200 tons burthen, and gave to the famous firm of Boulton and Watt the making of their machinery. Now a full horse-power or more per ship's ton is provided in marine engines; then they were content with less than a third. Such were the earliest postal

steamers—mere cock-boats as they would be deemed now, but yet staunch enough to face a storm in the Irish Sea, or, for that matter, in the Bay of Biscay.

The steamers being put on the station, down went the average duration of passage to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours. If one voyage was as long as 23 hours, yet another was as short as  $5\frac{1}{4}$ . Sails were thrown overboard for good.

On land Telford let loose his energy and skill. About £1,000,000 was laid out in improving the highways. The Chester, Bangor, and Holyhead road was taken in hand, and, greater work still, the old highway between Bangor, Corwen, and Shrewsbury was turned into a fine mail-coach road, and its excellences imparted to that between Birmingham, Barnet, and London. Many uncivil things had been said, perhaps justly, of the condition of the highway by Corwen; but a score of years before Telford brought spirit-level and pickaxe to bear upon it, Paterson, no mean authority, had declared it to be 'hard, smooth, level and extremely pleasant, being,' he added, 'passable at all times.' Probably for the transit of his Majesty's mails something better was wanted than a passable roadway. In Ireland a good road was also made to Howth, an hour's drive from Dublin, on the northern curve of the bay. A sum of £300,000 was spent in making a packet harbour at the former place, which is now practically deserted by the shipping.

The mail-coaches on both sides were whipped up to the highest possible pace.

‘The main line of communication,’ wrote the Duke of Richmond to the Treasury in a burst of exultation on February 24, 1834, ‘with Ireland by Holyhead and Dublin has been essentially improved. The mail that leaves London at eight o’clock at night reaches Dublin, under ordinary circumstances of weather, between seven and eight on the second morning. Thirty-two to thirty-six hours,’ added his Grace in a footnote which seems to breathe defiance to all critics, ‘from London to Dublin, 269 miles by land’ [the distance was about to be shortened by 8 or 10 miles, but the Duke does not seem to have been aware of it], ‘and a sea-passage of 70 miles’ [meaning from Holyhead to Dublin], ‘including stoppages.’

For a time Howth flourished as a mail-port. But the year 1834 did not expire without sealing its fate. From faults of construction, the harbour was reported to be rapidly filling up. Two vessels had grounded at the entrance. So on December 13 the mails were landed at Kingstown, and sent for the first time by railway to Dublin; but it was not until the year following that they were sent by rail in both directions. Then of what account were the new harbour of Howth and the well-metalled mail-road to the capital?

As the packet bound westward passed the Kish, the helmsman now steered a straight course west by north a quarter north, or if it was low-water on Burford Bank, he gave a little southing to the compass-card, and, no longer shaping his course for Howth, made for the new, commodious, and secure ‘asylum’ harbour of

Kingstown. But although by this time a regular steamship service was maintained by the Admiralty from Holyhead, and one of less importance from Liverpool, stormy seasons had the same effect on the packets as on the coaches, and the Irish public had sometimes to complain of irregularity.

The importance of punctuality, however, was seen on all hands. The managers of the Dublin and Kingstown Railway kept an engine in steam from half-past five in the morning awaiting the London mails, sometimes so keeping it an entire day, and doing the same at night for the Chester mails; being as eager in the past as in the present to carry the mails up to Dublin with all practicable despatch.

An important factor had now to be reckoned with. The City of Dublin Steam Packet Company appeared on the scene. With this enterprising corporation is closely allied the name of William Watson, who was one of the company's staunchest supporters, and in 1853, at any rate, a managing director. His son is their chairman to-day.

The company had been trading between Dublin and Liverpool since 1823. In 1838 a contract to carry mails to Kingstown was given to them; for the port of Liverpool, desiring to have direct mail communication with Ireland, had been strong enough to induce the Government to make it a packet-station. The Post-Office, however, by this time no longer ran its own packets. The Admiralty, in 1837, had taken them over, and now maintained the packet-stations at

Liverpool, Holyhead, Kingstown, Milford and Waterford, and at Portpatrick and Donaghadee.

The vessels employed, though still mere pigmies compared with the *Ireland* of the present day, were all strong, fair-sized paddle-wheel steamers, as vessels then went, and were manned with a crew of from ten to twenty-seven persons.

The new arrangement was that the Admiralty boats should take the day mail and the City of Dublin Company the night mail. They did so for ten years.

In the year 1836 the road service of the Irish mails in Great Britain left nothing to be desired. Telford had already hung across the Menai Straits that beautiful suspension bridge which still delights the eye, and which, at a distance of less than two miles from Bangor (there is a short cut through Treborth Park), by connecting the Anglesey shore with Carnarvonshire, saved the delay of crossing the tide-way by the broad ferry.

The bridge was opened on January 30, 1826. The London night mail coach, carrying the letters for Ireland, crossed it from Ynys y Moch, in Carnarvonshire, into Anglesey, and was followed, says Mr. Williams in his illustrated guide, by the Bangor Pilot and the London Oxonian. The time, one o'clock in the morning, of the London mail-coach horses setting foot on this bridge is a standard from which may be computed the increase of speed which Telford's genius, and improvements in coaches, ultimately

effected. Ten years afterwards the coach was due there at 8.43 p.m.—4¼ hours earlier.

A similar bridge which spans the tidal river at Conway had quickened the route of the Chester mails, but the main road for London from Holyhead turned off to the south-east at Bangor. It made for Corwen and Shrewsbury, avoiding Chester altogether, and, as I have said, ran almost as true as a line can be drawn on the map through Birmingham and Coventry, direct for Barnet and London. That road, from post-office to post-office, is 259 miles 2 furlongs long; and it is another mile down to the Admiralty pier.

Hurtled through the country at a mean speed of 10 miles 1 furlong an hour, the London night mail for Ireland, which had left St. Martin's-le-Grand on Monday at 8 p.m., was due at the waterside shortly before midnight on Tuesday, and, wind and weather permitting, would arrive on the Irish coast at five or six o'clock on Wednesday morning. In 1830 this coach had got over the ground in 29 hours; now it consumed only 27.

The public had highly approved of the Conway and Bangor suspension bridges—the posts ran quicker, travelling was more convenient. The Post-Office, too, was enchanted; twopence more postage was clapped on letters, a penny for each bridge.

A comparison of the time-bill of about the period of the accession of his late Majesty, with that of the accelerated service of 1836-37, may not be without interest as showing the process of acceleration.

The time of starting from London was the same in both cases :

At	Distance from London.	1830.		1836-7.		Gain.	
		Hrs.	Mins.	Hrs.	Mins.	Hrs.	Mins.
Towcester .....	Miles. 59	2.36	a.m.	2.12	a.m.		24
Birmingham ...	108	7.58	a.m.	7.8	a.m.		50
Shrewsbury ...	152	1.9	p.m.	11.59	a.m.	1	10
Corwen .....	192	5.43	p.m.	3.57	p.m.	1	40
Holyhead .....	259	1.17	a.m.	10.55	p.m.	2	22
Time occupied from 8 p.m.		29	17	26	55	2	22

The transit between the two capitals occupied about 34 hours.

The London and North-Western Railway, except from Manchester to Liverpool, was as yet inchoate.

In 1837 the tide of change caused by the opening of the Grand Junction Line between Birmingham and Manchester and Liverpool began to flow. The Irish mail-service in England was partly performed by road, partly by rail. It was a transitional period.

In 1838 alterations of importance were numerous. The railway was opened throughout from London to Liverpool, whereupon the Holyhead route practically became obsolete. The bulk of the mails passed to and from Liverpool. Passengers preferring the shorter sea-passage, and not fearing a long coach-ride, still, however, clung to Holyhead. In this state of suspended animation the important Anglesey harbour remained for about ten years.

But brighter days were in store. Robert Stephenson was constructing the Chester and Holyhead



Railway; Rendel had commenced shooting the rough deposits for the new breakwater. Great gaps, it is true, had to be bridged over before the railway could pass the river Conway and the Straits at Bangor. But the genius which had carried the line around the spurs of Penmaenmawr was not to be baffled by tidal rivers or navigable straits.

Stephenson soon electrified Great George Street, Westminster, and half the land besides. He built a hollow iron beam of angle plates, and hoisting it far above the waterway, right over the tops of the tallest masts of sea-going vessels, flung it from shore to shore, across the Menai Straits, sent the mail-trains through it, and called it the Britannia Tubular Bridge. He did the same at Conway, where, as at Bangor, the Suspension Bridge and the Tube—memorials of the two great engineers, Telford and Stephenson—stand side by side.

The Bangor bridge cost £622,000. Its central span, in which two tubes are placed parallel to each other, measures no less than 460 feet; two shorter tubes measure each 230 feet. It was so far completed that one line was opened for traffic on March 18, 1850. Both lines were ready for use on October 21.

Then, in May, 1848, the railway opened to London. No longer did the well-laden down night mail coach dash into Shrewsbury and achieve at a canter some of its steep inclines. No longer did timid 'outsides,' and even the hardy box-seat passenger, shut their

eyes as from the heights above they crossed by Telford's aerial bridge the depths below; no longer viewed wearily from the coach-top the sandy wastes which, less lovely than the wooded crests of Bangor, made the last toilsome miles across Anglesey the dreariest stage of all.

In the meantime, the Admiralty had not been idle. With great vigour, they built the famous *Banshee*, a paddle-wheel steamer of 700 tons, and of engines of 350 nominal and 1,555 indicated horse-power. She was a true success. Her name and reputation are stamped on my recollection. They built three other vessels—one very good, the *Llewellyn*, and two not so good, the *Caradoc* and *St. Columba*. The *Banshee* could almost approach in speed her Majesty's yacht, the *Victoria and Albert*, doing on her trial trip 16·1 knots, or 18·5 statute miles, per hour; that is, within two knots of the beautiful *Connaught*, now on the Holyhead station.

In 1850 another great change was wrought, traceable, perhaps, to an opinion expressed by Lord Auckland when at the Admiralty, that the packet-service might be more cheaply done by contractors. A contract was made, on April 9, for ten years, with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, whose engagement for carrying the Liverpool mails had naturally ceased in 1848, for a service, twice a day, at an average speed of 12 knots an hour, between Holyhead and Kingstown, for a subsidy of £25,000 a year. The Admiralty relinquished the packet-stations,

and the fleet of twenty packets in her Majesty's service was forthwith dispersed.

The contractors started the Holyhead service with four vessels; they built the *Eblana* and *Prince Arthur*, and they bought the *St. Columba* and *Llewellyn* from the Admiralty. I kept a record of their performances for a year or two. The sea-passage was to occupy about 5 hours, and the total time allowed for the conveyance of the mails between London and Dublin was 14 hours in one direction and 16 in the other.

We were advancing by leaps and bounds. But the public were hard to please. No sooner was the new service set fairly going than complaints arose. The Dublin Chamber of Commerce, always on the *qui vive*, were urgent in their remonstrance. Said they:

'A passenger sailing from Kingstown Harbour at 9 o'clock a.m. by the boats of the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company arrives in London at 11 o'clock p.m. A letter forwarded from Dublin by the mail-packet which sails from Kingstown at 7.30 p.m. on Monday does not arrive in London till 1 o'clock on Tuesday. It is not delivered in the City till between 3 and 4.'

Now, a letter leaving Dublin at 7 p.m. would be delivered in the City of London before 9 a.m. next day.

The *Banshee*, under the Admiralty, taking the month of March, 1850, as a specimen, had performed thirty-eight voyages in an average time of 4 hours

5 minutes. She has, indeed, made so short a passage as 3 hours 37 minutes, and was properly accounted swift. The corresponding month in 1851, when the service was in the contractor's hands, only showed for 30 voyages of the *Eblana* a mean of 4 hours 37 minutes, while out of 62 voyages performed by the *Llewellyn*, the quickest occupied as much as 4 hours 13 minutes. Did the superseded Admiralty repress a genial smile? Perhaps not.

The payment, £25,000 a year, was probably too low. The mails but too often got to Dublin an hour and a half late, and instead of the stipulated average—13 hours 35 minutes (allowing for Dublin time)—being observed, the actual time occupied between London and Kingstown was 15 hours 10 minutes. Worse than all, the passenger accommodation was defective. Ladies were obliged to lie on the floor in such numbers as to render it impossible to move about the overcrowded cabins.

Thus, or in some such words as these, a select committee expressed itself on July 13, 1853. They pronounced the opinion that, notwithstanding the vast and increasing importance of a rapid and efficient communication between England and Ireland, the arrangement of 1850 was inferior to what had previously existed.

This was strong language, but it bore fruit. The great tribune, John Bright, was a member of the committee. He took no part, however, in its deliberations.

On this searching question of how to ensure quick communication with Ireland, guidance was sought amongst the best authorities. The names of the eminent men who gave evidence come down as household words, familiar in the mouths at least of those who have been interested in boats and railways: I. K. Brunel, Captain Mark Huish, Cawson Patrick Roney, John Laird, Admiral Moorsom, J. O. Binger, John Penn, Captain Smithett, Scott Russell, and the leader of the City of Dublin Company, W. Watson.

Stirred up by the vigorous and trenchant report of the Committee, Parliament lost no time in advising itself what to do. For in 1855 it bent its mind on 'Improving the Postal and Passenger Communication between England and Ireland,' and passed into law the 18th and 19th Victoria, cap. 172.

The London and North-Western Railway Company owning the line from London to Chester, the new company which had made the railway from Chester to Holyhead, and the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company from Holyhead to Howth, Kingstown, or Dublin, were to unite and provide a first-rate service. So that there should be no mistake about the sea-service, which was the key of the position, the parties to the new plan were to be jointly empowered 'to purchase, build, contract, navigate, maintain and work; also to charter or hire steamboats'—a free hand in arranging for the Channel passage being essential to success.

Here is the consequent time-table :

Euston, departure ... ..	5.0 p.m. and 9 p.m.
Chester ,, ... ..	10.15 p.m. ,, 2 a.m.
Holyhead ,, ... ..	12.45 a.m. ,, 4.30 a.m.
Kingstown, arrival... ..	5.45 a.m. ,, 9.45 a.m.

Thus, a passage from London to Kingstown in 12 hours 45 minutes, and to Dublin in, say, 13 hours 15 minutes, was to be accomplished. The return service was not quite so prompt. It took the heart out of 16 hours :

Kingstown, departure ... ..	2.0 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.
Holyhead ,, ... ..	8.24 p.m. ,, 2 a.m.
Chester ,, ... ..	11.4 p.m. ,, 4.40 a.m.
Euston, arrival ... ..	5.10 a.m. ,, 11.0 a.m.

It is true there was at first, for a year or two, a service not strictly in agreement with these time-tables ; inasmuch as until the limitation of traffic in the Scotch mail, which began on February 1, 1859, both Scotch and Irish night mails left Euston by a train at 8.45 p.m., and reached Euston together by a train at 4.30 a.m.

But whether the London mails through Holyhead were in to time or not, away from Dublin at eight o'clock in the morning, or at seven o'clock at night, went eleven or twelve well-appointed four-horse coaches, beside other mail-conveyances. The mail-coaches ran at an average speed of about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  English miles per hour, the fastest being the Limerick mail, at 9 miles and 4 furlongs, and the slowest the New

Ross mail, at 7 miles and 4 furlongs. The longest ride was to Cork, 160 miles by the direct road *viâ* Clonmel for the quick coach, which went at the customary pace of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour, and 3 furlongs more for the slow coach by way of Cashel, which only averaged 7 miles and 7 furlongs in the hour.

But although the longest ride out of Dublin was  $160\frac{3}{8}$  miles to Cork, a supplementary service running at reduced speed (8 miles 3 furlongs), but still a four-horse mail-coach, took the traveller 71 miles 6 furlongs further to Bantry. It went through Bandon, Rosscarbery, and Skibbereen. Once, on driving along part of this road, but turning southwest for Schull and Crookhaven, I suggested to the driver that we should halt at the next inn to rest and refresh the horses.

‘Inn!’ said he; ‘there is no inn, your honour, betwixt this and New York.’

It was either at Ballydehob or Schull (the latter, perhaps) that a bit of true Irish politeness (one of many in the course of time) was shown to me. A long drive was in prospect and the clouds hinted rain. So I bade the driver pull up where an umbrella could be bought, having none with me. Said the shop-keeper: ‘Do I understand that you wish to buy an umbrella because the day may turn out wet? If so, here is a good one.’

‘Certainly. Many thanks. How much?’

‘Oh, you can settle on the way back.’

On our return I again inquired the price.

'Give me my umbrella,' was the reply. 'There's nothing to pay. You have not even used it.'

The distance from Skibbereen to destination was 30 miles—the round trip 60—yet the horses came back at 9 miles an hour into Skibbereen without a touch of the whip, so great is the endurance of that magnificent creature, a true-bred Irish horse.

There were curious differences in the rates of payment. For instance, the Enniskillen coach received £1,253, or 8d. the double mile, for travelling 102 miles 3 furlongs, at an average speed of 8 miles 5 furlongs in the hour; while the quicker coach to Galway got little more—£1,293 (in fact, it actually received a lower mileage payment, viz., 6½d. a mile)—for running a greater distance—133 miles—at higher speed, viz., 9 miles an hour.

However, to Dublin, Cork, Derry, Enniskillen, Galway, Limerick, New Ross, Sligo, Waterford, and Wexford, the roads were made merry by the horn of the mail-guard, and even the single day mail coach which took the Belfast mail out of the Holyhead steamer, in rattling along at nearly 9 miles an hour, aroused Drogheda-by-the-Boyne, Dundalk, and Newry-in-the-Hills, with a sense of the lively march of time.

P. Purcell and F. Bourne between them built nearly all the mail-coaches in Ireland, and they followed pretty closely the English model, allowing, as was proper, from roof to floor, an inch and a half more for the superior stature of the Celt. It is probable that Captain Bourne, R.N., who helped to form



the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company (eventually the 'P. and O.') was a relative of the eminent coachbuilder, F. Bourne. If so, contract mail-services in Ireland suggested contract mails to the Peninsula.

But while there were certainly not fewer than thirty four-horse and five pair-horse mail-coaches in Ireland in 1836, there were as many as seventy-nine mail-cars. The greatest speed of the coaches was 10 miles 4 furlongs, the slowest 7 miles, and the mean 8 miles 2 furlongs, per hour. The cars went, as might be expected, slower. The greatest speed was 7 miles 5 furlongs in English miles, the slowest 5 miles 1 furlong, while the mean was 6 miles 3 furlongs, per hour.

When the Irish coaches were still in full operation, a noted mail-guard was McClusky, commonly known as 'Jack.' He was not in the service of the department, but was a contractors' guard, in which capacity he worked from about 1830 to 1865.

With education gained at Maynooth, and with good natural ability, it seems a pity that he took to a humble vocation on the road. McClusky was of medium size, well built, with a cheerful face and manner, and he possessed an ample store of witty anecdotes and wonderful yarns with which he regaled his passengers. Further, he was a skilled cornopean-player, and delighted the travellers with lively airs.

Thanks to Maynooth, he was better informed than the generality of his class, and his manners were

superior. He was naturally very popular with the coach passengers.

Anthony Trollope introduced him into one of his books, and in a letter to Mrs. Morgan John O'Connell related a delicious anecdote of McClusky, with whom he frequently travelled when a surveyor of the Post-Office in Ireland :

'I remember him well. He was guard on the Dublin and Boyle coach. He and I were great friends. Once on the top of the coach, when I had been vindicating the character of donkeys, he said to me: "A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind."' '

On another occasion a tourist, travelling by the mail, discovered McClusky's stock of sandwiches, provided as a snack by the way, and ate them whilst the guard was delivering the mails. 'Where are my sandwiches?' the robber demanded. The robber smiled. 'Where,' roared McClusky, 'is that packet of poisoned sandwiches for killing off the keeper's cur dogs?' The robber at once fell ill, afflicted less by the innocent roast beef than by a poisoned conscience.

For many years he travelled with the mail-coach between Dublin, Boyle, and Sligo, but on the opening of the first section of the Midland Great Western Railway his route lay between Mullingar and Sligo. On his retirement from coaching he obtained employment in the left-luggage office at Broadstone terminus, and there he remained up to the time of his death, about fourteen years ago.

The Cork and Waterford coaches from Dublin came off the road, at least as far as Carlow, in 1846; the Cork and Bandon in 1851; the Dublin and Belfast coaches in part in 1844; and in 1852 they practically disappeared.

The cross-Channel service did not long remain as remodelled in 1855. The Government, egged on by public opinion, decided on yet greater things. The Holyhead breakwater was finished. The high authorities—the Post-Office (under Lord Colchester and Sir Rowland Hill) and the Treasury (at the latter Mr. James Wilson, M.P., was Financial Secretary)—laid their heads together and settled the bases of a new and imposing scheme—so new and so good, so far in advance of previous efforts, that in the indenture of January 3, 1859, which gave effect to it, it is styled in quotation marks, ‘The New Irish Postal Service.’

By the improved arrangement, which came into operation on October 1, 1860, the three corporations—the London and North-Western, and Chester and Holyhead Railway Companies, and the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company—bound themselves anew to effect the whole journey between Euston Square and Kingstown in 11 hours as a maximum. So allowing half an hour more for the conveyance of the mails from Kingstown to Dublin, here was the prospect of a clear gain in time of about 2 hours between the capitals.

The railway companies were to run two trains each

way between London and Holyhead, and the packet company were to build four paddle-wheel steamers, each 300 feet long, of 35 feet beam, and 1,700 tons builder's measurement, which were to be fitted with engines of 600 horse-power.

These vessels were estimated to cost £75,100 apiece, and, as experience has shown, can steam even in unfavourable weather upwards of 15 nautical miles in an hour.

The arrangement was to be carried out in two years from the date of the contract. It was done well within the prescribed time. For many years the mails leaving London at 7.30 a.m. and 8.30 p.m., Greenwich time, were delivered at Kingstown at or about 7 a.m. and 6.5 p.m. respectively, Dublin time.

The payment for the land service was fixed at £20,000, in addition to a special subsidy of £30,000 granted to the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company. So the land service stood at £50,000 a year; the payment to the packet company was fixed at £85,900; total, £135,900 a year.

A penalty for delay on the sea services of £1 14s. per minute was prescribed, but as its imposition was made contingent on certain alterations of the piers at Holyhead and Kingstown, the stipulation remained inoperative for many years.

The *Ulster*, *Munster*, *Leinster*, and *Connaught*, built under the contract of 1859, are still running, large and beautiful vessels, which are a sight which tax-

payers of all nationalities and all shades of politics may behold with pleasure as they steam away from or arrive at the Carlisle Pier in Kingstown harbour night and morning, saluting as they pass the guardship which lies at her moorings, and receiving in reply the regulation acknowledgment. They, with the *Ireland*, the latest addition to the station, are names in most men's mouths in Kingstown and Dublin.

But paddles, though they have survived to this day on the Holyhead and Kingstown and Dover and Calais lines, speedily became obsolete for ocean navigation, and the screw-propeller, which it is said, though not originally invented by Mr. Francis Pettit Smith, was first applied successfully to the navigation of ships by him, replaced them. Which was the first private vessel fitted with a screw may be open to doubt, but the first steamer of the royal navy to be so fitted—and that, too, at the time when H.M.S. *Terrible* was in the full glory of her paddles—was beyond question the *Rattler*.

The new service went on for twenty years, when, in Mr. Fawcett's time at the Post-Office, another acceleration was effected. Mr. Childers was the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Leonard Courtney the Financial Secretary. Mr. Fawcett took me with him to the Treasury, and there were several discussions. At length, a new contract was made, which began October 1, 1883. It separated the partnership which had hitherto existed, and provided for a quickened transit both by sea and land under payments amounting

to £141,500 a year. Still, there seemed the possibility of further improvement, and on October 1, 1885, we made the latest change, when a further gain in time was effected in both directions. The cost then stood at £147,000 a year. The mail is now due at Kingstown Pier at 6.37 a.m., *i.e.*, in 10 hours 7 minutes from Euston Square. It reaches Dublin about 20 minutes later. Say from post-office to post-office the transit is effected in 11 hours. That is just the estimate of the Select Committee of 1853.

Once—in 1871, I think—it was my lot to experience the sensation of what 'Breakers ahead!' might have meant in the old sailing days, or in stormy weather even in a steamer. My work being done in Ireland, I was returning to St. Martin's-le-Grand, when midway between the Hill of Howth and Holyhead a thick sea-fog came on. We crept ahead at reduced speed, and after a time, when it was reckoned we were nearing Anglesey, the captain, chief officers, and look-out were clustered forward, striving to discern through the fog over the starboard quarter the loom of the Holyhead Mountain, and so get their true bearings. Just then I happened to be on the promenade deck, and saw, looking a trifle to port, a long low line of frothy white waves. A young officer was within reach; I ran to him, pointing to the surf. Without calling the captain or pausing a moment, he darted to the speaking-tube of the engine-room, and sang out lustily to 'stop her and go full speed astern.' My recollection is that the way of the ship was arrested and she began to go

backwards, just as the stem was apparently about to touch the reef. Then the fog lifted, and Holyhead Mountain—at any rate, the South Stack—instead of being to the right hand, was in full view on the left. In the fog, and at low speed, strong currents must have drifted the vessel a little out of her course to the southward.

At least, that was my theory, and as I said nothing about the matter, nor probably did the officers or crew, the owners never had the opportunity of presenting me with the gold chronometer, or at any rate free pass or letter of thanks, which I had surely earned. At all events, that was my nearest approach to shipwreck.

Meanwhile the reader may care to see in detail how the service was arranged when my term of office came to an end.

# TIME-BILL OF THE IRISH DOWN NIGHT MAIL.

The Right Honourable ARNOLD MORLEY, M.P., Postmaster-General.

From LONDON to KINGSTOWN, 1898.

This Time-Bill will be filled up by the Travelling Souters on duty between London and Holyhead, and by the Officer in charge of the Mails on board the Packet. An Official Watch (to be carried throughout between London and Kingstown) will be supplied for the use of these Officers; and in order to prevent, as far as possible, dispute as to the Time, the Travelling Clerk on duty from London to Holyhead should, immediately before the departure of the Train from Euston Station, compare the Post-Office Watch with the Railway Guard's Watch, and record the exact difference of Time at the moment of comparison.

H. M. S.

Post-Office Watch, No. \_\_\_\_\_ \* than Railway Guard's Watch.  
 (\*Here write Slower or Faster, as the case may be.)

Remarks as to Delays, etc.		Proper Time (London Time).	Actual Time (London Time).	This Column to be left blank.
<i>London and North-Western Railway. City of Dublin Steam Packet Company.</i>	Despatched from the General Post-Office, London, the _____ of 189 _____, .....at	P. M.		
	} Watch, No. _____	7 50	H. M. S.	
	} Received safe by _____ at			
	Last Van arrived at the Station .....at	8 9		
	Last Bag placed in Train .....at			
	Despatched from the Euston Railway Station .....at	8 20		
	Bletchley (Apparatus) ..... (9 20)			
	Arrived at Rugby .....at	10 4		
	Off at	10 8		
	Tamworth (Apparatus) ..... (10 42)			
	Arrived at Stafford .....at	11 13		
	Off at	11 15		
	" Crewe .....at	11 48		
	Special Mail from London arrived .....at	11 54		
	Off at	12 0		
	Arrived at Chester .....at	12 28		
	Off at	12 38		
	Rhyl (Apparatus) ..... (1 17)			
	Arrived at Holyhead Ticket Platform...at	2 27		
	Arrived at end of Pier .....at	2 35		
	Last Bag out of Train .....at			
	Last Bag on board the Packet .....at			
	Packet sailed .....at			
	Arrived at Kingstown (Packet touched Pier) .....at	Not later than 6 37		
	A. M.			
Communication by Gangway established .....at				
Last Bag out of Packet .....at				

F. E. BAINES, Inspector-General of Mails.



Concurrently with the acceleration of the London services of 1833, the inland mail-trains in Ireland running in connection were also accelerated, so that the general result within my own experience is this :

In 1854, a letter must have been posted early in the day in London or Dublin if it were intended to obtain an early delivery in the other city next morning. Now it obtains an early delivery if posted in time for the ordinary night mail.

In the same year, a letter despatched from London to Cork or Belfast by the night mail of Monday would not have been delivered until Wednesday morning. Now if letters be despatched from London to Belfast and Cork by the night of Monday, they reach Belfast soon after nine, and Cork by about eleven o'clock on Tuesday morning. Galway benefited proportionately ; the west had a slice of the good things granted north and south, and the Maiden City was not neglected.

Such is the history of one of the finest services which the Post-Office can boast of, and which in its branches to Belfast, Londonderry, Cork, and elsewhere, admits of a letter posted before luncheon at Penzance, or after it in Brighton, being delivered in distant parts of Ireland about breakfast-time next day.

The Channel passage, as I have said, has ever been a difficult question in the Irish mail-service. Punctuality is the essence of efficiency : not an embarrassing earliness (to coin a word) one day, and an exasperating lateness the next. Yet, to get across in 4 hours in all

weathers, vessels must be able on a pinch to go through in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours, and on a fine day, and with wind and tide favourable, they may now and again not exceed even  $3\frac{1}{4}$  hours. 'Then,' say the advocates of swiftness, 'build swifter ships, and do it always in  $3\frac{1}{4}$  hours.' Indeed, they may on such a basis even now demand more than this. For the *Ireland* actually made the passage on one occasion from the breakwater light at Holyhead to the east pier light at Kingstown in 2 hours 44 minutes. The distance is  $55\frac{1}{4}$  knots, or  $63\frac{2}{3}$  statute miles, and her rate of speed was over 23 statute miles an hour.

At some not far distant date, no doubt, a special engine will take the latest mails out of the 'down special' at Crewe, and race after the regular mail to Holyhead, and as the special engine comes to a stoppage on the pier, a still more powerful packet than that now employed, with the passengers and heavy mails already embarked, will start for Kingstown, and the whole journey from London to Dublin will be accomplished in 9 hours. Did not the torpedo-boat destroyer *Daring* attain at her trial trip the other day a speed of  $29\frac{1}{4}$  knots, and is not that equal to 33.6 land miles an hour? Holyhead to Kingstown in 2 hours! Did not the railway company once flash the mails from Holyhead to Euston in 5 hours thirty-three years ago? My forecast is too moderate by at least 'an hour.'\*

\* Since the foregoing paragraphs were written, the Postmaster-General has called for tenders for a new Irish mail-service.

No sketch of the mail-coach service in Ireland from 1832—nay, from 1815—to the full development of the railway system in the sixties could fail to include a reference to the late Mr. Charles Bianconi. He was one of the most remarkable men of the age in Ireland as regards enterprise on the highways, as was the late Mr. Dargan in undertaking the construction of railways.

He was a Milanese, and was born at Tregolo in 1786. At sixteen he was bound to Andrea Faroni, consigned to Paolo Colnaghi, in London, sent over to Dublin, and employed as a petty huckster. Soon the natural genius of the man began to show itself. He cut himself loose from Faroni, and opened a gilder's shop in Carrick-on-Suir. The first person who befriended Bianconi in Carrick was James Rohan, a cooper, who sheltered him in his humble abode in Oven Lane, and ultimately received from him grateful acknowledgment in the form of a small pension.

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Without fixing the exact duration of the journey, which in effect is left to the parties tendering to specify, Mr. Arnold Morley appears to contemplate the possibility of the time occupied from Euston Square to Kingstown Pier being shortened by 2 hours. He invites the railway company to say for what annual sum they will perform the railway journey in 5 hours 13 minutes, and the packet company the sea-passage in 3 hours 7 minutes, leaving each free to name other periods for a proportionate payment. Supposing that a new service were established on these bases, the mails would be conveyed from the General Post-Office in London to the General Post-Office in Dublin in little more than 9 hours.

Next Bianconi went to Waterford ; then to a corner shop in Clonmel. As he moved on, so his income improved. At length he was able to start a car from Clonmel to Cahir, and then unchecked prosperity followed. His first purchase was a jaunting-car for six passengers. But although he could have bought a splendid horse for from £10 to £20 (so abundant were first-rate horses in Ireland after the peace), he had not money enough to do so. He purchased two bad horses for less price than a good one would have cost, and started his car. But he found that two horses, even bad ones, would draw more than six people, so he lengthened his car a bit and carried eight. Finally, as he bought better horses, he added yet to the car and took ten passengers. Then he went ahead and acquired horses freely, at times paying £30 for a bad steed, at others £5 for a good one.

How he created traffic by running a second car at lower fares, in active competition with himself, and how the light-hearted Irish people, enjoying the fun and not suspecting the joke, filled up both cars at remunerative fares, is matter of history.

How Bianconi became a large mail contractor, built his own cars at Clonmel, and kept on adding to their length until he carried sixteen passengers in a single conveyance, besides the driver, is also matter of history.

But what is not generally known is that, in 1838, this poor Italian, having no one to thank but his own

clever, shrewd, indomitable self, had established ninety-two vehicles, carrying from four to twenty persons apiece, on forty-five routes, and horsed them over an aggregate daily distance of 3,800 miles.

Bianconi from the earliest moment hit on the sure road to success,—his fares were moderate, and he studied the travellers' safety and comfort. No detail was too small to escape his notice. The simple expedient of a wooden rack under the cushions kept them from being soaked upwards in wet weather, and stout aprons sheltered his passengers' knees from rain and snow.

The managers of the great railroads of the three kingdoms were long in finding out that, by providing comfortable carriages, quick trains, and cheap fares for third-class passengers, they had hit on the true vein of prosperous management. They should earlier have taken a leaf from the poor Italian's book.

With one at least of Bianconi's tastes, perhaps his chief amusement, I have myself much sympathy—the examination of the coaching way-bills. His house was littered with way-bills; the floor of any closed carriage he travelled in lay ankle deep in them. I wish I had a score before me at this moment.

They gave him a perfect insight into the working of his services—of the difficulties, the successes, the failures; told him of time lost here, and traffic gained there; of horses and men in good order, or going to the bad. One secret of his prosperity lay in the fact that the master's eye was as searchingly used in the

agency at Belmullet, 201 miles north-west of Dublin, as in the stables at Clonmel, a hundred miles or more to the south of it.

‘A handsome man,’ wrote Mr. Hayes, ‘with a fine large head, very bright, sparkling eyes, and a deep florid complexion. Almost to the last he was as active, energetic, and impulsive as when his black hair curled all over his head.’

A letter lies before me from a former colleague in Ireland, whose duties continually brought him in contact with the Italian :

‘I had frequent opportunities of seeing Bianconi during the early years of my Dublin service. Indeed, I stayed at Longfield, his place near Cashel, on a short visit, and had then the pleasure of making the acquaintance of his pretty, graceful, and accomplished daughter.

‘Bianconi, as I knew him, was short and plump, with a round head, fine expansive forehead, curly gray hair, and merry, soft, yet piercing eyes. He was very fond of jokes, and was full of funny anecdotes, at which he laughed quite as heartily as did those who listened to him. But although his usual manner was playful—natural or assumed—he was an exceedingly shrewd man, possessed of strong common-sense; and his conversation, when serious, was most interesting and instructive, from the intimate knowledge he had of Ireland in all its phases, and acquaintance with many of the principal people of the country. He had the not uncommon failing of being vain of his big

acquaintances ; but he was no less proud of having been the architect of his own fortune. He told me how, in his boyish days, he had wandered over the country, selling penny pictures and other small articles ; that his practice, when moving from one place to another, was to *run* from milestone to milestone, resting at each ; that when so resting he pitied the many wayfarers who toiled wearily along on foot ; that he determined, if ever he should have the means, to start a public road conveyance ; that for years, even after his circumstances had improved, he forgot this determination, but that the idea eventually recurred to him, and he carried it out, at first on a very small scale, but in the end on the large scale which everyone knows of. He was kind-hearted and charitable, and did much good. He had a son, who died in his prime. He was very proud of a mausoleum he had erected at Longfield, and there no doubt he now lies.'

Out of ninety cars and two coaches, thirty-six carried the mails. In short, Bianconi's was a mail and day car establishment. He ran a coach at an average speed of 10 miles an hour from Limerick to Galway, and was, in the South and West of Ireland in the middle of this century, what Palmer was to the West of England at the close of the last one.

Similarly as regards Scotland, equally persistent, though less heroic, efforts have converted a slow course of post to and from London into a swift one.

At the period when this narrative begins, Caledonia was approached chiefly by two routes, by Berwick

from York, and by Carlisle from Leeds and Preston. Of course, Edinburgh and Glasgow, Perth, Aberdeen, and Inverness, were the points made for.

One London and Edinburgh mail-coach went *viâ* York, leaving London at 8 p.m. It took the road by Waltham Cross and Stamford; was at Grantham at 8 a.m. next day; stopped there 40 minutes, spent another 40 minutes at York, and reached Edinburgh at 4.43 p.m. on the third day, thus covering 399 miles 4 furlongs in 44 hours and 43 minutes. Its pace was 9 miles an hour exactly, including stops.

The Edinburgh coach which went by Wetherby also took the Waltham Cross road. It must have been close on the heels of the York coach, as it was due at Grantham at 8.5 a.m. next day, and at Wetherby (191 miles from London) at 5.6 p.m., thus taking 21 hours 6 minutes for the first half of the journey. The speed was just the same as that of the other coach—viz., an even 9 miles an hour, including stoppages. This London coach was driven no further north than Wetherby, but after an interval of 1 hour and 20 minutes away went a fresh coach (6.26 p.m.) for Edinburgh, *viâ* Newcastle-on-Tyne. It was at Belford at 8.37 a.m. next day, stopped there 40 minutes, and rattled along Waterloo Place in Edinburgh at 5.14 p.m.; the second journey of 201 miles thus occupied a day all but 1 hour and 14 minutes, or together 45 hours 14 minutes. Again the speed was 9 miles an hour.

For London passengers there was not much to choose between the two; one got in about half an hour



sooner than the other—that was all. The precise object in view in running two mail-coaches from London to Edinburgh, on nearly the same roads, is forgotten; but at about the time of the accession of King William IV., and during his Majesty's reign, some important changes were made. The coach due at 4.43 p.m. was made to arrive at 3.30 p.m., and a curriole post was put on, *via* Wooler, to and from Morpeth and Edinburgh (92½ miles), which outstripped the coach by about 2 hours. It was due at Edinburgh at 1.40 p.m., and often arrived, when the coach ran to time, at 1.30. But the coach rarely did run to time. It usually left St. Martin's-le-Grand 10 or 15 minutes, sometimes even half an hour, late; and so, although it was due at York at 5.36 p.m., and Morpeth at 4.16 a.m., it constantly arrived at least as much behind time as at starting.

Then a further change was made. The Wetherby-Edinburgh coach was struck off the road; the Carlisle and Glasgow mails from London were no longer sent by Leeds, but were transferred to a Wetherby-Glasgow coach, which, turning off westward at Boroughbridge, broke into the Penrith road, and got to Carlisle at 4.17 a.m., instead of at 6.7 a.m. by Leeds. The great Yorkshire town had a coach through Higham Ferrers and Barnsley to itself.

Simultaneously the Edinburgh mail by York was whipped up; an hour or more was gained, and it got to Edinburgh at 2.23 p.m. The coach never improved on that acceleration.

There was yet another route to the border. The Manchester coach, which ran through Barnet and Derby, was continued by second coach to Carlisle, and by a third to Portpatrick, and carried the North of Ireland mails. Leaving London at 8 p.m., it was at Manchester (187 miles) at three o'clock in the afternoon of the second day, and at Carlisle at 4.53 on the morning of the third day, only 7 minutes, by the way, before the coaches for Glasgow and Edinburgh were timed to leave, so that one would suppose that letters from Lancashire for Scotland generally must more than once have missed the junction. It passed through Gretna Green at 6.35 a.m.—not too early, probably, for the blacksmith.

And while the 35 miles 5 furlongs from Carlisle to Dumfries were cantered over at 9 miles an hour by four horses, there was a sad come-down for the Portpatrick mail from the south as soon as Dumfries was past. A pair-horse coach struggled through Kirkcudbrightshire at 7 miles 4 furlongs an hour; and if for the 85 miles it was paid 5d. a mile, or £646 a year in all, it certainly got as much as was fair.

Like the arrival of the mail by horse-post or mail-gig at Westbury in Wiltshire, so that of the mail-coach at corners of Great Britain so remote as Portpatrick or Stranraer was always an event of interest, and sometimes of keen expectation.

I am told to-day that a banker in Stranraer remembers a crowd in 1832 awaiting at the end of the town news of Lord John Russell's Reform

Bill, which was passed, as will be remembered, early in June. As the coach hove in sight, with colours flying, the lads of the town, without awaiting its actual arrival, ran up the streets, crying, 'The Bill has passed! the Bill has passed!'

About the time, too, that the younger Mr. Weller was paying marked attentions to Mary, the pretty housemaid at Mr. Nupkins', the guard of this same coach was enamoured of a fair creature who resided on the mail-road between Stranraer and Portpatrick. The coach passed her abode twice daily. When nearing it, the lover gallantly blew the horn loud and long; the considerate coachman 'slowed down' the horses; the devoted guard sprang to the ground, publicly saluted the object of his affections, and, amidst general plaudits and the sympathy and approval of passengers of his own sex, nimbly regaining his perch and charge of the mail-bags, blew a farewell blast.

It was either on this coach or that which ran to Ayr that the guard was provided with one of the few key bugles allowed on the royal mails, in lieu of, or in supplement to, the long straight horns, such as are still used on the parcel coaches.

The Carlisle coach was due at Portpatrick at 22 minutes past 9 at night. In this case the journey of 424 miles from London to the Irish Sea occupied a fraction more than two days and an hour. From Glasgow to Portpatrick with the Irish mail was a distance through Ayrshire of 94 miles. A pair of

horses drew the coach at  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour. The mails for Ireland passed on by packet to Donaghadee.

Competition at one time raged furiously on some of the Scotch coach-lines. Between Ayr and Wigton and Dumfries the late Mr. Robert MacMurtrie, of Ayr, was the contractor for carrying the mails. A rival started up who offered lower terms all round, whereon Mr. MacMurtrie took the mails for nothing, and carried passengers at merely nominal fares. The unprofitable strife went on for eighteen months, when the interloper, exhausted, quitted the field. Not long after this two English railway companies followed suit, throwing away the receipts of the Great Exhibition traffic of 1851 by carrying passengers to and from London at less than cost price, one company actually paying away in tolls for right of way more than it collected in passengers' fares. Such are some of the vagaries of human nature, whether in individuals or corporate bodies, when reason and moderation are cast aside, and the bit is taken between the teeth.

So, at the time of her Majesty's accession, a letter which left London at eight o'clock on Monday night was due at Berwick, on the border, at 8.17 on Wednesday morning, and at Edinburgh at 2.23 in the afternoon; while a letter for Glasgow, despatched at the same hour, would pass through Carlisle at 4.17 a.m., and reach Glasgow at 2 p.m.

The journey northward is easily traceable. At nine o'clock at night the coach from Edinburgh was

at Perth; at 2.23 in the morning at Montrose, and at 6.22 at Aberdeen; at three o'clock in the afternoon at Elgin, and at 6 minutes past 8 at Inverness. This was Thursday.

At 3.15 next morning it was on the south side of Meikle Ferry, and, with good luck, before 4 it was north of it. Dornoch, Golspie, and Helmsdale and the Ord of Caithness were passed, and on Friday the glimmering lights of the schooners lying off Scrabster, one perhaps waiting for the mail for the Orkneys, came into view, and the mail-coach drew up its weary steeds at Thurso Post-Office at six o'clock at night. So the toilsome journey from St. Martin's-le-Grand to Thurso—783 miles—was achieved in 3 days and 22 hours. Four hours later the return mail left for Edinburgh and London.

Some further particulars of the Carlisle and other four-horse coaches which in 1836 ran in Scotland in continuation of the London mail are given below:

Coach.	Rate and Speed per hour.		Coach.	Rate and Speed per hour.	
	Miles.	Furl.		Miles.	Furl.
Aberdeen to Inverness ... ..	8	3	Edinburgh to Aberdeen ... ..	9	5
Berwick to Edinburgh ... ..	9	5	Edinburgh to Glasgow, <i>via</i> Bathgate	9	6
Carlisle to Edinburgh ... ..	9	2	Edinburgh to Stirling ... ..	8	4
Carlisle to Glasgow	10	4	Glasgow to Perth...	8	5
A second mail-coach ran between these points.			Perth to Inverness	8	5

Greatest speed travelled by a mail-coach, 10 miles

4 furlongs per hour; slowest, 7 miles. Average, 8 miles 2 furlongs per hour.

The old mail-coach route from Perth to Inverness was often blocked. On one occasion the coach was upset at Dalwhinnie, and the guard (John Stewart) fatally injured. His widow was allowed a pension.

The Grand Junction, the North Union, the Lancaster and Carlisle, and the Caledonian Railways bit by bit usurped the north-west road; similarly the Midland pushed on to Normanton and Leeds. The York and North Midland, to York, Newcastle, and Berwick, joined the North British and Midland Companies' tracks together, and the iron way was made continuous from Euston Square to the Border and far away beyond it. Yet the downfall of the coaching interest in Scotland was long delayed.

The railway line between Berwick and Edinburgh, which was completed in 1846, was not fully connected with Newcastle and York until 1848, nor were the Caledonian Railway trains able to run to Perth before the latter year. In short, the Scotch coaches continued on the road at least ten years later than the English coaches, and, of course, to the Far North they held on until the completion of the Highland railway some years afterwards. But, attacked on both flanks, they shortened their journeys by degrees until the bitter end. It was not until July 5, 1847, that the last mail-coach, bound for Berwick and Edinburgh, left Newcastle-on-Tyne. Then, sorrowful to all who saw it, the Union-jack was borne aloft flying half-mast high.

In fact, if a general date, say 110 years ago, be assigned to the commencement of Palmer's wise scheme for the improvement of mail-coaches, the very hour—nay, the exact minute—can be recorded of the actual end of the mail-coach system in Great Britain. At 4.45 in the morning, on Saturday, August 1, 1874, the London night mail by coach across the Ord of Caithness arrived for the last time at Thurso.

The Highland Railway had long been creeping northwards from Inverness. It had opened its main line to Wick; now it threw out to Thurso a spur from Georgemass. As the dust-covered coach delivered the bags at the door of the post-office, the old order changed. The final road-bags went in at a quarter to 5, and at 10 minutes past 5 the first railway-bags came out.

That was the end of the working of the longest mail-coach ride out of London, which in 1836, following rather a circuitous route from St. Martin's-le-Grand, traversed 783 miles, gave employment to nearly 800 horses, and performed the whole distance from post-office to post-office in 3 days and 22 hours.

It maintained its reputation to the last: had on the box a smart coachman, dressed in real gray sealskin, as befitted those high latitudes; ran good cattle, and kept true time. It came into Thurso with a 'unicorn' team of splendid half-breds (a cross between a cob, or a cart-horse, and a thorough-bred), perhaps resembling those which Chaplin stabled at Hounslow and described as 'half-bloods.' They were powerful

creatures, swift, and of good courage and endurance. They went at so slashing a pace when allowed to trot—knowing, as experienced coach-horses, exactly what they had to do, and desiring to get it promptly over and done with—that it was usual, when the roads were in good order, to reduce them to a walk for a mile or two midway, so as not to overshoot the time-bill.

Once, an onlooker tells me, a coachman mounted the box at Thurso in a state of health which obviously rendered him unfit for duty. He was remonstrated with, but in vain. He was there, and would take the coach to Wick. He did so, but on arrival had to be assisted from the box, and died the same day.

One mail-guard of the Thurso coach had the habit of falling asleep upon his perch, and from thence tumbling to the road. This occurred frequently; sometimes the coach proceeded for several miles before the driver became aware that he was deficient of a guard. But his comrade had seen long service with the army, and, being accustomed to hard knocks, was none the worse for his involuntary falls.

The coach many years ago was not always lucky in the skill of its drivers, but the horses made up for every deficiency. 'Freedom from accident,' an experienced correspondent of mine, who, living on the spot, had the coach constantly in view, is of opinion, 'may be safely set down to the credit of the team; for the horses knew perfectly well what they had to do, the pace they were required to travel at, and also, of course, better than the men, they knew their



halting-point. Should any conveyance by chance meet them, the coach generally kept a good share of the fair-way, leaving the other party to take precautions.' Surely a breed so sagacious, which does honour to Caledonia, ought to be preserved.

Still, as I write, one solitary coach recalls the past. It runs under contract, carrying what mails and parcels can be sent by it, from Kingussie, in the Highlands, to Fort William, close by the Caledonian Canal. But that, too, is doomed. The West Highland Railway is at the gates of the mail-road, and soon 'Lochaber' (the Kinlochs) will know the prancing steeds of the Kingussie coach 'no more.' Yet the stage from Thurso to Tongue—not, indeed, a mail-coach—runs as it did on June 10, 1836, when Sir Edward Lees, Mr. Abbott's predecessor in Edinburgh, described it as 'a carriage on four wheels, drawn by two horses, capable of carrying four passengers, but which was not a stage-coach, nor did it carry a guard.'

When Rowland Hill was in power he lost no chance of accelerating the mails. Eventually the Great Northern Railway carried the London and Edinburgh mail, and the London and North-Western and Caledonian companies the London and Liverpool and Glasgow and other mails. So it is arranged at this moment, as I intend to explain in a subsequent chapter.

But the electric telegraph was to outstrip all efforts—at least, in point of mere speed. An anecdote which illustrates what, after all, requires no proof occurs to me. The London and Edinburgh coach, *viâ* York,

as shown, was allowed, when at its best, 42 hours 25 minutes for the 397 miles 3 furlongs between St. Martin's-le-Grand and the old post-office in Waterloo Place—say the course of post was five days. In 1798 the coach had not worked up to this pitch of perfection. 'It was,' says Mr. Harris, 'two days and three nights on the road;' so replies to letters would be looked for in about a week. A few years after the transfer of the telegraphs to the State, a literary man called on me at the Post-Office on some official business. In course of conversation, he mentioned that he had been engaged on a work which treated of a period (that just mentioned) when it took seven days to get by post a letter to Edinburgh and an answer back. It occurred to me to take him into the telegraph galleries, to see if we could not get a message through to Edinburgh and an answer back in seven *seconds*.

The Edinburgh circuits were engaged, but a Dundee or Aberdeen wire was free. This was the message: 'How weather?' and this the answer: 'Fine.' The time occupied, according to my recollection, was nearer five seconds than seven. Perhaps the clerks at both ends cut the signals short, and 'Hw zm?' and 'Fn' ('How is the weather?' 'Fine') did both for message and reply. At any rate, so far as the mere exchange of intelligent ideas went, we did in the nineteenth century, in a given number of seconds, that which in the eighteenth century had required as many days.

## CHAPTER IV.

## PENNY POSTAGE.

ON January 10, 1840, a Warwickshire schoolmaster, born in 1795 at Kidderminster, in the county of Worcester, took the town—one might almost say the world—by storm.

The speech from the Throne in August, 1839, had contained words to the effect that it had been with satisfaction that her Majesty the Queen had given her consent to a reduction of the rates of postage. In August, 1838, the rates, with the exception of a change which had been recently made from 4d. to 2d. on 'single' letters for distances not exceeding 8 miles, had continued the same since 1812 for Great Britain, and since 1814 for Ireland. They advanced from 2d. for 8 miles and 4d. for 15 miles, by steps to 1s. for 300 miles, and 1d. for every additional 100 miles or part of 100 miles. In Scotland, letters, when conveyed by mail-coaches only, were subject to an additional charge of a halfpenny. Letters passing between Great Britain

and Ireland were liable to the rates of postage charged in Great Britain (in Ireland, after the initial charge of 2d., the scale for inland letters was 1d. lower than in England), but there was a Channel rate, with some other special charges.

Rowland, the third son of Thomas Wright Hill and Sarah, his wife, had with his own bow and spear accomplished a triumph. He had brought to the ground, as his quarry, the high rates of postage which hampered trade and social life; he had made clear their direct evils and attendant abuses, and had gained the consent of Parliament and the country to the amount of charge on all inland letters not exceeding half an ounce in weight thenceforth being uniformly fixed at a penny.

It was in 1835 that Rowland Hill's thoughts had first turned in earnest to the Post-Office. In that year there occurred an event full of comfort to reformers who have to consider the public purse,—a large surplus of general revenue. Here was the tempting opportunity of successfully suggesting a beneficial reduction of postage duties, though, strange paradox, the scheme which was prepared in view of a surplus of revenue came (to anticipate) to be legalized when the income of the country fell short of the expenditure. Lord Melbourne thought that the difference either way of a few hundred thousand pounds in an income of £48,000,000 was of comparatively little moment. He said, in effect, that there was a general concurrence of all parties in

favour of the plan, and, as Sir Arthur Blackwood remarked to me one day, a big till to draw upon.

As a first step after exhaustive examination of his subject, Rowland Hill wrote an effective pamphlet which soon wrought conviction in the minds of all sensible men. His reasoning, according to Leigh Hunt, carried all along with it 'as smoothly as wheel on railroad.' He set forth the public gain to be expected from cheap and frequent postal conveyance; he declared that the object of his postal reform was not to increase the political power of this or that party, but to benefit all sects in politics and religion, and all classes, from the highest to the lowest. He claimed for his plan an increased energy to trade, and the removal of temptations to fraud, and that by means of it an important step would be taken in general education.

Lord Ashburton, looking at the postage question generally, had always thought it a very bad means of raising revenue. 'I think it,' said he, 'one of the worst of our taxes.' Dr. Dionysius Lardner regarded a tax on correspondence as he would a tax upon speech; letters were a mode of speaking and hearing at a distance.

In recent years Mr. Henry Fawcett (himself a professor of political economy) told me, speaking of postage rates, that he looked on needlessly high postage as a tax on education, which tax he considered to be the worst of all taxes. Most people will concur in this opinion.

Many men of eminence besides the gifted professor of political economy and those already mentioned have held the same views. Mr. Jones Lloyd, the famous banker, afterwards Lord Overstone, thought that if there were 'any one subject which ought not to have been selected as a subject of taxation, it was that of intercommunication by post.'

The Government had Mr. Hill's paper before them in 1837. It was referred to a Select Committee of the House of Commons. Of this Committee Mr. Robert Wallace, member for Greenock, was made chairman, and it is remarkable that a member of it, Mr. Villiers, who sat for Wolverhampton, is in the House to this day. Mr. Warburton was another member, and a helpful friend.

Lieutenant-Colonel Maberly was then the permanent head of the Post-Office. He had not been long installed; but he had mastered the methods of postal work as then pursued, and he was heartily opposed to penny postage. The same roof covered the Secretary and the Clerk who was to follow his successor. Colonel Maberly received as compensation for loss of house-room, coals and candles (he had never had them, by the way, so one ought to say in lieu of those perquisites) £400 a year; the clerk, Mr. John Tilley, then the first junior, for loss of fees, £11 17s. 6d. The Colonel received as salary £1,500 a year; Mr. Tilley £180.

The pruning-hook had been applied to secretarial remuneration when Colonel Maberly took up office.

The salary of his predecessor, Sir Francis Freeling, had been only £500 a year. But that was justly deemed inadequate pay for a man in his position, and especially for a public servant conspicuous for ability and devotion to duty. Sundry allowances were accordingly added to the bare stipend, which brought up his actual remuneration to £4,165 6s. 4d. per annum.

Revisions of establishments in the Post-Office are always going on. There was one of the Inland Office in 1834. The Postmaster-General, in framing it, abolished a very old allowance of £10 a year made to a certain number of clerks. It was originally granted for the loss of a room at the old Post-Office in Lombard Street. The allowance was of so ancient a date that some of the oldest officers in receipt of it had never had a room.

What, however, was sauce for the goose was by no means such for the gander. Two years later Colonel Maberly was brought into the office. The Earl of Lichfield took no thought of the wise precedent set by the Duke of Richmond, perhaps was never told of it. He readjusted the actual salary, it is true, fixing it at £1,500 instead of £500, but the £400 a year in lieu of house-room he maintained for a reason hard to explain. The Colonel had never had house-room. As well might he be granted £400 a year in lieu of garden and paddock.

However far behind the front rank of progress the Post-Office may have been before it felt the full effect

of the Reformers' vivifying influence, there were not wanting in the Legislature those who rightly appreciated the importance of good management at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

For upon such management and the regulation of the rates of postage depended 'in a great measure,' said a Select Committee of the House of Commons, 'the entire correspondence of the country; and in that correspondence is involved whatever affects, interests, or agitates mankind: private interests, public interests; family, kindred, friends; commercial business, professional business; literature, science, art, law, politics, education, morals, religion. Every rank and class has an interest—more or less immediate—in the safe, speedy and economical transmission of Post-Office communications.'

It was therefore a wide field on which Mr. Hill, fresh from the shires of Worcester and Warwick, from the towns of Kidderminster and Birmingham, had entered.

It was not merely the postage for 'single' letters which needed reform. There were double and multiple letters, the principle of rating for such letters being as follows:

All letters weighing less than an ounce were charged, if consisting of one piece of paper, single postage; of two pieces, double; of three or more pieces, triple postage. Weight sent up the price alarmingly—a letter weighing  $1\frac{1}{4}$  ounces cost quadruple postage; one of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ounces, quintuple postage,



and so on. On a triple letter from Liverpool for Barnet the postwoman's demand was, 'Letter, two and nine.'

The estimated number of articles passing through the post in a year was as follows :

Letters, 77,500,000; franks, 7,000,000; newspapers, 44,500,000. Grand total, 129,000,000.

The average produce per letter is not easily stated in a clear and comprehensive form. To ascertain the true produce of the several classes of letters was obviously of much consequence. The Select Committee of 1838 gave the matter much consideration, and if a choice be made of two only of the results which they arrived at, their conclusions would be quite clear. They recorded (1) that the average postage on all letters, foreign as well as inland, was about 7d., and (2) that the average of all letters, exclusive of foreign, was 6½d.

This plain language, however, was qualified by two additional statements to the effect that (3), including the foreign letters, and reckoning all double and triple letters as single, the average was 9½d., and that (4) the average of general post letters alone (*i.e.*, excluding local letters) was 8¾d. On the whole, it seems safest to take 7d. as the usual produce of a letter in 1837-8. When penny postage came, 1½d. was found to be the average.

Now, seeing that the Earl of Lichfield, as Postmaster-General, had shown that by dividing the expenditure of the Post-Office by the number of letters passing through it the cost (not for conveyance

only, but for management also) of each letter worked out to not more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d., it can be understood how a profit of £1,658,479 was netted from a gross receipt of only £2,339,738, and that, too, derived from relatively so small a number as 77,500,000 letters. Two conclusions might be drawn: first, that the postage was unduly high; secondly, that an insufficient sum was expended in improving postal processes.

Before the Committee of 1837-8, Rowland Hill was bent on establishing these two propositions and others, and the Post-Office officials were certainly no match for him. Colonel Maberly had been in office barely two years. He had not been confronted with his new duties long enough to solve all the problems which they presented. Sir Francis Freeling, the great Secretary of the Georgian era, was no more. How he would have comported himself towards penny postage is an interesting speculation. He had strong prepossessions, it is true, but he was a man of great intelligence. The Earl of Lichfield could do little more than speak from the returns which his officials laid before him.

Rowland Hill, on the other hand, not only brought a trained intelligence to bear upon the general question, but an ardent thirst for reform; and a special capacity for mastering the lessons taught by the most complicated statistics inspired him with new and original ideas, and armed him with power to confute every attack on his calculations.

But, as regards returns, a marked feature of postal administration at this critical period was the extreme difficulty of obtaining, not merely intelligible and accurate returns, but any returns at all. Reforms authorized by the Treasury conditionally on particulars being furnished were long suspended because the schedules of such, although duly ordered, were but slowly framed. Probably it was not inertness, which provoked delay, but the difficulty of deciding what was wanted and how to get it. The complicated regulations of the Post-Office greatly hindered the preparation of clear and explicit statements, and absolute accuracy was hard to realize. For example, the Postmaster-General sought to show how the cost of conveyance increased with distance, and how much greater was such cost than Hill's estimates. The figures Lord Lichfield adduced went to establish, if anything, the converse; at any rate, they brought out the fact that a letter from London to Louth, a distance of 155 miles, cost 1·235d., say 1½d.; but from London to Edinburgh, a distance of 399 miles 6 furlongs, only ·774d., say ¾d. Double the distance was covered for scarcely more than half the money.

But Lord Lichfield's advisers had (of course, unintentionally) misled him. He stated that the cost of a mail-coach trip from London to Edinburgh was £5. A post-office return, procured by Mr. Wallace, M.P., put it at £3 19s. 7¾d., which was to a certain extent correct. It was, moreover, shown that the reduced sum included a charge of £1 which really

had nothing to do with the matter, and that the true cost was not £5, but £2 19s. 7½d.

The committee soon brushed aside fallacies. 'It is not a matter of inference,' said they, 'but a matter of fact, that the expense to the Post-Office is practically the same whether a letter goes from London to Barnet, or from London to Edinburgh.'

That opinion settled the question of uniformity of charge. My fellow-townsmen may boast that the name of their town was thus associated with the most effective argument adduced in favour of this radical change. If Rowland Hill was the father of penny postage, the Committee of 1838 certainly stood sponsors for the beneficent infant. Mr. Wallace, the chairman, Mr. Villiers, and Mr. Warburton were solid as rocks in their favourable opinion of his scheme.

There were not wanting men of real ability in the Post-Office who were conscientiously opposed to penny postage. They were those who had thoroughly mastered their own particular function, but were not accustomed to look beyond it. They had not been trained to the collection and use of statistics, and they were all naturally and properly anxious to keep up the net revenue of their department at the highest possible point.

Of all the official witnesses who went before the Select Committee, probably Sir Edward Lees, Secretary of the Post-Office in Edinburgh, who had filled the like post in Dublin, and who had, moreover, in the course of his long service gone through many different

branches of the administration, and so had a thorough knowledge of all, and Mr. George Louis, were the most intelligent and reasonable. The former took the clear line that the cure for most of the evils ascertained to exist in postal management was a low and uniform rate of postage, and that if any change was made it should be to the proposed penny. He set his face stoutly against any provisional tinkering of the rates, but he dwelt with force on the loss of revenue likely to follow.

This surely was a defensible line for a civil servant to take. Not for him to tender definite opinions of his own on questions of high policy, but only to trace and connect cause and effect. It was for authority—for the Minister, the Government, and Parliament—to decide the issue.

The same view very strongly held in the Post-Office in 1838. Colonel Maberly went so far as to affirm that it was no part of the duty even of the Postmaster-General to advise a reduction of postage rates; the Chancellor of the Exchequer was the functionary to take cognizance of such a question as that. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is still the arbiter; but public opinion would estimate poorly the administrative qualities of a Postmaster-General who shrank from proposing sacrifices of revenue which he deemed justifiable and expedient.

Mr. George Louis brought ripe practical knowledge to bear on all the questions addressed to him. He had been twelve years in the foreign branch, eleven

years in the western district of England as Surveyor—in fact, his surveyorship extended from April, 1821, to January, 1835—and he had been for three years at the head of the mail-coach office. He resigned in the summer of 1838. All his evidence was clear and to the point, and the opinions he advanced were well-balanced and moderate.

Outside the Office advocates of penny postage were numerous and influential. Mr. Richard Cobden, 'an extensive manufacturer at Manchester,' came forward with Mr. Jones Lloyd, Lord Ashburton, and others in its support.

Mr. Hill's proposal as regards rate was that all letters not exceeding half an ounce in weight should be conveyed from one place in the United Kingdom to another for one penny. All letters over half an ounce were to be charged an additional penny for every additional half-ounce. If not prepaid the postage was to be doubled, though Mr. Hill was strongly in favour of compulsory pre-payment. Practically payment of postage is now made in advance, not, indeed, by compulsion (except in the case of parcels), but by free will of the people and change of habits. The levying of an extra postage on unpaid packets no doubt gave a fillip in the right direction.

Prepayment, however, in 1838 was objected to as contrary to the habit of the people of this country, who, it was urged, disliked it. Perhaps in some cases a deep-rooted constitutional aversion to making payment of any sort still exists; but that prepayment

should be objected to 'on the ground that it would diminish the security for the delivery of letters' is less intelligible. Yet so it was. Even in the twopenny post almost four letters out of five—126,000 out of 160,000—were posted unpaid.

The sight of an unpaid letter tendered for delivery showed the addressee in many cases all that he wanted to know; payment was thereupon refused, and the letter was returned to the sender. It did double duty for nothing, telling the addressee who it was that had written to him, and the sender that it had been seen and rejected. Finally the latter refused the returned missive.

It must not be supposed that penny postage was unknown in this country before the penny rate became uniform. The Postmaster-General had long possessed authority to set up a penny post wheresoever he thought fit. It was, however, purely a local post, and the selection of points between which it should run, arbitrary. A letter not exceeding 4 ounces in weight could be sent for a penny over a wide local area. Unlike Docwra's earlier penny post of 1680, which applied to London, this was a provincial post, which radiated from Bristol, as already stated, and many other post-towns.

At Exeter the penny post ran from Ottery to Moreton Hampstead, from Silverton to Star Cross; at Manchester from Glossop to Newton-le-Willows, from Wilmslow to Delph. The revenue derived from letters paying the rate of 1d. was, in the beginning of 1838,

as much as £56,000 a year, and the number of local letters 8,000,000.

In establishing penny posts, the principle was to take the post-town as the centre, and lay out a branch if the estimated receipts would cover cost. Then, as now, the department found local work profitable to the revenue, and increased accommodation productive of an increased number of letters. What was true then is true still.

Leeds made £964 a year out of its local post—at any rate, that was the revenue; Birmingham, £1,268; Liverpool, £1,581; Bristol, £1,731; and Manchester topped them all with £2,032. ‘Fifth clause’ posts did not amount to much. They brought in a bare £2,000 a year. The rule for establishing a fifth clause post was either that the inhabitants should propose it to the Post-Office, or that the latter should call a meeting of the inhabitants and make propositions to them. In the end any deficiency of revenue had usually to be made good by the department, which might just as well have taken the initiative in all cases.

The plan of a post within a post, a penny doing at the same time more and less than fourpence, of course gave rise to all sorts of anomalies, which, if hard to defend, were highly picturesque. For example, a 4-ounce packet posted at Exeter for South Zeal, 18 miles off, but within the limits of the local post, cost 1d.; a similar packet sent to Honiton, a distance of 16 miles, cost 6s. 8d.



Yet, strangely enough, while a penny post was given to villages, there was no direct communication, through the medium of the Post-Office, in populous manufacturing districts between 10 and 30 miles from Manchester. At Sabden, 28 miles off, Mr. Cobden stated that although there was a population of 1,200 souls there was no post-office, nor anything that served for one.

Here was solid ground for a reformer to work upon.

So deeply ingrained, however, was the idea that postage must increase with distance, that such schemes as came out of the Post-Office as alternatives to Rowland Hill's uniform penny rate all leant to multitudinous scales. Colonel Maberly tried his hand. He proposed to sacrifice £800,000 a year of revenue by adopting a scale of eleven gradations of distance and charge; up to 12 miles a postage of 2d. was to be levied; for 350 miles and over, 1s.

Not to be outdone by his chief, Mr. Paul Measor, postmaster of Exeter, propounded another graduated scale. This had a flavour of penny postage in it, as by his plan a letter was to be carried uniformly 5 miles for 1d.; then at increasing rates for 12 miles, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100 miles, and so on; in all he had sixteen gradations of charge for distance, winding up with a postage of 1s. 6d. for 500 miles. Even the shrewd Superintending President of the inland branch, Mr. William Bokenham, asserted that it was quite as easy to make twenty different

taxes of letters—meaning, as easy to assign to each letter its proper tax or charge out of twenty different rates—as to have only one rate. ‘Taxing’ is still a familiar term in the Post-Office.

What strikes one now as amazing is that these practical and experienced men failed to see that the labour and complexity which charge graduated by distance must have involved, and the impossibility of determining the distance with precision in all cases, pointed rather to simplicity of scales than numerous rates.

But the department might have replied that, as they had the fixing of the route which a letter followed, they alone knew the distance, and there was no appeal against their ruling—which would have been true.

As it was, so indifferently did the scale in actual operation work, that £122,531 a year had to be refunded for overcharges and other untenable taxes, the principle of rating by the route taken by the mail, however circuitous it might be, naturally giving rise to error and appeal. Moreover, the extra postage due to sinuosities of mail-routes, and the circuitous course which some letters had therefore to follow in reaching their destination, amounted in Great Britain to as much as £101,776 a year. That was too pretty a penny to be lightly cast aside.

Perhaps as striking an illustration as can be given of the oppressiveness of the old rates of postage is to be found in the evidence of Mr. G. Henson, a working hosier of Nottingham. He observed that ‘a servant-

girl goes perhaps 100 miles off; if she communicate with her friends once a month, that would be twelve tenpences—that is, 10s., a tenth part, perhaps, of her year's wages.'

One Hydra-headed abuse on which Hill plied the battle-axe was the system of franking, or evading payment of postage by means of the signature of a privileged person affixed to the outside of the letter, to the left hand of the superscription.

The postage represented by franked correspondence is estimated to have amounted in the year 1837 to the prodigious sum of £1,064,874 8s. 4d., which, of course, represented so much national loss. Seven millions of franks were affixed to packets otherwise chargeable with postage.

The revenue lost heavily by letters being sent otherwise than through the post. It was the boast of an extensive publisher and school-agent that he knew of and adopted evasions of the postal laws which enabled him to receive letters from Glasgow for 2d., on which the Post-Office would have levied at least 1s. 1d. He had practised evasion for eight years; he still practised it in 1838. Out of every 236 private letters he received, 169, according to a strict record which he kept, came to him otherwise than by the post. He considered that he had a right to send letters as he pleased, and did not feel it his duty to acquiesce in a bad law; every good man, he thought, should set himself against a bad law in order to get it changed. All this came out before

the committee appointed by the House of Commons November 23, 1837.

Mr. Peacock, solicitor of the Post-Office, was in favour of reducing the postage rates if only to check the illicit transmission of letters.

Mr. William Maury, President of the American Chamber of Commerce at Liverpool, deposed that at Liverpool Mr. William Banning (the postmaster of the day, and father or uncle of the late Mr. C. B. G. Banning, the third of that name, and predecessor of the present postmaster, Mr. J. D. Rich) had expected that some thousands of letters would pass through his office in order to be forwarded by the steamship *Sirius*, bound from Cork for New York, but to his astonishment he only received five letters. Mr. Maury added that by that ship at least 10,000 letters were in fact sent; he had himself sent 200 letters by her, all of which went free.

At length the arguments in favour of Mr. Hill's plan prevailed, and as a consequence the welcome announcement from the Throne that the old rates of postage would be reduced. But in the meantime there had been hard fighting all along the line, and the reformer had had his work to do in beating down opposition and winning the day. Many of the objections advanced to the scheme are racily told by Mr. Hill himself. Here is an example:

'Another class of letters presenting a difficulty (here I am careful to quote the exact words) "would be half-ounce letters weighing an ounce, or above." I

could not but admit that letters exhibiting so remarkable a peculiarity might present difficulties with which I was not prepared to deal.'

It is not hard to imagine the reformer's grave smile of contentment, the twinkle in his eye, as with demure countenance and deliberate speech he made his humorous and at the same time sarcastic admission.

Not even when the main point was gained did the warfare cease, as the 'Life of Sir Rowland Hill,'\* edited and in part written by his nephew, Dr. Birkbeck Hill, has abundantly shown.

In the struggle for cheapened rates Mr. Wallace did yeoman's service. Penny postage must no doubt in any case eventually have come; but he helped to smooth the rugged path, himself carried many reforms, and gave Mr. Hill a cordial and welcome support. Mr. Wallace well might stand in a group with the chief actors in the final scene of the fray: Lord Melbourne, the Premier of the day, on one side (though thinking of other things than penny postage); Sir Francis Baring, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, signing the Treasury warrant of 1839, on the other; between them, in the foreground, Rowland Hill; Mr. Wallace, M.P., and Mr. T. W. Hill, the great man's father, not too inconspicuous in the rear. In this case, a sense of the fitness of things would seem to suggest that as honour—and justly so—accrued to the famous son, one at least of the revered parents, if not both, might properly be honoured too.

\* Delarue, London, 1879.

However, penny postage became an established fact, and the Shetland Islands, which had had to pay 1s. or more on their letters, now paid only the uniform penny, and wrote at least a dozen letters for every one they had written before.

Then came about a remarkable change in ways and manners of letter-writers. When the rates of postage were various, and ranged from 4d. for a 'single' letter for a distance of 15 miles, to 1s. for 300, and 1d. for every 100 miles beyond, letters were extensively posted unpaid.

As mentioned, 4d. for postage was the common demand on the delivery of a letter at Barnet, which is 11 miles from London. In a popular book for children, entitled 'The Parent's Cabinet,' published sixty years ago, Mr. Harmer, who lived in the suburbs of London, expresses himself with some enthusiasm at the moderation of the charge of 1s. 1d. which he has to pay on a letter for his little son from Uncle Alfred at Manchester—11d. was the postage to London, and 2d. the charge for retransmission to a suburban part. It obviously never occurred to him that the writer might just as well have paid for his letter in advance. Perhaps there was a certain sense of equity in this practice. You who had the labour of writing—and letters were long ones in those days, even crossed—went scot-free; and it was he who had the pleasure of receiving the letter that had to pay the piper, or, rather, the postman.

Be that as it may, 'Letter, fou'-pence,' ceased to be

the cry: the sender paid the penny in cash; a little while later cut with the scissors a penny label from a sheet or strip of postage-stamps, covered at the back with a 'glutinous wash'; for awhile he enclosed his letter in the somewhat fantastic yet artistically drawn cover of Mulready, and finally abandoned himself to the luxury of the gummed envelopes and perforated or embossed postage-stamps which have come down to our day.

In a 'Philatelic History' by 'Phil,' we are told that the original sketch for the postage-stamp bore the Queen's head and the legend, 'Post-Office—One Penny—Half-ounce,' and that the head of Queen Victoria on the penny embossed stamp was copied from Wyon's medal, which was struck in commemoration of her Majesty's visit to the City of London in November, 1837.

No longer was it needful for the Post-Office to hold letters up to the light for the detection of enclosures. Weight, not number of slips of paper enclosed, nor distance either, now decided the charge.

Away, at a blow, were swept the notable abuses of the franking practice, and the devices all and singular for defrauding the revenue. 'Mr. Jones' on the wrapper of a newspaper (which, by the way, went free) had told one story to the recipient; 'Jones, Esquire,' another.

Rowland Hill himself, in youthful days, had economized slender means by use of an ingenious code which displayed itself on newspaper-wrappers—the

names superscribed of members of the two political parties signifying various degrees of bodily health.

Like most inventions which prove beneficial to the public, the adoption of the simple and highly convenient plan of perforating by machinery the rows of postage-stamps so as to admit of easy separation was the cause of much heart-burning to the ingenious patentee, Mr. Henry Archer. The perforating-machine which, in 1847, he submitted to the Post-Office was at once pronounced to be 'a clever and useful invention.' The Board of Stamps and Taxes also thought well of it, and obtained Treasury authority for allowing Messrs. Bacon and Petch, postage-stamp printers, to try one of Mr. Archer's machines under the direction of Mr. Edwin Hill, Sir Rowland's brother.

After various trials and the correction of mechanical defects, the latest machine proved successful; and then arose the question of remunerating the patentee. Machines in the perfected form were to cost £200 apiece; but the Board, while maintaining that the perforating process was well known, recognised the fact that a first machine is necessarily more expensive to make than copies, and as Mr. Archer had been about three years engaged in the effort to bring his invention to perfection, they were of opinion that £300 for the machine which he had supplied, and £300 as a personal payment, would be a sufficient compensation. However, the Treasury thought that £200 in addition to the purchase-money would be



sufficient remuneration. The Post-Office concurred in this view.

But at length it seems to have been borne in on the minds of all concerned that the knocking off of £100 was not quite in harmony with justice and liberality. But how to put it on again? To say 'No' one day and 'Yes' the next is not the way in which her Majesty's Government is carried on.

A happy thought struck Mr. Thomas Keogh, Secretary of the Inland Revenue Department. He was an old official hand, and well aware that, although all roads lead to Rome, some have easier gradients than others. The construction of the machine, he found, had cost more even than £300, though the precise amount could not be ascertained; and so, while maintaining the justice of the view of my Lords that £200 was sufficient personal remuneration, he suggested that, instead of paying Mr. Archer two sums of £300 as at first advised, he should be paid two sums of £400 and £200 respectively. This ingenious idea brought down both birds by the same barrel, upholding as it did the original proposal to pay £600, without breaking through the Treasury decision to pay as personal compensation no more than £200. It was a master-stroke, only equalled, though not surpassed, by what happened within my own knowledge to a civil servant, who received his salary in two payments, one of £720, and another of £80, a year. He was called in by the head of the department and gravely informed that, in recognition of his

ability and services, he was to be advanced to a higher post, and paid at once, not in two sums, but in one sum, £800 a year.

Mr. Keogh's dexterous and kindly strategy, however, went for nothing. Mr. Archer—such is the ingratitude of inventors—declined to see the offer in the desired light. The honour of being successful did not entirely content him. Even the attractive bait of £600, to be taken in two bites at the same moment, did not by its novelty fascinate. Mr. Tilley's letters making the offer from the Post-Office received no answer. Instead of replying, Mr. Archer took an arrow from his quiver and shot it at the Treasury. A change, it would appear, had come over the spirit of the Whitehall dream. By a leap and bound up went the offer from £600 to £2,000, now with no nice distinction of so much for this and a separate receipt for that. Then did Mr. Archer prove himself master of the situation. He declined even the higher offer as 'wholly inadequate,' and—this was the unkindest cut of all—actually turned a pet official phrase against the department itself by adding in quotation marks, 'under all the circumstances of the case.'

He felt his claim to be strong and the ground beneath him sure, and he had a staunch supporter in Mr. Muntz, M.P. for Birmingham, on whose motion Parliament called for the correspondence, and soon granted a Select Committee. Rowland Hill was ordered before it. His clear head saw that the value

of the invention lay in saving the public trouble, and that the less of it they had in snipping off stamps the more of them they would use. The Committee reported in Mr. Archer's favour, and eventually the Government bought his patent outright, and paid him £4,000.

Penny postage is responsible for ultimately doing away with a quaint custom, viz., the use of bells by City postmen. The practice was ancient. A print is extant of 'A Letter-Woman (with a bell) 1768.' A high official, of more than fifty years' service, has preserved a bell used by a letter-carrier in the City up to 1840, and so within his own time.

The actual wages of the letter-carriers at the earliest date of this narrative (January 1, 1832) were wholly inadequate, and the men drew the greater portion of their incomes from other sources. Some by seniority and good conduct had assigned to them 'walks,' which were fruitful in pence paid to them on letters collected in the evening, when ringing their bells, and in gratuities from merchants, to whom they gave credit (at their own risk) for postage.

Many of these officials must have sorely needed emoluments, inasmuch as 42 established men were paid no more than 8s. a week, 12 only 11s., and none except the river postmen (who received £2) more than 14s. a week; so that the helpful pence (1d. per letter was paid to the letter-carrier over and above any postage chargeable) were very welcome.

Before penny postage came about there were 35

letter-carriers, having early deliveries, who rang bells; and 101 who had no early delivery, but rang bells too. The 136 got, on an average, £18 11s. 7d. a year, or 7s. a week apiece, but some only 2s. 6d. a week.

The letter-writers of that day did not always observe a large-hearted liberality, inasmuch as many persons who paid for the early delivery made the bellmen collect their letters at night for nothing. Merchants in the City of the present day give to postmen and Post-Office institutions with both hands, and are generous to the postal servant in all their ways.

At this point it occurs to me that, in these days of the proposed legislative limitation of the hours of labour to eight daily, it may be interesting to note the official view of sixty-two years ago. The salaries of the junior classes in the Inland Office had always been fixed at a low rate, on the principle 'that, the duties being early in the morning and late in the afternoon, young men of diligent and industrious habits might employ the middle of the day in other avocations for their own pecuniary advantage.' It never seems to have struck my sagacious colleagues of the past that a young man of eighteen or twenty, who had to rise at 3 a.m. in order to be at St. Martin's-le-Grand by 4 or 5 o'clock, who worked there until 8 or 9, and who then spent the day in another 'avocation,' would hardly be fit for much when he resumed duty at 5 in the afternoon, or that his health could not long stand want of sleep and the strain of 16 hours' work a day.

It was foreseen that uniform penny postage must

be attended with temporary loss of revenue. The last complete year of the high rates (January 5, 1839), yielded a profit of £1,659,509; the following year, into a part of which came reduced rates, but not penny postage, about £26,000 less. The first complete year—complete if we disregard five days before the uniform penny rate was in actual force—produced £500,789 of net revenue. So there was a loss at the outset of rather more than £1,000,000. But the gain to public convenience outweighed even this considerable reduction of profits.

Mr. Hill did not at once fall into his right position. First he received a temporary appointment at the Treasury—to keep an eye, as it were, on St. Martin's-le-Grand. Then it was thought his services were superfluous, and in 1842, under Sir Robert Peel's Government, Mr. Henry Goulburn did in fact inform him that his further assistance could safely be dispensed with. Four years later the Government of Lord John Russell recalled him from private life, and on December 9, 1846, he commenced his duties at the Post-Office under the Marquis of Clanricarde, as 'Secretary to the Postmaster - General,' Colonel Maberly having co-ordinate authority.

Finally, opposition of all kinds collapsed. But it was only in 1854, fourteen years after his great scheme had come into operation, that Mr. Hill became what he ought to have been from the first—Secretary of the Post-Office.

The interval, a long seven years, between the one

secretaryship and the other bristled with as many difficulties, and was the occasion of as much vexation of spirit, as probably ever fell, in the same space of time, to the lot of a public man. But, to be just, the waters can hardly have been smoother for the official whom Rowland Hill eventually displaced.

The discomforts which the new-comer had to endure were, as it seems to me, as much the fault of the situation as that of the human beings whom he found antagonistic or coldly indifferent. Of all anomalous positions, this office of Secretary to the Postmaster-General was the most trying which can be conceived. Colonel Maberly, as Secretary of the Post-Office, was the real head to whom all eyes turned for directions, and it seemed as though his colleague must risk a collision with him on the numberless points on which their views were opposed, or become his subordinate. The latter, at any rate, was out of the question.

In one of the Postmasters-General Hill found a Minister who, holding the justifiable theory that there could not be two kings in Brentford, so hampered his freedom of action that the burden became almost insupportable; and even at a later period, with Minister and Ministry in the Junior Secretary's favour, no suitable adjustment of the difficulty could for some years be found.

It is easy to see now what would have been the right course: viz., in accepting the reformer's plan to have cast on him, with adequate powers, the responsibility of execution. That would have meant, as at

last it did mean, supersession of the *de facto* Secretary. But there was a not altogether unreasonable hesitation in shelving Colonel Maberly, and turning over the control of a great department to a man comparatively strange to official life.

As for the permanent officials, it was not in the nature of things that a new-comer, unknown, it might be said, to the Civil Service—one who had flouted their opinions and torn into shreds their statistics; who had come to the Post-Office to teach them the business they had spent their lives in conducting; who meant at first to cut away a million of pounds from the net revenue—should all at once be received with open arms as *persona grata*, bent on building up the fortunes of all the men in the office, and making things pleasant all round.

In their perplexity the statesmen of the day had sanctioned an arrangement of which it must be said that the wonder is, not that it did not work well, but that it ever worked at all.

However, in 1854 Rowland Hill was firmly seated at last as Secretary of the Post-Office, and, with the approval of the country, bending the full powers of his mind on progress and reform. He was then verging on sixty years of age, so that he had reached the full maturity of life before he obtained the position to which his remarkable ability and great public services had clearly entitled him. This was his happiest time at St. Martin's-le-Grand. 'I entered now,' he has written, 'upon the most satisfactory

period of my whole official career—that in which the course of improvement was steadiest, most rapid, and least chequered.’

If the right thing was done at last in making Rowland Hill Secretary of the Post-Office, it does not greatly signify what was the precise way of doing it; yet the Treasury took a course which, after a lapse of forty years, still strikes one on the face of it as unusual. Room had to be made for Mr. Hill by removing Colonel Maberly. That was done by transferring the Colonel to the Board of Audit. With whom rests the appointment of the Commissioners of Audit is immaterial; probably the Treasury fill up vacancies by warrant. But all appointments at the Post-Office, beyond question, lay then, as they lie now, with the Postmaster-General. He alone can exercise the power which makes a designation to office legal and secure. Yet, according to the letter printed in the ‘*Life of Sir Rowland Hill*,’ the Treasury wrote to the Postmaster-General stating that their lordships had made a minute on April 24, 1854, appointing Lieutenant-Colonel Maberly to a seat at the Board of Audit, and ‘consolidating the appointments of Secretary to the General Post-Office and Secretary to the Postmaster-General in the person of Mr. Rowland Hill.’

This letter can only be read as though my Lords, and not the Postmaster-General, made the appointment. In all probability, however, the scribe who drafted the official letter, taking as his text the



Treasury minute, gave by inadvertence a twist to the language of my Lords which their lordships had never intended. If so, it is strange that the error escaped the eye of so critical and experienced a functionary as Sir Charles Trevelyan. The Premier or the Chancellor of the Exchequer had probably expressed at the Board itself an opinion that such an appointment would be desirable, and the draftsman took it on himself to assume that an expression of opinion was tantamount to a definite appointment. It is to the last degree improbable, looking at the composition of the Treasury Board in 1854, that my Lords would have directed that to be done which was *ultra vires*.

Whether, on receipt of the Treasury letter, Lord Canning gave a covering sanction as a matter of form, or merely initialled the letter 'Cg.,' as with a certain class of papers was his custom, the records of the office may show.

Well might Sir Rowland in later years contend that he had received his appointment from the Treasury direct rather than under the patent of Viscount Canning. There was no mistake, however, as to the proper course amongst the permanent officials of the Post-Office. Some yet in the service will recollect the public notice of April, 1854, stating that 'the Postmaster-General' had 'appointed Rowland Hill, Esq., to be Secretary of this department'—a notice probably originated by the Chief Clerk, the late Mr. Rodie Parkhurst.

Constitutional practice seemed to require that the Treasury should have limited their letter to an intimation of willingness (and probably such was the intention) to sanction a consolidation with the object stated, and have left it for Lord Canning to accept the suggestion, and in the regular course to himself appoint Mr. Hill to the consolidated post. A great many years afterwards somewhat similar circumstances raised a tiny cloudlet on the postal horizon, but good sense in accepting the true view of the scope of the Minister's patent happily prevented mischief.

An amusing anecdote is still current concerning Sir Rowland Hill and Mr. Anthony Trollope, the novelist, who for many years was a Surveyor in the Post-Office. One day Sir Rowland (then Mr.) Hill called the surveyors together to consider a paper of instructions about to be sent out on some important matter. It was probably the draft of the circular to surveyors of nineteen paragraphs which Sir Rowland issued on April 25, 1855 (my official service was then just a week old!), defining their duties and responsibilities. His object, no doubt, was to satisfy himself that the circular covered all the intended ground. When it was read aloud, the impetuous Trollope, properly eager, as a young man, to show that he had a head on his shoulders, challenged not the scope and tenor of the instructions, but the literary composition. That, however, was not Sir Rowland's object in convening the meeting.

'I think, Mr. Hill,' Trollope is reported in sub-

stance to have said, 'that the language of paragraph so-and-so, literally construed, may be held to mean what you do not intend.' Sir Rowland was hardly the man to be checked by anyone, much less by a younger and (on postal policy, at any rate) less-informed man; so he neatly rejoined, speaking slowly and deliberately, and enunciating the letter 'r' in each word with Midland distinctness: 'You must be aware, Mr. Trollope, that a phrase is not always intended to bear a literal construction. For instance, when I write to one of you gentlemen, I end my letter with the words, "I am, sir, your obedient servant," whereas you know I am nothing of the sort.'

Sir Rowland sat in the same room—perhaps in the same chair—that his eminent predecessor, Sir Francis Freeling, had used not a score of years before, and by a coincidence bought Bertram House at Hampstead, a comfortable residence close to the mansion in which Sir Francis lived and in which, it is thought, he died. So close was it that at one time a splendid avenue of Spanish chestnuts (a few trees still remain) led down from Roslyn House almost to the door of Bertram House, where on August 27, 1879, Sir Rowland ended his honoured life, and where in June, 1893, a commemorative tablet was, with the permission of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, affixed to the wall.

During the period of comparative tranquillity in the mid-fifties Sir Rowland was able to give undivided

attention to many highly important features of Post-Office management. Date-stamping, for instance, which, if the impressions are perfectly produced, has many commercial, and even legal, aspects of value, lacked, but too often, clearness. Rowland Hill sought for improvements both in the quality of the ink and methods. His son, Mr. Pearson Hill, designed a new stamping machine for which, long after Sir Rowland ceased to be Secretary, the Treasury awarded him a payment of £1,500.

To the Savings Bank proposals of Sir C. W. Sikes he gave commendation and support as they came to him through his friend, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Edward Baines, then the Member for Leeds.

On salaries he bestowed much thought, being of opinion that if any of the officers of the department are underpaid it is rather those in the higher walks than the lower—a defect not wholly remedied even at the present day.

The volunteer movement received Sir Rowland's cordial support. The Post-Office regiment of volunteers is amongst the finest in the reserve.

On the question of compulsory prepayment of postage he was, of course, right in his views as to its tendency to simplify accounts and economize time and expense. But the public would not see it in that light, and could not be made as earnest in defence of the plan as the opponents were in attack. So the measure was indefinitely postponed.

Sir Rowland was a warm friend to the principle of

tubular conveyance, and would gladly have made use of tubes in connection with the London district postal system; but on investigation he found that the economy in time would not be sufficient to justify the additional expense likely to be involved.

So the idea was reluctantly given up, although there is little doubt that Sir Rowland continued to lean to it throughout life. His imagination had been fired by an attempt made forty years before by Mr. Vallance to propel passengers through a partially exhausted tube, with a view to the construction of an air-tight tunnel between London and Brighton. A tunnel 50 miles long and air-tight to boot!

A passenger in a short experimental trip told Rowland Hill that on reaching the terminus he and those with him 'got a bang' by the abrupt stoppage of the vehicle. Sixty years after Mr. Vallance's essay a gentleman brought to me at the Post-Office his plan for conveying the mails by electricity through a tube to Liverpool at the rate of 200 miles an hour. The same idea of 'a bang' at the terminus occurred to me; but the inventor regarded it as a detail easily met, though he failed to convince me of the propriety of the Post-Office embarking on an experiment which, if practicable and prospectively remunerative, ought, perhaps, first to be tested by commercial enterprise.

The Pneumatic Despatch Company, indeed, many years ago established a tubular communication between the south-western corner of the Post-Office yard, Euston Square railway-station, and the north-

western district post-office in Eversholt Street. In 1873-74 a few day mail bags were daily sent by it between St. Martin's-le-Grand and Euston, but after a time the experiment was abandoned.

One of the engineers consulted by Rowland Hill was my cousin, the late Mr. Edward Alfred Cowper, C.E., who more than once discussed with me the matter of the conveyance at least of express letters by pneumatic tube in London within the last two or three years. But the Post-Office has never got beyond the transmission of telegrams by this means over a distance of 2 or 3 miles. Large funds would be required for trials on an effective scale, to greater distances, which it would need some address to persuade a Chancellor of the Exchequer—not to say Parliament—to provide.

Tubes for the conveyance of mails have exercised a fascination over the minds of inventors for a length of time, as witness Mr. Cadogan Williams' proposal of 1826 to effect propulsion from stage to stage by a subterranean channel provided with furnaces and valve-boxes for alternately creating vacuum and pressure.

The idea, propounded when the century was young (which 'An Old Coachman' has disinterred), of an officer of the Royal Engineers, who would have the mails shelled from point to point by means of a succession of cannon and relays of trusty bombardiers, planted at suitable intervals along the mail-road, though striking, is not quite so original as it looks.

For in the possession of Mr. J. W. Hyde, Controller of the Post-Office in Edinburgh, is a photograph of a letter which was actually sent out for delivery, by being fired off in a hollow cannon-ball at the siege of Neuss, in Germany, in 1473, four centuries ago.

In 1858 the mind of the Secretary was much exercised by the resolution of Government to extend postal facilities in favour of the public press. He seemed to think that things had already gone far enough, inasmuch as the heavier newspapers were even then rated at only one-eighth of the postage chargeable on letters. Perhaps his prescient soul foresaw the present time, when a newspaper weighing 17 ounces or more passes through the post for a halfpenny, which is equal to the eleventh part only of the postage to which a letter of similar weight is liable.

The Government of the day, however, were no doubt of opinion that the liberal dissemination of public intelligence had advantages to the body politic which more than outweighed the burden cast upon the Post-Office, though such involved the carrying of postal matter in its mails at less than cost price. Their policy overbore the scruples of the department.

Many other useful measures were considered and promoted, though under the stress of uncertain health and uncongenial associations—but is not all this told in detail in Dr. Hill's valuable work?

Penny postage meant, of course, a great deal more than a sweeping reduction of postal rates. It meant

also quicker posts, more abundant facilities, and an efficient administration. It was the thin end of the wedge which split up excessive charges on foreign and colonial letters and opened the way for a parcel post forty years later.

Moreover, when Rowland Hill was established in the secretarial chair, the spirit of a true reformer began to influence all ranks of the service.

The halcyon state of things which prevailed at the time of my entering the service was not to last long. For six years, indeed, from 1854 to 1859, there was 'peace at the Post-Office,' and my recollection is distinct of the force with which Rowland Hill's mind stamped itself on all that came within my limited purview. But in 1860 occurred a change. Hostility developed itself — the health of the Secretary, sorely shaken by a generation of anxious and laborious work, began to fail. He continued, it is believed, to enjoy the full confidence and sympathy of the brilliant, the illustrious statesman then, as now, at the head of the Treasury;\* but, to use his own words, in the Post-Office the ground was slipping from beneath his feet. In March, 1864, he resigned his appointment; in August, 1879, he died.

The Sovereign had created her servant a Knight of the Bath; Parliament had voted him £20,000; the Treasury had granted superannuation on full pay;

\* These words were written while the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., was still Prime Minister, and as such First Lord of the Treasury.



the public presented testimonials, one of them a sum of £13,000; the City of London bestowed on him its freedom, the University of Oxford an honorary degree. His statue is to be found near the Royal Exchange in London, in the Post-Office at Birmingham, in his native town of Kidderminster, in the Vestry Hall of Hampstead. His grave, with his bust over it, is in Westminster Abbey. But the most enduring, the most splendid memorial of Sir Rowland Hill is that great organization which with speed, punctuality and cheapness daily performs its allotted task over the length and breadth of the land.

What are some of the prodigious results of the changes planned by this indomitable reformer as tested by the experience of half a century? 76,500,000 high-priced letters have given place to 1,800,000,000 cheap ones; 400,000,000 packets at book-post rates pass through the post where, if we except the newspapers and 'Prices Current,' none had passed before. All nations have followed Rowland Hill's lead in adopting low and uniform postage; all honour his illustrious name. 'His advent to the administration of the Post-Office,' writes a colleague of fifty-three years' service, 'quickened its action in all directions,' and the influence so exercised, to the great advantage of the State, continues to be felt and to bear fruit to this day.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

IF the decennial period which ended in December, 1839, had seen the decay of one great industry in which the Post-Office had been vitally interested, and the uprising of another in connection with which the usefulness of the department and its prosperity have in these later years advanced by leaps and bounds, not the less did the following decade open auspiciously with the great fiscal change just described.

Yet, far-reaching in its beneficial results to mankind as was the amelioration of the rates of postage, a more startling and hardly less beneficent departure, while the forties were still in their prime, began as a coming event to cast its shadow before.

The Post-Office, indeed, was not to take the lead in telegraphic reform until many years later; all the same, the decade which saw the birth of penny postage saw also the realization of the dreams of many a scientist—the employment for public purposes of a practicable electric telegraph. The homely but important experiments of Messrs. Cooke and Wheatstone

with galvanic batteries, some miles of insulated wire, and a few galvanometers and commutators between Euston Square and Chalk Farm railway-stations had borne fruit; a commercial value accrued to their invention, and the Electric Telegraph Company, consisting of John Lewis Ricardo, Member of Parliament for Stoke-upon-Trent, as chairman, and seven other men of means, had been formed to acquire and work their patents.

Wisely enough, the company sought to attach itself to the State, make itself useful to the Government, and gain a firm foothold where it was able. So it happened that a telegraph-office came to be established in the Post-Office, though purely as a private enterprise, and one in no sense connected with the State. Little did the Postmaster-General of the day, when he admitted the wires to the building, foresee the time when the Post-Office itself should control telegraphic communication, and develop and bring to perfection the telegraph's marvellous capabilities.

In 1846, on the incorporation of the Electric Telegraph Company, I had acquired a taste for telegraphy, and at only fourteen years of age had mastered its principles and language; and when in April, 1848, the Company and the Postmaster-General had made their agreement for bringing the 'Electrical Telegraph' to the Post-Office, the company, at the suggestion of Mr. Rowland Hill and his brother, Mr. Frederic Hill (my uncle by marriage), took me into their service. They gave me a thorough

drilling at IK, their central telegraph station in Lothbury, and sent me to take charge of the new telegraph-station.

The dark closet, for it was little more, which served for an office, held me from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. for two or three years. It was formed out of part of a spare passage, and was situated in the south-east corner of the southern of the two aisles or colonnades which at that time flanked either side of the great central hall.

The messages at the new office were few. The charges were so high that for the most part it was only in an emergency that the telegraph was resorted to. Even the Post-Office, with favoured rates, made little use of it. As much as ten years later so little familiar had the telegraph become to official people that the form of instruction to a postmaster to have recourse to it was 'to forward the information required by means of the "electric telegraph."' We were yet twenty years from the handy injunction, 'Wire reply.' Perhaps not more than two or three messages spread over ten hours of daily attendance beguiled the too abundant leisure of the young telegraphist shut up alone in his dark little box. It was a weary time.

On Friday, February 21, 1851, whilst employed at this office, I received a telegram for Mr. Peacock, the Solicitor of the Post-Office, respecting the removal of a convict from a hulk to a transport, the meaning of which I have only fathomed to-day, June 21, 1894—that is, forty-three years later.

It related to an audacious robbery of the up mail-train from Plymouth on the Bristol and Exeter Railway on January 1, 1849.

The train arrived at Bridgwater at its usual time—viz., 10.30 p.m. At this station the bags collected on the way were locked in the tender at the rear of the Post-Office carriage. The train then proceeded on its run to Bristol without stoppage. Here the mail-guard discovered that all the bags had been tampered with. Some were ripped open; others had their seals broken and their fastenings cut. It was soon evident that the registered letters and banking parcels had been abstracted, and as the letter-bills had been stolen also, the loss could not even be estimated. Later on the down mail-train, which left London at 8.55 on the same evening, was robbed in a precisely similar manner.

The operations of the thieves involved no ordinary peril. On the up journey they left their carriage whilst the train was travelling at full speed, and crawled along the narrow footboard for some feet before reaching the door of the tender containing the mails. Keys to unlock the door had been provided beforehand. On completing the robbery, the thieves jumped from the train when approaching Bristol, and, secreting their booty, returned to rob the down mail. But the pitcher went to the well once too often.

In perpetrating the second robbery the thieves had overlooked the fact that the same two Post-Office officials who were in charge of the up mail to Bristol

would return with the down mail to Bridgwater, and, after the discovery of the first robbery, would probably be keenly on the alert. Of course, at Bridgwater, where the second attempt was detected, all the exits of the station were carefully closed, and the train was immediately searched, with the result that in a first-class compartment adjoining the Post-Office carriage registered letters and money parcels were found, and in the same compartment two men. A false moustache, a black crêpe mask, and other disguises betrayed their calling. Perhaps more incriminating than all, a piece of string was seen attached to the boot of one of the men of precisely the same description as the string used in an attempt to refasten a bag robbed in the up mail.

One culprit proved to be a discharged guard of the Great Western Railway. The identity of the other was more difficult to establish, but he was ultimately discovered to be a London horse-dealer, whose father, by a curious coincidence, had been tried and acquitted on a charge of robbing a mail-train many years before.

A strange fact in connection with this matter is that the plan of the robbery was divulged before it took place by the wife of one of the accomplices, in revenge for brutal treatment. The information was not, however, taken seriously.

Chief Justice William, Lord Denman, sentenced the culprits in March, 1849, to fifteen years' transportation.

Now comes in my telegram. These two men were obviously the principals. But there were confederates. While the proceeds of the robbery of the down mail were seized by the authorities, the booty captured on the up mail passed out of sight. In February, 1851, a convict about to be deported to a penal settlement declared he could reveal the hiding-place and name the actual receiver of the stolen property. The telegram was sent to enable the Solicitor of the Post-Office to obtain his deposition before the transport sailed. But the story turned out to be a fabrication, devised by the prisoner to evade transportation. The stolen notes had been presented and paid at the Bank of England, the vessel sailed from Spithead, all the malefactors disappeared from view, the fame of the great robbery died away, and its method was forgotten, until, as I shall show later on,\* history repeated itself.

The Electric Telegraph Company, in the middle of the forties, had built for themselves as a central telegraph-station an elegant suite of offices (now in the possession of Messrs. Brown, Shipley, and Co.) in Founders' Court. The plan was that of a public hall, open to the roof, sundry offices, and a board-room beyond. Right and left of the public hall were three or four galleries, one over the other, for operative and administrative purposes. Only the eastern set were ever used for telegraphic work; the western set were occupied by the secretarial

\* See p. 279.

officers, or were left empty, so small was the beginning of a great thing.

These galleries, one over the other, have given the name for nearly half a century to telegraph instrument rooms generally; so to this day the spacious operating-chambers of the Central Telegraph Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand, which are really vast saloons, go under the name of galleries.

The lowest gallery at Lothbury was styled the 'code-room,' a cognomen which, though never in the least applicable, was preserved in the later building in Telegraph Street up to the transfer of the telegraphs to the State in 1870. In this room, arbitrary signals were supposed to be translated into the vernacular, but the idea of codes as a means of economizing the use of the wires was never adopted, except to a very limited extent, by the Electric Telegraph Company. The 'codes' were not those used by the public for the sake of shrouding the meaning or lowering the cost of telegrams, but Wishaw's Codes of 1846, which substituted a brace of letters for names of men or places or a group of words.

They were ingenious devices, but of little practical utility. Out of them, however, came IK (pronounced separately, Igh Kay), the code equivalent of the name of the chief station (London).

The double-needle apparatus of Cooke and Wheatstone was in use. The needles at first were long and heavy. They waved to and fro across the face of the



dial with exasperating slowness. About six or eight words a minute was a fair working speed, so the saving or abbreviating of words was of real importance. In later years, with shorter and lighter needles, as many as 40 words a minute could be read with ease, and then codes were of still less value.

Mr. Wishaw's codes, however, furnished a good deal of information by the use of four letters—two for principles and two for details. Thus, ZD or ZL meant a number of some sort; AM a particular number—one, for instance. ZY meant a telegram of some sort, CW a private one. So in this rather cumbrous way the first paid private telegram of the day was signalled: ZD, AM; ZY, CW. A telegram in the earliest days of all was delivered to a merchant in Sheffield with these cabalistic signs upon it, much to his bewilderment!

CW existed until recently; amongst the old stagers it is still understood, but M has freely taken its place. 'What caused the delay?' would ask an official querist. 'A very long CW to Birmingham,' might be the answer forty years ago; or as now, 'Derby had a good many M's on hand.' ZM referred to wind and weather. 'ZM fine,' is still a frequent entry in the office diaries, London fogs notwithstanding. DO for shipping news, and CS for Parliamentary intelligence, survived until the transfer of the telegraphs to the Post-Office. Then the work of editing news was handed over to the news agencies, and many of the old codes fell into disuse. CQ, meaning all stations,

still holds its own. PQ was one of the last to go, as it was, in the order of signals, the last for use in a message. It was an innocent code enough, meaning only 'end of message.' But under certain circumstances it could goad the distant operator to fury; because, abruptly given, it might have the significance of 'Shut up!' 'You're a muff!' and other interjections more vigorous than polite. Now, for the clerk, say at York, to be PQ'd by IK in the middle of some courteous explanation of the causes of slow reading 200 miles away, was more than the best-balanced mind and strongest apparatus could stand; and it was a common occurrence for the stout brass handles of the double-needle telegraph to be broken off by the aggrieved clerk in the white heat of his passionate telegraphic remonstrance.

Besides IK for London, Wishaw's Codes provided IH for Liverpool, AP for Manchester, GX for Hull, KM for Newcastle, EL for Edinburgh, FO for Glasgow, and so on. The initials did not necessarily bear any relation to the names of the places, and ultimately the codes were rearranged in order to produce some sort of connection between the two. Then LY stood for Lothbury, instead of IK; and MR for Manchester, BM for Birmingham, GW for Glasgow, etc., replaced the arbitrary codes formerly in use.

When, as one of the preparations for the transfer in 1870, it fell to me to revise and enlarge the code-book, my aim was to preserve unchanged the appropriate codes as far as possible, to distribute all the

remaining two-letter permutations of the alphabet amongst the big towns, and to symbolize the smaller ones by three letters. So BM is still the code for Birmingham, but Barnet is BBT. LY, it is true, is deposed from its high estate, and TS (once Telegraph Street, now Telegraph Station, Central implied) reigns in its stead.

Here is the old gallery at Lothbury as it was in the beginning. A room perhaps 12 or 14 feet wide and 30 feet long, well lighted and with plenty of ventilation. In it are ten or a dozen persons. Two high benches jut out at right angles from the windows, the instruments upon them thus getting a good side-light. On one is fixed a double-needle instrument working to Rugby and Derby, and to Normanton in Yorkshire. Behind it operates a printing wire to Manchester on the principle of Bain's chemical process. Opposite, on the other bench, a double-needle to Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. Behind it, a double-needle to the Admiralty, rarely used—never in my recollection—out of sight, out of mind, at both ends of the circuit.

It is singular that the company, having provided the communication, did not in some way coax the Admiralty into the use of it. To make themselves indispensable must have been an important condition to the commercial success of a young company. But the Admiralty did not take to any new-fangled ways. There is probably in that direction a constitutional repugnance to electric telegraphs. Ships and guns

are one thing, but electricity and wires, as applied to human intercourse, may be another. An early inventor, who went down to Whitehall, electric telegraph in hand, to offer his services, is said to have been snubbed for his pains. The semaphore answered every purpose. Half a century later, it scarcely fared better with me and my coast communication, even though the shadow of the Prime Minister in a manner fell on the proposals.

The observant reader will have seen that two pairs of needle-wires and a wire for the so-called printing—in all, five wires—before 1850, sufficed to meet the telegraphic requirements with London of the whole of the North of England and Scotland. Now the same service is provided for by 104 wires, and, thanks to better insulation and improved processes, the average capacity of each, originally 3 or 4 words per minute, but increased in my time to 15, is now probably not less than 30 words per minute. So, put briefly, requirements which in 1848 were met by the power of 5 wires, in the year of grace 1892 were only met, at the lowest computation, by 104, working at twice the speed of the old ones; in other words, by the power of 208, so vastly has business increased.

As will be seen hereafter, my estimate was not at fault in 1856 in foretelling on the basis of 1,000,000 messages then forwarded in a year at high rates a total so large as 30,000,000 messages a year within fourteen years of the adoption of extended facilities and a uniform 6d. rate. In 1892 as many as

70,000,000 telegrams passed over the Post-Office wires, besides part of some hundreds of millions of telephonic and private-wire despatches.

Besides the four instruments mentioned, there were on a long table opposite the windows, and with the light falling full upon them, a double-needle circuit to Norwich, one to No. 448, Strand (the only branch-office of the company in London), another to Southampton, and perhaps a fourth, fifth, and sixth to Waterloo, Paddington, and Shoreditch. Such was the modest head telegraph-office of the country when our gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria had been about ten years on her throne.

'Are you through to KU?' might have inquired the genial manager, Mr. W. H. Hatcher, *circa* 1850, of Mr. Jackson, the superintendent.

'Not yet, sir; there's want of continuity on the stop E, and full earth on the HN' (*i.e.*, the left-hand wire to Normanton is broken, and the right-hand wire touches the earth).

'What are you doing with the CW's?'

'Sending them to MI (Rugby) to go on by train.'

'What is wrong? How is the ZM?'

'High wind and heavy rain in Derbyshire. I think the linemen are shifting a pole.'

Diarial entry: "11.30, line right. KU reading well.'

Then an unofficial conversation by telegraph—

'How many CW's at IK?' asks KU, about 180 miles away.

'Twenty-three,' replies IK.

'All right; will clear you out.'

Joy overspreads at IK the face of J. M., aged fifteen. He signals 'ZL' (all being messages for stations beyond Normanton, otherwise he would have sent ZD), and away fly the CW's, the double-needle rattling like the stones of Cheapside under the wheels of Mrs. Gilpin's chaise. All twenty-three messages are taken without a single 'Not understand.'

'Good! good! good!' signals IK, in a paroxysm of praise.

There were two spots within the telegraphic area which were not the most ardently desired of telegraphists—Normanton in Yorkshire, and Carstairs on the Caledonian line in Scotland. The former included a railway-station and hotel; the latter, in early years at all events, little more than a signal-box.

All the clerks were extremely young and very frugally paid. Their ages ranged from sixteen to eighteen; they had a guinea a week apiece. A few graybeards who had attained a score of years had perhaps some shillings more, while a Methuselah of five-and-twenty, who was the clerk-in-charge, might even enjoy a weekly stipend of a couple of guineas. The latter post and pay were, however, the prizes of the profession, and not to be reached at a single bound.

The work was wonderfully well done considering. These youngsters, especially at Normanton, had nothing else to think of. The office at that station was a grimy room on a bridge built over the yard.

Normanton owed its importance to the junction of four trunk lines of three great railway companies. Some of its public glory may have departed since the days when passengers habitually broke their journey there and slept at the station hotel. But in another way Normanton is a vaster place than ever, with a traffic which no figures can measure. Yet the social gaiety of this railway stronghold is even now not very far from what it was in the remote days of old KU.

Here we transmitted for the North, for YO, KM, EL, and FO, *i.e.*, for York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, the last being the Ultima Thule. Sometimes in fine, dry weather IK could work to KM; and a dim recollection is preserved of seeing, on one hot August Saturday afternoon, on the dial-plate at Lothbury faint deflections from FO.

But Normanton was our frontier point. Beyond we might penetrate by chance. It did not, however, pay to work slowly, with weakened signals, into a dim and misty distance, and to stations only known to us by tradition.

So Normanton 'took' for Hull and Leeds; for York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and for the town and county of Berwick-upon-Tweed. In those days, as no other towns of importance were known to the telegraph clerks, could it be that they did not exist? Where were Greenock, Inverness and Aberdeen, Dundee, and the towns in Fife? Where the Hartlepoons, Darlington, and Middlesbrough? Bristol we had heard of, because every Saturday at noon a stock-

broking message was sent round by Birmingham to go by train from Gloucester to the great town in the West. But Cardiff and South Wales—we knew them not!

At Normanton, amongst a galaxy of fine double-needle readers, shone a bright and particular star, F. C. He was dark, young, small, and slender; self-contained, gentle in his ways, and a most consummate reader. He could read off the double-needle, it was thought, with his eyes shut—even perhaps during a needful nap! Fifty words a minute, as fast as the fastest sender could work, he, with good signals, was supposed to be able to read with ease. But his glory was to read when signals were bad.

Imagine two clock-faces, each with a single hand, standing side by side, the needle when at rest pointing to 12 o'clock. When in action, the needles shall singly, or both together, beat against ivory pins set a little way to the right and left respectively—say at 2 minutes *past* 12 to the right-hand, and at 2 minutes *to* 12 on the left. That was the normal state of things; and then distracting wobbles, numbering at top speed 400 to 500 a minute, *i.e.*, at an average of five letters to a word, and two deflections to a letter, sometimes of both needles in parallel deflections, sometimes of one needle reversing between its pins, had to be instantaneously deciphered.

To read the vibrations of one needle, even when the deflections are well defined, seems at first sight sufficiently difficult; but how it was that the signs of two needles moving together, or rapidly changing



from one to the other, did not bewilder the reading-clerk is a mystery. It is still possible for me to read at the rate of twenty words—that is, 200 deflections—a minute. So recently as August 1, 1893, the day of my quitting the Post-Office, one of the Assistant-Controllers—Mr. H. Smith—‘sent’ to me a few words on the double-needle telegraph in my room, which he found were easy to me to read. This was my last act at the General Post-Office. It is not a little singular that the identical instrument (as I believe it to be) which I was the first to put in action at the old Post-Office in 1848, should forty-five years later bid me farewell at the new one.

When the signals were bad, distractions arose in three ways: (1) One needle would deflect strongly, the other scarcely at all; (2) one or both needles would be in contact; *i.e.*, the messages of other wires would to some extent leak into our wires and impart irrational pulsations, which had nothing to do with, and only confused, the work in hand; or (3) nine-tenths of the current sent from London would run down the wet posts into the earth, or dissipate into the moist air of the Midland counties, and only a fraction would find its way to Yorkshire and feebly actuate the needles there.

Then was F. C. seen at his best. As photography discovers stars which no telescope can reveal to the human retina, so F. C. could read where no signal could be seen by ordinary telegraphists. Those are the days of the far-away past. The double-needle

has long since gone to the tomb of the Capulets, although contacts and full earth, the aurora borealis and earth-currents, still play their merry pranks in the regions of telegraphy.

In the gallery below the instrument room was set up the Intelligence Department. Over that branch of the service there ruled from 1846 to the close of the Telegraph Company's career in 1870 a kindly autocrat, Mr. C. V. Boys. His must have been an arduous post. It was certainly a responsible one. To compose the 'morning express' (a summary of news for the provinces) before 7 a.m., to write an evening version at six o'clock, was well-nigh equal to the composition of two original discourses per diem. Then, between whiles, to keep his mind going, London produce, and coal and corn markets, the arrivals of cotton in the Mersey and of shipping in the Thames, were always to the fore; and in the evening, four times a week, six months out of twelve, an outline of the debates in Parliament had to be provided. However, he did it all, and did it well, for a quarter of a century.

There were two great events each week-day, and two greater still twice a year, to quicken our pulses. At noon and four o'clock the mid-day and closing prices of the London Stock Exchange were sent, under the title of 'Funds.' To these reports all else gave way. No matter how many costly messages, prepaid at an average of 10s. or 12s. each, were waiting to go off, 'Funds' took priority of all.

Twice a year we had the Queen's Speech, at the

opening and closing of the Session. That was the 'Derby' of IK and of LY too. The witchery has worn off now. But in double-needle days each station was agog to beat the others.

'Look out for Queen's Speech' came from London, and in the country offices all was hushed excitement. The needles were newly magnetized, pencils by the dozen newly sharpened, pad upon pad of blacks and flimsies prepared, and the best readers, the swiftest writers, told off for duty. Then came DQ: 'My—Lords—and—Gentlemen——'

To what purpose now for offices to race? How is the 'sunder,' at 30 words a minute, to chase the 'Wheatstone,' with perforated slip, ready to run through, at 300?

After a few years business grew apace; the old building in Founders' Court could no longer contain the exuberant child to which telegraphy had already grown, the Electric Telegraph Company added 'International' to their title, laid a cable to the Hague, and built themselves a yet more spacious central station in a narrow street behind, which, however, still was styled LY. Here, on February 5, 1870, the Post-Office, like a bolt from the blue, startled its tenants.

Meanwhile, with the Electric and International Company I spent several years until, in 1855, the good friends who had helped me once did so again, and brought me back to the Post-Office, not as the official of the Telegraph Company, but as an established officer of the Postmaster-General.



*PART II.*

CHAPTER VI.—ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND.

CHAPTER VII.—THE MODUS OPERANDI.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE MINISTER.

CHAPTER IX.—THE EXECUTIVE.

CHAPTER X.—PILLARS OF THE LAW.



## CHAPTER VI.

## ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND.

IN 1855 traditions of Lombard Street as the old General Post-Office still flavoured the service, although Sir R. Smirke's fine building in St. Martin's-le-Grand had been occupied for more than a quarter of a century. Sir Francis Freeling, Bart., the famous Secretary who under George IV. and William IV. held office continuously for thirty-eight years and a month, had passed away nineteen years earlier; his successor, Lieutenant-Colonel William Leader Maberly, whose name is still remembered by veterans, had gone into an honourable retirement as a Commissioner of Audit; Rowland Hill sat in the curule chair; Lord Canning wore the purple.

So it happened that Sir Rowland (then plain Mr.), as Secretary, gave me my nomination, and Lord Canning, as Postmaster-General, my appointment; and April 18, 1855, found me settled on the establishment of the Post-Office.

Mr. (now Sir John) Tilley and Mr. Frederic Hill,

the latter of whom had relinquished the congenial work of inspecting prisons in order to help in the development of his brother's plans, were the Assistant-Secretaries. After more than sixty years of public work, Sir John Tilley, K.C.B., is an active member of the municipality; and in his ninety-first year Mr. Frederic Hill, hale and hearty at Hampstead, has published his Autobiography.\* Under these eminent men the department flourished.

The General Post-Office, built in 1829, stands in half a dozen parishes, those bearing the picturesque names of St. John Zachary and St. Michael-le-Querne amongst them. The site covers 2 acres; the clearance for building operations displaced a thousand inhabitants, or at the rate of seven tenants for each house. It swept away congeries of alleys, courts and thoroughfares, though, to satisfy public opinion and to facilitate postal business, a passage-way for pedestrians was maintained through the building itself, down to my time.

Under the roof of Smirke's spacious, solid and classic fabric all the branches were housed, except the Money-Order Office, which, under the control of Mr. F. R. Jackson, occupied a building on the western side of Aldersgate Street. The Sorting-Offices were chiefly on the ground-floor of the Post-Office; those of the management above.

The central hall, entered by the grand portico, dwells in my memory. On its north side were to

\* Richard Bentley and Son, 1893.



be found the Inland and Foreign Letter Offices, the former being governed by an Inland President, whose desk, of portentous size, remains to this day. The Inland Office, or sorting-place of letters for provincial distribution, has since been renamed the Circulation Office, but it is still familiarly known by its former title, which is perhaps the better of the two.

In May, 1851, the Honourable the House of Commons became strangely concerned in the cost of gas at the Post-Office. They ordered a return, which was not without interest. In the year ended January 5, 1848, the total charge was over £3,000. By January, 1851, the gas-bill had been reduced one half. To this result three successive abatements of 1s. per 1,000 feet made by the gas company contributed £824, and 'the use of Mr. Leslie's patents for the purification, etc., of gas' £739 more. So it would appear that the Post-Office in the year 1847-8 burnt about 5,108 thousands of feet of gas, and paid for the same at the high rate of nearly 12s. per 1,000 feet.

A long time ago an anecdote of the Inland Office was related to me, which, however, must be repeated with all reserve. One day (so the story ran), more than forty years since, certain bags lay unopened on the floor. Surrounding them, at a respectful distance, stood a ring of sorters. No one cared to touch these bags. Cholera, they said, was rife in the place from which they came. A cordon had been formed around

the infected town; the mails alone were allowed to pass out; purifying bonfires blazed in the streets.

Naturally, the sorting staff felt somewhat chary of opening bags of so uncomfortable an origin. There lay the mails, and near at hand were the merchants' clerks loudly calling for their letters. All this soon came to the ears of the Postmaster-General of the day. He made short work of it. Going into the Inland Office, his lordship called for a knife to cut the bags open and turn out the letters. But this was too much for stout English hearts to see unmoved. The hesitation of the moment was cast aside. With a cheer the sorters flung themselves on the bags, and forthwith sorted off the contents in their best style.

On the south side of the hall there flourished the Twopenny Post. It was at this date just as much a penny post as its bigger brother on the north side, but having once been lawfully possessed of this distinctive title, it tenaciously clung to it as a survival of the past. The Twopenny Post-Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand was the London District Office, through which in the earliest years of my service every letter posted in London for delivery in the Metropolis passed, and from which, indeed, all letters for London were delivered.

Over these chief branches—Inland, Foreign, and London District—Mr. William Bokenham held long and undisputed sway. He was an official of the old régime, who had honestly and faithfully considered penny postage a bad thing for the revenue, and had

opposed it. But when Parliament and the country resolved on its adoption, he threw all his energies into the scale to make the new plan a success, and was a trusted coadjutor of Sir Rowland Hill to the last.

Up a bold flight of stairs were the offices of the secretariat. Mr. Rowland Hill occupied a room in the front of the building on the first-floor, to the south of the portico. Lord Canning's offices were almost exactly below.

An apartment on a higher floor was used as a bedroom for an officer styled the Clerk-in-waiting. In 1848, general rioting being expected in the City, a keg of gunpowder was taken on to the leads, perhaps in case the building should be garrisoned by the military. To keep the powder dry, it was stowed away in safety under the roof. There it lay for several years forgotten. Many a night it has happened to me as the Clerk-in-waiting for the nonce to sleep under the said keg, unconscious of what might be the effect of a chance spark from the chimney close by.

The Clerks-in-waiting took charge of the department between 4 p.m. and 10 a.m., armed with full authority, and sometimes having to use their discretion under a sense of heavy responsibility. Mr. Frederic Hill relates how Lord Hardwick, guided by his recollection of discipline on board ship, gave orders, as Postmaster-General, that these functionaries should be told 'All's well!' at four o'clock in the after-

noon, and directed to report 'All's well!' at ten o'clock next day.

On the occasion of another threatened riot and attack upon the Post-Office, a plentiful supply of empty white stone ink-jars was carried to the roof, as safer, on the whole, in the hands of our doughty special constables, and less likely to explode than the villainous saltpetre. Happily, no rioters appeared. Nor did they do so many years later in Fenian times, when a valiant corps of gentlemen-at-arms mustered early on a Sunday morning in the vacant rooms of the Post-Office to defend the old building, if need were, to the bitter end.

The central hall was very lofty. Its grandeur, however, lay in massive granite columns lining either side. In an aisle behind them, and through wooden panels in the wall, the public posted or registered an occasional letter, or bought a few unperforated postage-stamps. They did so with more or less timidity, and seldom without a stealthy survey, as doubting what might happen when they knocked at the panel, which, though not poetic, had its merits and its use. Swiftly shot across the field of view, it was sometimes a salutary—at all times an effective—check when undue remonstrance needed a curb.

At night, as the big hall clock drew on to the hour of six, and especially on Friday, when the American mail was despatched, the central hall wore an animated aspect. Onlookers who came to post their

letters, but stopped to see the sight, thickened into a crowd; public excitement grew apace. Vociferous cries of 'Stand back!' and 'Clear the way!' from the hall constables resounded. At the first stroke of six expectation was at fever-heat. Belated messengers rushed up with sacks of newspapers, and merchants' clerks with letters by the score, until at the sixth great shock of sound a universal shout, followed by a glorious bang of all letter-boxes and windows, announced the closing of the post.

Tumultuous was the merriment when some unpractised person, reserving his newspaper until the last second, but apparently breathless with haste, hurled it at the open window, only to miss his aim, and see the outcast packet lie ignominiously on the floor of the hall.

This central hall, up to the end of the sixties, was freely used as a thoroughfare by pedestrians. Being in a direct line, on the one hand, with the shops and alleys (now displaced) on the western side of St. Martin's-le-Grand, and Gutter Lane and the City by-ways on the other, it was a tempting short-cut for people bent on saving time.

Why the Metropolitan public, usually so tenacious of its rights, real or imaginary, yielded meekly to the shutting up of this ancient thoroughfare is still unexplained. The process was effected very cleverly. First the big doors at back and front were closed, leaving only an inconvenient sideways; then, after a time, that was closed too, and the Post-Office entered

on its conquest—viz., an enormous quadrangle in the centre of the Post-Office, just where space was most urgently required. Afterwards at the Cheapside end the yard itself was closed, and the public were relegated altogether to other routes.

April 18, 1855, is fresh in my mind. Someone had told me that the official hours were from ten to four, and the central hall saw me ready to ascend the secretarial staircase and begin work so early as 9.40 a.m.; but even when the hall clock struck ten the brand new clerk paused awhile, thinking that a too punctual attendance would excite a smile. Ten minutes late, however, he presented himself to a principal functionary, and by him was remitted for initiation to a lieutenant—a spare, grizzled, but kindly if sententious official, evidently one of the props and pillars of the establishment.

A sense of the proprieties, however, was speedily shocked by finding that my Mentor was briefly and unceremoniously addressed by the gilded and irreverent youth of the Secretary's office as 'Joe.'

'Come and sign the attendance-book,' said he. 'What time did you get here?'

'Ten minutes past ten.'

'What! ten minutes late to start with! I say, young fellow, that's a bad go off.'

Mr. Joseph was quite right; his was a wholesome admonition. The 'go off' might have been better. It was an indifferent beginning, though not due to sloth on my part. However, I took the admonition

to heart, and did not arrive late again—certainly for the next ten years, if then.

The secretariat occupied nearly the whole of the first floor south of the portico, looking on to St. Martin's-le-Grand in front and to the church of St. Vedast Foster in the lane behind. It happened that in the fifties there were still in the Secretary's office several young men whose fathers had won distinction in literature or on the stage. They were appointed, perhaps, by a Postmaster-General who in some special and particular way had been a patron of letters and the drama.

Several of these sprightly young men and their friends were in the habit of supping together, as was very generally the custom in the fifties, at Evans's, in Covent Garden. Douglas Jerrold, though an older man, would occasionally join them. One of the fraternity was a brilliant entertainer then rising into popularity. His amiable foible was an easy reference in conversation to the great houses to which he was invited as a guest. One night he was later than usual, but, on coming to the supper-table, explained that he had been out to dine at the house of the Marquis of L—. 'Was it not strange, boys!' he observed, 'we had no fish for dinner.'

'What!' exclaimed Douglas Jerrold, 'was it all eaten *upstairs*?'

Occasionally, in the Large Room, at slack moments, Mr. Harold Power would give acceptable impersonations of the chief magistrates at Bow Street. But we

never found ourselves in similar plight to that of the commissariat clerk of the War Office in Peninsula times, who, seated on his high stool, was pulling out the drawers of his desk as organ-stops, and giving a musical performance, to the joy of his colleagues, instead of sending out orders for the shipment of stores, when he became aware, by a sudden silence in the room, that something was amiss. He looked over his shoulder, only to find the dread Sir Arthur Wellesley regarding him sternly and in the act of exclaiming, 'This is why I can't get my tents and my boots.'

Mr. William James Page, in the Foreign and Colonial Branch, and Mr. Arthur Benthall, in the Home Mails Branch, were regarded, and justly so, as the foremost men after the Secretaries. While Mr. W. Bokenham controlled London, Mr. Thomas Boucher, a singularly able official, assisted him.

The coming man appeared to be Mr. Edward Page, Inspector-General of Mails; but his health failed, and he retired from the service while he was yet, as years went, in his prime.

The man who was really coming, but who had not then made the mark he afterwards made, was Mr. Frank Ives Scudamore, an official of untiring energy and unusual ability, and of whom some account will presently be given.

At the head of the Surveyors was Mr. William John Godby, who had been appointed to his post when the tale of the thirties was barely told, and was still there,



as efficient and esteemed as ever, when the first stroke of the nineties was about to sound.

'I visited,' records Sir Rowland Hill, writing of 1851, 'the more important towns in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where I discussed with Mr. Godby, the Surveyor, numerous demands for improvement.' Nearly forty years later again a Secretary of the Post-Office was discussing with his invaluable colleague, 'Mr. Godby, the Surveyor,' the bearings of various 'demands for improvements.'

In the Jubilee year, Mr. Warren, also for many years a Surveyor, told me that just before uniform postage was resolved on, he had partly prepared a schedule of charges based on distance, and had handed it over to Mr. Godby, then a Surveyor's clerk, to complete.

So we planned a little pleasantry. 'Mr. Godby,' I wrote in formal terms, 'when will the schedule of postage rates be ready which was ordered by the Secretary in August, 1839, and handed to you by Mr. Warren to complete?' The old surveying hand was more than equal to the occasion. He said it was completed and sent in by up night mail the day before it was due; 'and when may I expect,' inquired he, 'to receive a warrant in payment of the overtime which I spent in preparing it?'

Mr. Godby stood midway in a line of three generations, Mr. Augustus Godby, the father, having been Secretary of the Post-Office in Ireland; Mr. William John Godby, the son, having been a Surveyor for

fifty years; and Mr. W. H. Godby, the grandson, being at this moment Postmaster of Gloucester.

His long service necessarily gave him great experience, and he was a member, usually the chairman, of many departmental committees of importance. Almost to the last his health and vigour were phenomenal. He had his headquarters at Shrewsbury, and it was little more than pastime for him to leave home in the early morning and spend, when required, the greater part of the official day at the General Post-Office in close discussion.

These were some of the able men with whose aid Sir Rowland Hill engrafted his plans on the Post-Office, inspired it with zeal which has never cooled or slackened, and laid the foundation of an abounding prosperity.

There is no doubt that Sir Rowland was an ideal Secretary of the Post-Office. He had not only a powerful mind and a genius for administration, but it was the emanation of his own brain that he had to fashion into concrete form.

Although technically a subordinate official, he was so backed up by public opinion as to become, when at last full Secretary, master of the situation. As long as his health—never robust—lasted, he was probably a match for any hostile superior. Until the last years of service he can scarcely be said to have had one. When his health failed, the tussle with Lord Stanley of Alderley, it is believed, tried him a good deal.

After Sir Rowland Hill came Sir John Tilley. He

had been the senior Assistant-Secretary, and so stepped into his chief's shoes. Sir John possessed vast experience. He had entered the postal service some time in the twenties, had been for many years a Surveyor, and had an intimate knowledge of all the branches of the department which none has ever excelled. To his initiative is due the erection of the block of buildings which directly face the General Post-Office, about to be devoted solely to telegraphic purposes.

When Sir John retired, to lead an active life in voluntary employment in municipal affairs, the late Sir Arthur Blackwood, then Financial Secretary, came to be Secretary-in-chief. Sir Arthur was originally a Treasury officer. He had seen service in a civil capacity in the Crimean War, and had acquired a large insight into the financial relations of the Treasury with Parliament before he received his appointment as Financial Secretary at the General Post-Office.

With pain and sorrow the word 'late' is written before the name of this good, high-minded man. It is but too probable that he fell a victim to a sense of duty, labouring as he did to the last as an official faithfully at his post in St. Martin's-le-Grand, and in his private capacity as a fearless exponent of the truths of religion as he received them. Sir Arthur presided at the Mildmay Evangelical Conference of 1893, after a severe attack of illness, when he should have been at home and at rest. He told me before-

hand that he meant to attend the meeting, but that his doctor had forbidden him to speak for more than two minutes.

The president of a congress, however, in one of the main speeches of the occasion, could hardly limit himself to so short a space of time. But Sir Arthur Blackwood smilingly brushed aside any subsequent allusion to the matter, probably believing in his heart that the joy of once more taking part in the great annual gathering of a spiritual brotherhood, which had had its rise in Chipping Barnet thirty years before, and with which he had been long associated, was worth any risk to health and life.

His instincts were kindly, as the subjoined letter, written when influenza held me down, will show :

‘ January 18, 1892.

‘ MY DEAR BAINES,

‘ Pray take whatever leave is necessary. Your heart is, I know, at the Post-Office, and you will be, I fear, only too eager to return.

‘ I am back at work to-day for the first time for three weeks, having also had an attack, though, I am thankful to say, only a slight one.

‘ Yours has evidently been much more serious, and I thoroughly sympathize with you.

‘ Hoping that you will take all care, and be soon quite re-established,

‘ Yours sincerely,

‘ S. A. BLACKWOOD.’

My late chief called me into his room at St. Martin’s-le-Grand for the last time on Tuesday, August 1, 1893, at about half-past two o’clock in the afternoon.

We met in the corridor as he came up the private staircase from Mr. Arnold Morley's room. Taking me by the arm, he explained to me the details of a revision of the Secretary's office, which he had probably just settled with the Postmaster-General. Then he gave me to read a letter from the Treasury settling the terms of my own retirement, said a few kindly words of sympathy and regret at official separation, and did his best to soften a Treasury decision which negated what he had recommended, and what had seemed to others to be a not unreasonable proposal.

As I left the room, and turned to close the door, he kissed his hand in mute farewell, and that was the last that I saw of Stevenson Arthur Blackwood, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Secretary of her Majesty's Post-Office. He died two months later at Harwich on Monday, October 2, 1893, on the very day probably on which he hoped to resume duty at the Post-Office, only living long enough, after a toilsome Continental journey in search of the health which never came, to regain the English coast.

Ten happy years at the Post-Office were spent by me directly under his hand. As Assistant-Secretary, it was my duty to see him from 1882 to 1892 almost every day. We fell into a swift and comparatively silent method of transacting business which suited both, such being varied only by a cheery remark from him; for his spirits, if not exuberant, were always

good, and rose to any humorous aspect which official papers sometimes presented. It is comforting to think that while he gave me all possible support in such proposals of mine as he approved of, I, on the other hand, tried to save him all avoidable trouble in submitting papers for his consideration, and in conducting the arrangements of the inland mail service placed in my charge.

Deep-seated as were Sir Arthur Blackwood's religious convictions, and ready as he was to open his mind on the strength or weakness of any form of moral teaching which came under his notice, he forced his own views uninvited on none. In official matters he was absolutely uninfluenced by theological tenets.

His tastes were, as far as they were known to me, few and simple. The service of the Most High, whether at the desk or on the platform, was clearly his one aim. He found many ways of fighting the good fight. The cause of temperance, or, rather, total abstinence from intoxicants, he lost no chance of furthering; but in his own case he would take hilariously any trifling *jeu d'esprit* which told against him or his cherished principle.

This, by the way, was one of the secrets of the charm of Sir Arthur's manner. He was never offended by what was not meant to offend, and was always ready to see the amusing side of things. Any gathering of the employés of the Post-Office had his sympathies at once. He was good, at the shortest



SIR ARTHUR BLACKWOOD, K.C.B.,  
SECRETARY OF THE POST-OFFICE.  
(Ob. 1893.)

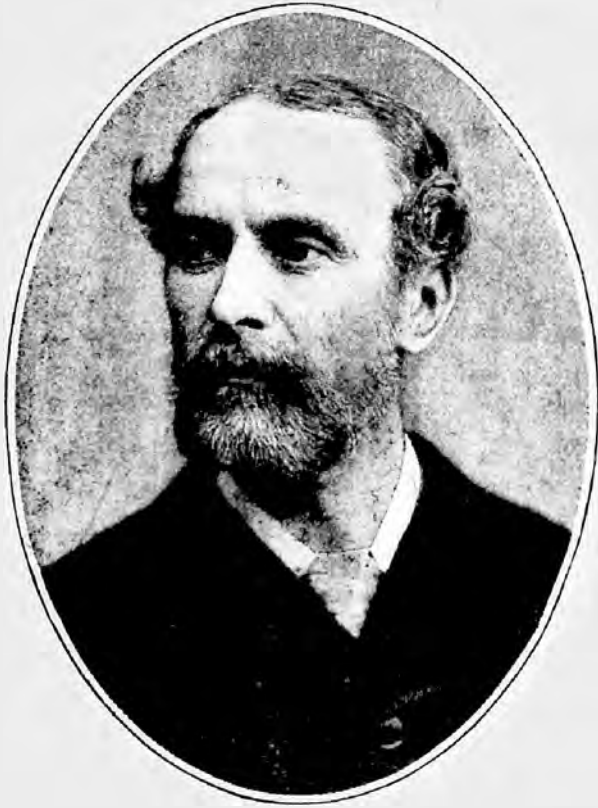
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notice, for an evening with a telegraph messengers' institute in any part of London, or, if business allowed, for a scamper on the trial trip of a new parcel-coach a score or two of miles out of town, or of a mail-steamer on the coast.

If a memorial had to be planned or publicly dedicated to a lamented Postmaster-General, he was to the fore, subscribing and assisting. If an opening presented itself for widening the basis of a great benevolent fund, there was he to encourage and suggest. He had the happy faculty of making official business work smoothly, and the labours of his subordinates pleasurable in the last degree.

Sir Arthur Blackwood will be remembered as a man of sterling worth, who, like Sir Henry Lawrence in India, in all the relations of life, tried to do his duty. An article in the *Birmingham Daily Post* described him as 'the help and comforter, not only of the poor in goods and circumstances, but of the poor in spirit likewise; and it was,' so the writer declared, 'to the task of raising the timid and distrustful to hope and exertion that he devoted himself entirely.' What nobler inscription could be traced upon his tomb?

Some months after these lines were written, Mr. Buxton Forman circulated amongst a limited number of friends a monograph of great beauty, descriptive of what he felt about Sir Arthur Blackwood. The two accounts, written independently, are identical in their

views, but Mr. Forman having enjoyed more opportunities than were open to me of obtaining a thorough insight into Sir Arthur's character, has been able to write with greater weight of personal knowledge. He has borne warm testimony (as I would do) to 'his beautiful, cheerful disposition . . . the fine buoyancy and hilarity which were so striking,' and to his 'wholesome subordination of mere reason to moral conviction and righteous impulse.'

In the autumn of 1893, Mr. Spencer Walpole resigned the responsible position of Governor of the Isle of Man to take up the onerous duties of Secretary of the Post-Office. He is fortunate in finding as his coadjutors men of tried capacity and long official service. Mr. Algernon Turnor, C.B., the present Financial Secretary, spent some years under the eye of Lord Beaconsfield; Mr. Herbert Joyce, C.B., has given forty years to the Post-Office. The senior Assistant-Secretaries, Mr. J. C. Lamb, C.M.G., and Mr. Lewin Hill, possess ripe experience.

Between the accession of Mr. Rowland Hill to the Secretaryship and the present day there have been vast changes in the Post-Office, on some of which these pages will in due course especially dwell. Perhaps the reduction of foreign and colonial postages, towards which Mr. Frederic Hill did much; the institution of Post-Office Savings Banks, wherein Mr. Scudamore, C.B., and Mr. Chetwynd, C.B., came to the fore; the acquisition of the telegraphs, the introduction of postal orders, and the establishment

of the parcel post have been amongst the most conspicuous.

In another chapter reference is more particularly made to the services of Mr. Scudamore. At this point it seems proper to mention that, next only to him in ability, unflagging application, and acquaintance with the principles and details of Post-Office business, was his successor in the post of Receiver and Accountant-General, the late Mr. George Chetwynd, formerly of the Money-Order Office. Mr. Chetwynd's name is identified with the organization of the Savings Bank, the introduction of the daily account, the analysis of the earnings of the telegraph companies, phases of the transfer of the telegraphs, and the adoption of postal orders. A large share of the work must, at least, in each case be ascribed to him.

Who it is that absolutely originates a new and practicable idea is almost always more or less matter of doubt. Many people at different dates propound novel but impracticable schemes, and at length the crude thought embodied in such as are worthy to survive is moulded by some master hand into a feasible plan, while it rarely happens, of course, that an official carries out a work single-handed. He may bear the brunt of the labour, but others necessarily assist.

How much of the first three considerable achievements was exclusively Mr. Chetwynd's work, and how far Mr. Scudamore shared the labour, or contributed original thought, may be open to conjecture. The

latter told me that he and Mr. Chetwynd had planned the daily account while one day waiting for the train at Cannon Street.

How far the merit of introducing the postal order lies with Mr. Chetwynd, or is due to Mr. Frederic Hill, is matter of opinion; the latter was the earlier in the field, and brought the project to an advanced stage; the former overcame whatever difficulty stopped the way, and carried it to completion.

As regards the Savings Bank measure, Sir Rowland Hill has recorded that the machinery for giving effect to it was devised by Messrs. Scudamore and Chetwynd. This agrees with my own recollection. In most things these two able men worked cordially together. But a letter lies before me in which the writer, a high and competent authority, affirms that 'the machinery of the Post-Office Savings Bank is undoubtedly Chetwynd's.' This much is certain, that Mr. Chetwynd was either principal or accessory in bringing several great public works to fruition. He died while still in the prime of life. A few years before his death he was made a Companion of the Bath.

A memorial bust in white marble has been placed by his former colleagues in the room which for many years he occupied at the Post-Office.

A valued coadjutor and faithful henchman of Mr. Scudamore and Mr. Chetwynd was the late Mr. Samuel Walliker, my colleague for many years, whose merits were of a high order, and whose energy,

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always at high pressure, was almost inexhaustible. A principal in the Money-Order Office (Sir Rowland Hill refers to good work done in that office by him as far back as 1849 or 1850), an excellent accountant, an Honorary Quarter-Master of the Civil Service Rifles, Postmaster of Hull, Postmaster of Birmingham, he did well in all that fell to him to do ; he was justly valued for official qualifications, and was trusted all round. Moreover, everyone liked him. His heart was kind to the innermost core. Half the joy which he felt in doing good probably lay in the fact that the benefited could make no return. A colleague whose wits were going, joyless old souls in workhouses, the poor, the helpless, the sorrowful, the orphan, they were the clients after whom his generous soul hungered.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MODUS OPERANDI.

My aim in this chapter is to make clear the ways of the Post-Office, to show how the machinery works, how each part is kept smoothly in motion, how every servant has his well-defined task.

As these words are written, it is six o'clock on a winter's evening. Let us take a Pisgah view of the post at this moment throughout the United Kingdom.

The rural messengers are hurrying through country lanes or along the highway to the head post-town, each laden with a wallet full of letters, post-parcels, and the like.

In the towns active postmen, bag across the shoulder, are intent on clearing the pillar-boxes of letters for the night despatch ; outside the head post-offices the public are posting correspondence to all parts of the world ; within them the sorting office is redolent of sealing-wax, is thronged with officials and bestrewn with empty bags.

At six o'clock the Limited 'up' night mail train from Aberdeen and Glasgow for London flies through



Wishaw Junction, and the 'up' special, which—carrying none but postal officials and consisting of none but postal letter and parcel sorting-vans—becomes before leaving Scotland a train of great length, is now halfway between Perth and Stirling, thundering after the Limited at 50 miles an hour.

The *Princess Victoria* is in Larne harbour preparing to steam swiftly across the Irish Sea with the Belfast mails for Stranraer. In an hour the bright light off Larne will be well down astern in the north-west and the beacon at the entrance of Loch Ryan will open up straight ahead.

Her bigger sister, the *Ireland*, belonging to the Holyhead service, is warped alongside the Carlisle pier at Kingstown, having landed her passengers and the down day mail and the parcel mail from England; while the *Leinster* lies on the eastern side of the pier, patiently gathering breath for the return trip with the Irish night mail for Holyhead.

The north mail-train from Penzance and Plymouth for the Severn Tunnel route dashes through Tiverton Junction on its way to Hereford and Crewe; and at Newcastle-on-Tyne the station superintendent begins to think of marshalling the mail-train for York and King's Cross.

All over the United Kingdom postal bees, though the daylight has departed, are busily at work. A third, or a half of them, it may be, have finished making honey for the day, and are snugly housed in the domestic hive. But perhaps 60,000 men and women

are doing their best to punctually despatch the night mail as the main business of the twenty-four hours.

How in St. Martin's-le-Grand? The great building on the west is plunged in silence and darkness, except its topmost floors, which are brilliantly lighted and thronged with telegraphists. The expresses for the country newspapers are being flashed along the circuits, Parliamentary reports are just upon the wires. But for the rest, a solitary taper may twinkle in the room of the Clerk-in-waiting. Perchance, for tranquillity of thought, he has turned out the electric lamp and is smoking the cigarette of contentment or the tranquil pipe; is meditating the evening meal, or reviewing that problem of which his branch has yet to find the solution. Gone to the House is the Chief of all postmen; to their homes the lesser lights; the stealthy watchmen pervade the corridors; the fire brigade unwind the hose.

Northward, the moonlight plays fantastic tricks with the new building, fast ripening into completion, the theatre, perhaps, of events so great in the future history of the Post-Office as to pale even the effectual fires of the past.

Opposite—how there? Shades of honoured Bokenham and Boucher and Jeffery, how spiritedly the men still work! O Mellersh of the steadfast mind! O Tombs of the cheerful brow! these were once the merry men all; and the forceful example ye set in the old days still inspires the crowd.

What are these cries of 'Oxford,' 'York,' 'Birming-

ham,' 'Crewe,' which salute the ear in the eastern lobby at the back of the building? what is the meaning of the bustle and turmoil on which the Goldsmiths' Hall looks down with superb unconcern? The bags from provincial towns are being checked off, and the 'down' night mail is in process of sortation. 130,000 letters, newspapers, and books have been posted at the General Post-Office during the day, of which 20,000 have come through the slits of the great box under the clock during the last quarter of an hour, the huge wicker baskets within having been refilled to overflowing as fast as they could be emptied and replaced.

As though this were not enough, 200,000 postal packets, specially collected by Post-Office vans from newsagents and the Government offices, add to the mass. Mails are arriving by cartloads.

Is even this the full measure of an evening's work at the Post-Office? Far from it! The total will not fall short of 1,200,000 postal packets. The bag-room has to supply for the night mail 5,500 bags to contain the correspondence; for the whole day's work 20,000 bags are required.

London itself, as all the world knows, is divided into eight postal districts, under a plan framed by Sir Rowland Hill, reported on by a committee of officers on July 4, 1855, and worked out by Mr. Boucher. Each district is a post-town complete in itself. The Eastern Central district, or City portion, is certainly the busiest. More than 900 postmen are needed to deliver its letters.

Some devoted statistician has reckoned that in the whole of the Metropolis postmen walk 46,000 miles daily. The calculation is probably within the mark. Say that 700,000,000 letters are delivered annually in the Metropolis ; about 5,500 postmen are engaged in delivering them. Therefore each man delivers about 430 letters a day, and hardly walks less than 10 miles in doing so, looking at the number of deliveries and the walk to and from the sorting office. Here would be 55,000 miles a day. But something must be deducted on account of illness and annual holiday. So a mileage which lies between 40,000 and 50,000 miles a day seems the lowest reasonable estimate.

But E.C., being in the heart of the Metropolis, includes no suburban area. Most other districts do. Let us therefore take the North-Western, which extends from the Euston Road to Mill Hill, as a sample. It is provided with a chief district post-office near Euston Square railway terminus ; it has sub-district post-offices at Kentish Town, Hampstead, Kilburn and elsewhere.

We will post a handful of letters in coloured envelopes at a letter-box in Hampstead, near the Heath, shortly before five o'clock in the afternoon, and see what becomes of them.

Soon the collecting postman with his bag clears the box and carries the contents to the sub-district or postmen's sorting-office in Downshire Hill. The letters are turned out on a table, arranged address

uppermost, struck over the postage stamp with a date in black ink, and sorted.

Our letter for Belsize Square is set aside for inclusion in the next local delivery. The letter for Vere Street and that for Euston Square are tied in a bundle for the North-Western district office. The latter the North-Western district office will deliver locally ; the former letter it will send by cart to the Western district office. If the Western letters are very numerous at Hampstead, they go by themselves in a bundle labelled ' W,' but still to the district office—North-West.

Our pink letters for Birmingham, Dublin and Glasgow, as well as those which we posted for Germany and Australia, are easily traced ; they are all tied up and labelled, the British letters in bundles corresponding with railway divisions, and the foreign and colonial in others, and sent to the General Post-Office. On arrival, the bag containing them will be cut open, its contents turned out on a table, and the bundles taken direct to their respective divisions, there to be untied and mixed with letters posted under the clock or received from other offices in town and country bags.

Here is the district system in a nutshell.

The Circulation Office itself employs more elaborate mechanism and demands a larger exposition.

We stand in what was once the central hall of the General Post-Office. 10,000 letters lie on each of the six big 'facing' tables in the midst, and at

least 100,000 more letters have yet to come in. They are 'faced' (*i.e.*, turned address upwards), they are divided—the big letters are separated from the ordinary ones, the stray newspapers from both. They are then stamped, and carried for assortment to the Inland Department. There, a first step is to arrange the letters in 28 divisions at the general sorting-table.

Three shelves, one above the other, and the flat surface of the table, each divided into seven spaces, do duty for 28 pigeon-holes; and then begins the process of separating letters from London from those for the provinces, and letters for places abroad from both.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that single-rated letters for abroad are freely picked out at the 'facing' table, and this for a curious reason: a single blue stamp of the value of 2½d. represents the uniform single rate of postage under the International Postal Convention, and is a badge which readily catches the eye and enables the sorters quickly to recognise and select such letters.

Twenty-eight neatly-sorted heaps, seven in each row, are found by experience to cover as much space as a sorter can conveniently over-reach.

Where are our pink letters? Like petals of the rose scattered by the wind, they fluttered through the primary sortation—now other distributions await them.

The 28 inland divisions must be sifted and arranged yet again into the inevitable 28. This time they assort themselves into 'roads.'

Read for the benefit of posterity the top line of inscriptions on the sorting-frame in the North-Western railway division, where the second sorting takes place. It runs thus: 'Chester Road, Warrington Road, Preston, Leamington Spa, Wolverhampton, Worcester Road, Blind.'

The pink letter for Birmingham, however, is not to be found in the first row; try the second one: 'Burton Road, Redditch Road, Carnforth Road, Birkenhead Road, Birmingham'—there is the letter, the coloured edge visible behind eight others. We shift it to the front. What next? Away it goes to the Birmingham sorting-table (each great town having a 'road' to itself), there to be tied in one of many bundles and dropped into the Birmingham sack.

Does curiosity desire to know what an average 'road,' where the third sorting takes place, includes? We select the Carlisle Road, and copy from the *vade mecum* prepared by Mr. R. C. Tombs:

'The work on the Carlisle Road consists of the despatch of letters, post-cards, packets, unpaid letters, registered letters, express letters, etc., to the towns of Ambleside, Armathwaite, Aspatria, Burgh-by-Sands, Carlisle, Cockermouth, Coniston, Dalston (Cumberland), Grasmere, Harrington, Kendal, Kirkoswald, Langwathby, Lazonby, Longtown, Maryport, Penrith, Sedburgh, Silloth, Wigton, Windermere.'

Even the Foreign Branch on a higher floor has its 'roads'; for example, the 'West India (Foreign) Road'—('Foreign' to distinguish it from the 'West

India (British) Road'—which includes a dozen or more countries or places: Colon and Panama, which were to have been enriched by the Count de Lesseps' Canal; Ecuador, under a vertical sun; Hayti, now an absolute monarchy, now a negro republic; Chili, far down in the southern seas; Costa Rica, rich in coffee; Peru, which recalls memories of the plate ships of the Spaniard. So also all the landmarks of the Empire, from Fiji to Labrador, the Continent of Australia and the Island of Bombay, the Cape, Calcutta and New Zealand, figure on the walls of the Colonial Branch.

The States of Europe, too? Yes. Constantinople, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, all have their 'roads.' No privilege is denied to the foreigner.

A line or two of figures seems called for here by way of connecting the several stages of a day's work. A little more than 500,000 letters, a little less than 500,000 newspapers, etc., 10,000 or 11,000 registered letters, and 250,000 foreign and colonial letters, fall into the night mail despatch from the General Post-Office: in all, 1,200,000 postal packets. But taking the mails of the whole day the total is thrice as great. 750,000 letters are sent out for delivery in the Eastern Central district alone, and the grand total for the day must be exalted to 3,600,000 postal packets, exclusive of parcels.

How many officials toil at despatches and arrivals? 2,500 sorters apply themselves daily to the assort-



ment of 3,600,000 letters, newspapers and books at the General Post-Office, and 250 superior officers look after them; nearly 1,300 other persons assist in various ways.

If a man be unpunctual, or a mail-cart be behind time, if a bag be mis-sent, nay, if a letter be left on the floor, the fact is known and investigated; and it is the same in every post-office throughout the United Kingdom, as though there were but a handful of men to be looked after instead of 130,000 persons.

The rule of the Post-Office is, that a report shall be made of every irregularity by the subordinate to his immediate superior. The latter, if need be, passes it on. So the inspector mentions the casual oversight of the rural postman to the head-postmaster, who checks the defaulter for his error, and there the matter ends. But the habitual disregard of regulations would be reported by the postmaster to his Surveyor, by the Surveyor to the Secretary, by the Secretary to the Postmaster-General, whose decision is final. Thus it may happen that infraction of rule in the Mull of Cantyre becomes part of the permanent history of the Post-Office, because the minutes of the Minister are the archives of the department.

The London night mail is the backbone of the circulation of letters throughout the country. Of course there are other principal mails—day mails, mid-day, anticipatory, relief and supplementary mails—but the London night mail is more important than them all.

Given that a letter for a remote village in the North of England or Wales is posted in the South—say at Bournemouth, where this book is written—in time for the noon collection from a town letter-box, the sender may confidently reckon on its delivery about eight o'clock next morning, because it will circulate through London and fall into the night mail despatch.

The night mails are sent off from London at such an hour as to allow of the rural posts being despatched from the head post-towns, as a rule, at six o'clock in the morning; and as the outward walk of the rural postman is completed in two or three hours, there is a tolerable certainty that the night mail letters for a village will come in with the breakfast-tray.

The London night mail train is due on the Border at Carlisle at 3.22 a.m., and Berwick at 4.23. It is due at Holyhead at 5.5, at Carmarthen at 5.15, and at Plymouth at 4.45 a.m. Therefore at almost all the post-towns in England and Wales, even the distant ones, there is a sufficient interval for sorting the incoming night mail before six o'clock in the morning.

A letter for, say, Hadley, in Salop, posted at Bournemouth at noon, would be made up in the fourth day mail for London at 12.55 p.m. It would be enclosed in a bundle for the North-Western railway division, which bundle, on the bag being opened at the General Post-Office, would be taken straight to the divisional table, and thus escape being

commingled with the general mass of unsorted letters. Next it would go through the second and third processes of sortation already described, and eventually find itself in the bag for Wellington (Salop), which is sent away from London, not, indeed, by the 'down special' at 8.30, but by the Holyhead mail at 10 p.m. It would branch off from the main line at Stafford, and arrive at Wellington at 2.38 a.m. The mail would be sorted, the town letters separated from the rural ones. The letters for Hadley would be picked out, and despatched by rural postmen at 6 a.m.; they would reach the sub-post-office at 6.35.

Take, again, a letter for Blaenau Festiniog, amongst the slate-quarries of North Wales. The London office would send it, with others, for places lying off the line in a bag which is made up for the Crewe and Bangor Travelling Post-Office. The latter, while rushing on its journey through the darkness of the night, puts all the letters it collects for Blaenau into a bag which arrives there at 6.10 a.m. by branch train from Llandudno Junction.

Once more: on some maps may be found Llanfair Caerinion. Its interests are carefully met. Its night mail is sent from Welshpool by mail-cart, due at 7.20 a.m. The delivery begins at 7.45. So even here, at this remote but considerable village, if letters do not appear at breakfast time, the squire, the vicar, and the doctor, the club and the reading-room, would demand the reason why.

Over the Metropolis and its posts, within a radius

of 10 or 12 miles, the Controller of the London Postal Service at St. Martin's-le-Grand holds sway. Through his hands passes every proposal to alter or amend the London service. Frequency and extent of deliveries, new offices, enlargement of buildings, increase of force; questions of discipline, of pay, of carts and vans, are his immediate concern. He controls and finds staff for the travelling post-offices. There is no one between him and the Secretary. In the whole department none holds a more arduous and responsible post.

How does Mr. J. C. Badcock (the Controller) contrive to bear the burden? With what officers and crew does he keep the head of the great ship *London Postal Service* true to the ordered course, and at all times contrive punctually to deliver her cargo? Good organization and a sufficient staff, a wise delegation of duty and unceasing watchfulness, go far to furnish the reply.

As personal assistants—officers not encumbered with executive functions—the Controller is provided with a Vice-Controller, two assistant Controllers, and six chief Superintendents. These lieutenants are backed up by 76 officers of other grades; so altogether 85 functionaries do what they can to lighten the immediate load of the Controller-in-chief.

Next, all London being parcelled out into eight principal districts, and four minor ones, under post-masters, each of whom has his following of clerks and inspectors, and each an adequate force of postmen,

twelve persons share in the second degree that responsibility which culminates in the Controller. All twelve, for their respective areas, are responsible to the chief; all look to him for counsel and aid; all trim the sails according to the general orders which he gives; all acquaint him with every essential detail.

In short, while 11,583 persons are borne on the vote for the London Postal Service, no fewer than 20,449 persons, including the telegraph staff, obey the beck of the Controller and keep the ship running free. But the cost is great—£1,280,480 a year—to which appreciable sum must be added the charge for cart and van services, viz., £125,000 a year.

These are the means by which the head functionary, responsible to the Secretary and Postmaster-General for efficiently conducting the posts in London, is enabled to regulate the postal navigation, and keep an unflinching look-out on all that concerns the interests of the public in the Metropolis.

An important feature of the sorting service is postal work in trains on the move.

The first travelling post-office—a 'moving post-office' was its earliest title—was established on the Grand Junction Railway between Liverpool and Birmingham on July 1, 1837, and on the completion of the railway to the Metropolis in July, 1838, that office began to ply throughout between London and Liverpool.

The early experience of clerks employed in the travelling post-offices was not always halcyon.

'Sir,' wrote his 'most obedient humble servants, Fredk. W. Karstadt and W. Mellush' ('Mellersh,' probably), to their chief, under date Birmingham, February 16, 1838,—'It becomes our painful duty to report the burning of the Carlisle mail-bag.' The London mail for Liverpool had been duly received at 7.15 a.m. by road through Barnet (108 miles in 11½ hours), and sent on by train. But the coach with the mail for Carlisle had been upset near Daventry, and the bags only came to hand by the Manchester coach at 7.45 a.m., when the train had gone, and gone, too, without the Bristol mail.

Then what was to be done? The two clerks promptly procured an express engine, fastened the bags on a 'larry' between the engine and the post-office, and started on their way at 8.10 a.m. At Whitmore, the furnace-bars were found to be burnt through, and a stoppage ensued. At Crewe the alarming cry was raised of 'Fire!' A hot cinder from the damaged furnace had fallen on the Carlisle sack and set it alight. Fortunately, water was to be had, also paper and string; so the letters, much burnt and defaced, and not, one would suppose, over-dry, were repacked, and the travellers set off again for Warrington. But their troubles were not over. 'The engine was in such a state of inefficiency that we were detained at four different parts of the journey, and at last were obliged to let all the water out of the cistern, into which the tender-man descended to find out what was wrong.'

Coming back, things were no better, for the 'fire and grate of the engine' this time gave way altogether, 'and were precipitated to the ground, nearly causing the train to be turned off the tram.'

However, another train overtook them, which happily was able to push them forward to their destination.

Once—that was on November 26, 1837—George Stephenson's veritable 'coo'—in fact, two cows—got on the line. The train was thrown off the rails, and though it was 'awkward for the coos,' the passengers were only delayed 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Travelling post-offices every night run direct from Euston Square to Aberdeen and Holyhead; from Paddington to Penzance; from Cannon Street to Dover; from Waterloo to Southampton and Dorchester; from Bristol to Newcastle; from Normanton to Shrewsbury, etc. They are in operation also between Dublin and Belfast, and Dublin and Cork.

In the aggregate, upwards of 3,000,000 miles are annually run by these movable offices in traversing the principal railways; about 1,800,000 miles appertain to the London and North-Western and Caledonian railways; about 370,000 miles to the Midland and North-Eastern, nearly 300,000 to the Great Western, and the balance to other lines.

The total number of apparatus-stations in England, Scotland, and Wales is 260, and there are 412 standards and 360 nets erected at these stations for the despatch and receipt of mails. To 132 postal

carriages the apparatus and nets are affixed; about two-thirds are in daily employment, a third being kept in reserve.

On nearly all the night mail trains, and on some of the day trains, this potent auxiliary of postal despatch is in active use. It fulfils two functions—dropping bags at points at which the mail-train does not stop, and taking others in as it flashes by.

Sir Rowland Hill has described in few words the action of the apparatus for exchanging bags without the stoppage of the train. 'That which takes place is as follows: The bags to be forwarded, being suspended from a projecting arm at the station, are so knocked off by a projection from the train as to fall into a net which is attached to the mail-carriage, and is for the moment stretched out to receive them; while, at the same time, the bags to be left behind, being hung out from the mail-carriage, are in like manner so struck off as to be caught in a net fixed at the station, the whole of this complex movement being so instantaneous that the eye cannot follow it.'

A few years ago the department offered premiums for improvements in the form of bag-exchanging apparatus. Some hundreds of designs were sent in. None was adjudged worthy of the first prize, but two received second and third premiums. One proposal struck me as certainly novel and bold.

Given a railway-station at which the mail-train did not stop, and from which bags had nevertheless to be sent on. At the said station a siding, engine, and



mail-van were to be provided, the last-mentioned being furnished with hinged sides capable of being let down to floor-level. The mail-van of the mail-train was to be similarly equipped.

When the mail-train was known to be approaching, say at a speed of 40 or 50 miles an hour, the engine and mail-van in the siding were to be started on a pair of rails carried parallel to the main line for a sufficient distance, and, gradually getting up speed, would, when overtaken, run abreast of the mail-train at an equal pace.

Then, at a signal, both vans would let down their hinged sides, and so form a stable platform, across which the guard would nimbly skip with the outward bags and as nimbly return with the inward ones. The Commissioners for examining designs were able and conscientious men, yet they awarded no prize for this original idea.

So far, we have chiefly considered ingeniously-contrived mechanism. But an equally important function is the assortment of letters while the train is in motion. Owing to this arrangement, letters may be received from the public after the closing of the box at the local post-office, even up to the moment when the mail-train leaves the station; and neighbouring towns on the line of post may exchange correspondence without the necessity of making up direct bags, yet with all the celerity secured by fast trains. It will be obvious that if every post-town made up a bag for every place for

which it had a letter, the service would break down by sheer mass of canvas. The travelling post-office steps in and obviates many difficulties.

More than 1,000 mails daily are transferred between the station-standards and the carriage-nets, and the carriages and the stationary nets. The total number of mail-bags included in these exchanges is estimated at 3,000, and their contents at 150,000 letters, etc., a day. About four-fifths are sorted *en route*, the other fifth being accounted for by bags sent direct from one town to another through the travelling post-offices unopened. The total number of letters, etc., dealt with in the travelling post-offices annually is about 270,000,000, besides 7,000,000 parcels, each of which is accelerated in delivery. There are other sorting carriages under local control, not included in the statement, whose figures would go to swell the totals.

A rotation of sorters is arranged, so that none may be on duty too often or too long.

It is hard to admit that in one respect, at any rate, the views of the Inspector-General of Mails during my term of office in the eighties were less enlightened and advanced than those which found expression in the late thirties. Yet so it was.

In 1838 the London and Birmingham Railway Company had in their service a talented officer of the royal navy, Lieutenant Peter Lecount. He was a mathematician, a writer of sound, easy English, and a civil engineer to boot. He wrote a 'Practical

Treatise on Railways,\* and this is how he advised that railway post-offices should be arranged :

‘The mails should be fitted up in conjunction with the Post-Office authorities, divided into two parts. The first is a sleeping-room, where two hammocks are hung up; the other is an office fitted up with drawers and pigeon-holes for the purpose of sorting the letters.’

My former colleagues, if not my readers, may be left to imagine sleeping compartments for the officials in the busy Scotch special train, where every square inch of space is jealously demanded by the letter and parcel work. After all, a sorter from London probably finds greater rest in leaving the train altogether at Carlisle than in being slung up in a hammock and going on to Perth.

A better illustration of the use of travelling post-offices than that supplied by a comparatively recent change can hardly be given. Formerly the day mail-trains on the London and South-Western line left Waterloo at 8.5 a.m. Letters from the North for towns between London and Southampton, etc., were sent for the most part to the Circulation Office to be reassorted, and were not in time for an earlier train.

On April 1, 1890, we arranged with the railway company that the mails and a travelling post-office should be sent by the newspaper train, which leaves Waterloo at 5.50 a.m. But between the arrival of

\* Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1839.

the mail-trains at Euston, soon after 4 a.m., and the departure from Waterloo, at 10 minutes to 6, the interval was insufficient for sorting at St. Martin's-le-Grand. So the travelling offices came into play. What letters the towns north of Euston, which did not make up direct bags for the South-Western line, had for that line they put with others in their bags for the up North-Western travelling post-office. The North-Western travelling office, in turn, before reaching Euston, sorted all the letters received for the South-Western line, enclosing some in direct bags for the large towns, and the rest in a bag for the South-Western travelling post-office. The latter finally made the residue up with others received in course of its travels.

By these means the delivery of letters was accelerated to the extent of two or three hours at a period of the day when, for commercial purposes, every moment is of importance.

The organization of a provincial head post-office follows more or less the lines of the London office. It presents, however, a special feature—that which is known as cross-posts. Such posts cannot be generalized, but examples may be given. Those of a great city, such as Manchester, are numerous and complicated; those of a smaller town, such as Bournemouth, will be better understood.

But while mentioning a city of the North, let me take a single illustration of the circulation by Northern cross-post from sub-office to sub-office, from Kirby

Moorside in East Yorkshire to Grasmere in West Westmorland.

A letter posted at Kirby before 6.25 p.m. would be sent in its bag for York. At York it would be sorted into a bag for the station post-office at Carnforth, which is on the Carlisle line a little north of Lancaster.

This bag would travel from York by up night mail to Normanton; thence by a cross-post established some years ago on my proposal, between Normanton and Carnforth, *viâ* Leeds (a cross-post intended to connect more securely the up night mail from York with the down night mail from London to Glasgow and the North). The station post-office at Carnforth would send the letter in a direct bag to Grasmere, where the delivery begins at 7.10 a.m., so that a letter written in the evening at a village on the one side of the country is delivered in a village on the other side possibly before most receivers of letters are awake.

At Bournemouth mails are made up at night for 31 towns. They include many cross-post bags, such being despatched to Bath, Bristol, Birmingham, and even so distant a city as Liverpool. The town of Bournemouth enjoys by the Midland route excellent railway communication with the western side of England, and as the Post-Office by the terms of its contract can make use of all Midland trains, the public benefit by the expeditious transit of letters which is thereby secured. So much for the west; to the east, cross-post bags are sent off to

Southampton, Portsmouth, and Brighton; and it would not be incorrect to write that in other directions the bags which Bournemouth forwards to Blandford, Dorchester, Kingston-on-Thames, Salisbury, Sherborne, Weymouth, and Yeovil come into the cross-post category.

Nine separate bags and certain separate bundles are made up for London and its districts, while as for Christchurch, Lymington, Parkstone, Poole, Wareham and Wimborne, perhaps the bags for those places, though strictly the outcome of cross-posts, may be considered as local. Up to the year before my entry into the service, little Bournemouth, which is now almost a city, depended on the Poole Post-Office and a donkey and cart for its letters.

Finally, at various periods of the day bags are sent off for certain travelling post-offices and sorting tenders, so completing its cross-post communication with all parts.

Such is the programme of the night mail as prepared at the head post-office at Bournemouth; and such, more or less, is the work nightly set before all head post-offices.

There is in operation a remarkable line of mail-carts across Kent and Sussex from Rochester to Brighton, a distance of  $64\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The object is to connect directly all parts of the two counties, and to deliver into the extensive rural districts of East and West Kent and East Sussex the correspondence brought by the South-Eastern mail-trains to Staple-

hurst. A cart starts from Rochester at 8 p.m. and is due in Brighton at 6.15 a.m., waits for trains and stops for sorting purposes eating into time. In the opposite direction the start from Brighton takes place at 7.15 p.m., and the arrival at Rochester is at 5.15 a.m. The route lies through Chatham, Maidstone and Staplehurst, where the main exchange of mails takes place; through Hawkhurst, which is the postal centre of an extensive area, and Cross-in-Hand, to which a cart from Eastbourne brings bags; through Blackboys, to which Uckfield sends a cart, and Lewes. By these means letters posted in London, or arriving there from other parts in the evening, are distributed all over East and West Kent by seven or eight o'clock next morning, while the cross-post letters and parcels which originate in Kent or Sussex circulate with great celerity.

Once, in an emergency, Sir Rowland Hill hit on the expedient of directing that certain classes of correspondence for the Metropolis from towns north of London should be forwarded by *down* mail-train, to be sorted in the course of the journey, and brought eventually to London by *up* mail-train. This plan is now followed, in principle, in a variety of cases, to the advantage of the service and the acceleration of the correspondence dealt with. For example, letters received into the South-Eastern night mail travelling post-office for Bromley, Bickley Station, Brighton, Croydon, Faversham, or Chislehurst, are carried down to Dover and despatched to those towns on the

up journey. Any letters received into the London and Exeter travelling office for certain places near Staines go down to Bath and come back again; those received in the South-Western travelling post-office for Bracknell, Brentford, Chertsey, Cobham, Esher, or Guildford, go down to Southampton and back; while letters received in the London and North-Western travelling post-office for Amersham or Chesham go even as far as Crewe, whence they are despatched to their destination by the up mail-train.

Fourteen bags are made up in London for conveyance by the midnight mail-train (which is not provided with an apparatus-carriage), for Aylesbury, Berkhamstead, Towcester, Weedon, etc. These bags are taken down to Rugby, in order that they may be transferred there to the up night mail-train, and dropped at the proper point by the apparatus which is attached to that train. Similarly, correspondence for certain Buckinghamshire towns, other than Aylesbury, despatched by down night mail from London, is sent in a bag to Rugby, and there transferred to the up mail travelling post-office.

I may very well contrast my experience in the circulation of London letters in 1888, when the activity of Mr. R. C. Tombs, as Controller of the London Postal Service, caused numberless improvements to be effected, with that of Mr. George Louis, my predecessor, in 1838.

We both resided, in our time, 2 or 3 miles from Oxford Street—he at Hammersmith, I at Hampstead.



If he had a letter for London, and did not post it before 4 p.m., it was not delivered until noon next day. If I posted a letter as late as 3 in the morning, it was delivered in any part of London at 8. I could receive a letter from Kilburn at 6 p.m., reply to it at 7 p.m., and get an answer, written the same night, at 8 the next morning.

When penny postage was established in 1840, a census was taken of post-offices, head and subordinate, in the United Kingdom. They numbered 4,028. In the year 1898 the total had risen to 19,625, and if thereto be added 25,072 letter-boxes, so making a gross total of 44,797 receptacles available for public use, the places for posting letters will be found to be now eleven times more numerous than they were half a century ago.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE MINISTER.

HER MAJESTY'S POSTMASTER-GENERAL, especially if he be a member of the Cabinet, is one of the hardest-worked politicians of the day. He has no peace. Almost daily he is at the Post-Office, and during the Session half the night at Westminster. Moreover, he is six days out of the seven pursued by the fateful 'pouch.'

In this are enclosed twenty or thirty sets of papers known as 'cases,' and on each he must pronounce a judgment. He might, it is true, take for granted the secretarial advice endorsed on each case, restrict himself to a formal approval, and so dispose of his paper-work in a short space of time. But if he choose to review the recommendations submitted to him, examine the evidence on which they are based, and acquaint himself with the organization on which the cases turn, some hours may be spent on a single pouch.

Moreover, the pouch, though important, is only one part of his Ministerial work. Much personal attention

is nowadays given by Postmasters-General to the appeals of deputations, and to questions which involve oral discussion; and these, with little to show for them, eat into the day.

He has no holiday, the pouch pursuing him wherever he may flee for change or rest. Sometimes the issues presented by the cases are momentous. Public interests may be largely at stake. A hasty settlement might injuriously affect his following of 130,000 souls, and a revenue of which the millions cannot be counted on the fingers of both hands. It might discount the popularity of the Government of the day.

There have been, even in my time, Postmasters-General who limited their action to questions of policy and principle, and who delegated the actual management wholly to the permanent officers. The Earl of Elgin adopted this course. In later years the tendency has been for the Minister to intervene, certainly in all questions of importance, and to some extent in matters of detail as well.

Perhaps a middle course, one that leaves with the permanent staff adequate freedom of action, coupled with full responsibility, and yet admits of the mind of the political chief being impressed on general policy and management, is that which works best for the country at large.

Mr. Fawcett was as popular outside the walls of the Post-Office as within them; and when he held the Ministerial post, the accepted idea of the public was that he did everything with his own hands. For

instance, a vestryman sitting next to me at Hampstead once remarked: 'My four o'clock letters sometimes do not come till five. I mean to write to Mr. Fawcett about it.'

Now, although Mr. Fawcett, blind as he was, toiled at the oar lest he should do unjustly or unwisely, and was unsparing of himself, yet to have dealt with a tenth of the best work of the Post-Office would have broken him down in a month. The public like to be in touch with the Minister, and it is well that it should be so; but unless a rigorous sifting of official correspondence and a liberal delegation of authority prevailed, any one chief officer would quickly fall under an insupportable burden. That must be obvious to all. Mr. Frederic Hill tells the story of a Postmaster-General who ordered that letters addressed to him as such should be laid on his table. This was done, but the new plan ordered one day was countermanded the next. A single day's experience of the labour of opening and reading the letters sufficed.

It goes without saying that the Postmaster-General is the fount of all authority in the Post-Office. But his is a limited monarchy, after all.

If the Lords of the Treasury sanction his financial proposals, such then acquire the force of law; but if they refuse (a contingency which has been known to arise), they fall to the ground.

The Secretary of the Post-Office, chief permanent functionary though he be, has no inherent power, except such as he derives from his chief. He shines

by reflected light, every act of his in the Post-Office being done in the name of the Postmaster-General. In practice he has, of course, very large authority. The postal machine otherwise could not work properly. As the adviser of his political chief, every paper submitted to the latter must first receive the impress of his own views; and by tradition he has necessarily, with great responsibility, great freedom of action. But in theory he is only the mouthpiece of the Postmaster-General.

The relative status of those two great officers—the Minister and the Secretary—was well defined in a discussion which arose out of a difference of opinion shortly before the retirement of Sir Rowland Hill from the Post-Office. The question to be settled was, who should be the chairman of a certain departmental committee. The choice lay between Mr. F. I. Scudamore and Mr. W. J. Godby; Sir Rowland, by formal minute, ‘advised’ the appointment of the one; Lord Stanley of Alderley, who was Postmaster-General, decided on appointing the other.

To this Sir Rowland demurred, and appeared to hold the view that in such a matter the Secretarial recommendation should be paramount; that he had been appointed by the Treasury, and so, it might be inferred, was not in all things directly amenable to the orders of the politician at the Post-Office. At least, this was the gist of his contention. But Lord Stanley retorted that the terms of his patent gave him, and him alone, authority in the Post-Office. He in-

sisted that his nomination should prevail, which accordingly it did.

To me it has always appeared that, as a pure abstract question of right, Lord Stanley's view was sound and constitutional. Under any other view, the Post-Office would attempt that which authority declares no man can do, viz., to serve two masters. Of course, the expediency of over-ruling the proposals of the highest permanent officer in the Post-Office, and so running the risk of weakening the springs of authority throughout the department, is quite another issue.

Supremacy does not go very far when the purse-strings are in the hands of another. Expenditure, wisely effected, is clearly the life-blood of the Post-Office; for as population, commerce, and wealth grow, the Post-Office must enlarge its borders, advance in the tide of progress, or for ever lag behind.

Yet not a penny can be spent on the establishment without Treasury sanction, and while some ardent progressionists may lament that the Postmaster-General has not a longer tether, and while minor evils may flow from checks so engendered to departmental activity, it is clear that one authority alone should control the purse-strings of the nation, and have the final voice in questions of outlay—and that that voice must be the Treasury's.

A Secretary of the Treasury in modern times is reported to have said that he was really the Postmaster-General. This, if actually stated, was true enough in a sense. He was both 'my Lords' and the

Postmaster on a question of scales of pay, or of additional clerical force, or variation of pension, and on most other questions of financial importance.

It must be remembered, too, that on its political side the Treasury is largely the Government itself, inasmuch as the Premier usually, though not always, is the First Lord, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer almost invariably stands next in authority in the Government. If the lay or permanent side can speak and act in the name and with the authority of these powerful Ministers, then even the mere junior, who in a Civil Service competition may just have won his place at the Treasury by a mark or two over his brother at the Inland Revenue, or Customs, or Post-Office, becomes a veritable power in the land.

A Postmaster-General, however, who is in the Cabinet can always, it is believed, hold his own against any odds when he has the public at his back. Mr. Fawcett was not even in the Cabinet, but by mere force of will and public sympathy he carried his points.

The Marquis of Hartington was said at Whitehall to be too big a man for the Post-Office. His lordship's talents, as events have shown, were no doubt equal to any position; but this was not what the Whitehall saying was intended to convey. Plainer words would have been—His postal proposals cannot be over-ruled.

Sixteen Postmasters-General have held office in my time:

*Viscount Canning* came into office on January 8,

1853. His lordship was greatly interested in Post-Office work. He sanctioned the book-post, made a postal treaty with France, and reorganized the department at home. 'I have said,' wrote he on January 31, 1855, 'that the Post-Office is essentially a department of progress, and one which admits of constant improvement and expansion.' Lord Canning acted up to these opinions, and rendered good service to the State while Postmaster-General. He was afterwards, as is well known, Governor-General of India, and its first Viceroy, and held office during the mutiny. Sir Rowland Hill has borne testimony to his great talents, high principles, strict conscientiousness, and unwearied industry, as displayed at the Post-Office, where he continued to transact business until the very day of his departure for the East.

To paraphrase the boast of Heine, it may be truly said that if anyone names the best half-dozen Postmasters-General, Viscount Canning's name must be brought in amongst them. But that is saying little. Amongst the most eminent administrators of the Victorian age, the name of Earl Canning, or, more glorious still, the cognomen of 'Clemency' Canning, must surely shine conspicuous.

*The Duke of Argyll, K.G.*, afterwards Secretary of State for India, came to the Post-Office on November 30, 1855, but remained there a very short time. His quickness of apprehension greatly impressed Sir Rowland; his facility of composition struck him with amazement. The Duke's adminis-



tration has always been spoken of in terms of approval and respect. He allowed me to send my scheme of 1856 for a postal telegraph system to the Treasury.

*Lord Colchester*, appointed on March 13, 1856, devoted himself with unremitting care to a mastery of the working of the department in all its details.

*The Earl of Elgin* became Postmaster-General on June 29, 1859, and remained in office about a year. He was then appointed Viceroy of India. It was he who, at the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, diverted at the Straits of Sunda the British forces intended to support his lordship's mission to China, and took or sent them to Lord Canning's help at Calcutta. He was a man of admirable qualities.

*Lord Stanley of Alderley* succeeded Lord Elgin on August 28, 1860. His name is chiefly identified with the establishment of the Post-Office Savings Bank, the broad-sheet of regulations for establishing which went out under his signature. His lordship was in favour of my postal telegraph scheme, as will be seen hereafter.

The patent of the *Duke of Montrose* is dated July 19, 1866. The Telegraph Bill of 1868 was passed during his Grace's term of office. He was at great pains to acquaint himself with Post-Office business.

*The Marquis of Hartington, M.P.*, now Duke of Devonshire, K.G., took up office on December 30, 1868. The transfer of the telegraphs occurred while his lordship was Postmaster-General. He signed a cheque for nearly £3,000,000 in paying off one of

the principal telegraph companies — the biggest cheque, his lordship is reported to have said, he was ever likely to sign.

*The Right Hon. William Monsell, M.P.* (afterwards Lord Emly), was appointed on January 24, 1871. After the lapse of a score of years he had not forgotten his old officials, and we had the pleasure of seeing his lordship, on the occasion of the Postal Jubilee, at South Kensington in 1890. He died this year.

*The Right Hon. Lyon Playfair, M.P.* (now Lord Playfair), came to the Post-Office on November 28, 1873; was chairman of a Committee of the House of Commons on the telegraphs, before which I went as witness, and he sanctioned the issue of postcards and postal orders.

*Lord John Manners, M.P.*, began his first term of office on May 4, 1874. When his second term came he was Duke of Rutland.

*The Right Hon. Henry Fawcett, M.P.*, the blind Postmaster-General, was appointed on May 14, 1880. I refer more especially to his period of office further on.

*The Right Hon. G. J. Shaw-Lefevre, M.P.*, was appointed Postmaster-General November 7, 1884. He filled, as the *locum tenens* of his friend, during Mr. Fawcett's first severe illness, the unique office of Deputy Postmaster-General, the only appointment under that term ever held in the United Kingdom. His tenure of office in either capacity was short, but no epoch was more active than that of his

administration, as he threw himself with energy, and even enthusiasm, into whatever fell in his way. It was as inspiring to work with him as with his lamented predecessor. The parcel post he adopted as warmly as though it were his own production, and he was firm in his intention still further to extend both its scope and prosperity.

He raised the limit of weight for inland parcels to 11 pounds and adopted a graduated charge for each intermediate pound. He had further views, which, if they had been assented to by all concerned, would have fixed the charge for an 11-pound parcel at 1s. 2d. instead of 1s. 6d., the present price. But the project fell through.

He built, or planned to build, several new post-offices, and carried on all branches of the service with great vigour, until, on the resignation of Mr. Gladstone's Government in the summer of 1885, his administration came to a close. Almost his last official act, as Postmaster-General, was to give notice of ten or a dozen changes of importance for July 1 of that year.

Acceleration of the night mails for Scotland was the main feature of the new programme. New night mails for Lancashire and North Wales and supplementary mails for Edinburgh and Glasgow were also established. Additional facilities for posting letters for South Wales were granted, and, with a touch of romance, a new midnight mail to the North was announced.

If busy at midnight, we were to be up with the lark in order to despatch new early mails for Yorkshire, and although it is chronologically inexact to group an improvement which took place in May with the July changes, yet it may be added that while rising betimes to accelerate the morning Continental letters for the Midlands, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre further showed his solicitude for trading interests by establishing a new mid-day mail from London to the principal towns in Yorkshire, and to towns generally on the Great Northern lines of railway, the correspondence forwarded by which is available for distribution the same day.

Yorkshire duly cared for, the Metropolis next benefited by his comprehensive scheme. A later posting of letters for the last delivery in London was arranged for, and at the same time a later posting for the provincial night mails generally.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer of the day told me in effect that, while he approved of the proposed arrangements for later posting as a Minister, yet the benefit to him as a private citizen was not unmixed, inasmuch as, instead of putting down his pen at five o'clock and having a little rest and leisure before dinner, he would now have to toil at private correspondence for at least another hour.

Not so thought the Chancellor's illustrious predecessor, Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, forty-five years earlier. He considered the post went out too soon. 'This new penny post,' said he, in writing to his sister, January

15, 1840, 'is hateful, as one must write so early. It closes at five o'clock.'

A really great measure of Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's, simple as it may appear on paper, was a reduction of the rates of postage for heavy letters. The scale of postage applicable to letters over 12 ounces in weight advanced at a bound from light rates to oppressive ones. For instance, while the postage of a letter of 12 ounces in weight was 4d., a letter of 13 ounces cost 1s. 1d. The new scale adopted was—for the first ounce, 1d.; for 2 ounces, 1½d., as before; and for all greater weights, ½d. for every 2 ounces, counting from the first ounce, plus a penny. This change brought down the charge for a 14-ounce letter from 1s. 2d. to 4½d., and had an immediate and very marked effect in increasing the number of heavy letters posted, and the amount of postage collected upon them.

A system of insurance of parcels and registered postal packets was foreshadowed in the public notice, as was also the establishment of colonial and foreign parcel posts.

Three other useful measures were notified, viz., a regular despatch of the mails for the West Indies every two weeks, instead of on the 2nd and 17th of each month; the inclusion of the kingdom of Siam in the Postal Union, and the extension of money orders to Hawaii.

Trade was fairly good, the postal exchequer was overflowing, the public and Parliament were well

affected, and the statesmanship of Fawcett and Lefevre had revived the spirit of progress which animated the Post-Office in the days of Rowland Hill.

Things went merrily. The press were unanimous in their approval. The *Globe* of June 22, 1885, wrote that:

‘Mr. Shaw-Lefevre publishes a programme of postal reforms which, if they can all be successfully realized, will certainly entitle him to a distinguished place in the annals of St. Martin’s-le-Grand. . . . But the thanks of the public are due to Mr. Shaw-Lefevre chiefly for the abolition of the extraordinary anomaly by which London was far worse off than almost any provincial town in reference to the despatch of the night mails.’

The *Times* of the same date observed that:

‘The notice which we publish in another column, summarizing the several postal improvements which are to take effect on the 1st of next month, affords sufficient proof that Mr. Fawcett’s successor has not been idle during the seven months of his rule at St. Martin’s-le-Grand.’

The *Daily Telegraph* also adduced generous testimony in the following terms in its issue of July 1:

‘Before quitting his brief administration of the Post-Office, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre gave his sanction to one of the most extensive schemes of letter postal reform introduced for many years. It affects almost all parts of the United Kingdom, but London naturally shares to a greater degree than any other city in the

acceleration, which takes effect from to-day. Not only are the great trunk services radiating in all directions increased in number, but in many cases their speed is very considerably augmented; while within the Metropolitan district itself one very noteworthy improvement cannot fail to be appreciated by all classes.'

On retiring from official life, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, from his place in the House of Commons, propounded a plan for applying systematically a portion of the Post-Office surplus to improvements. He favours the idea that a sum should be fixed upon as a normal surplus, and that the Postmaster-General should be at liberty to apply all profits, in excess of that sum, as he sees fit in increasing the efficiency and convenience of postal services.

When critics review the administration of the Post-Office, and reprove it for this or that shortcoming, it is seldom sufficiently borne in mind that, in shaping its course towards extension and improvement, the department is not wholly a free agent. Criticisms of postal policy, though ostensibly aimed at the Post-Office, hit, as a rule, the policy of the Government of the day, to which the department has to conform, and not necessarily that which it can itself control, or would desire to adopt. Money is usually the stumbling-block in the way of advancement, and so long as the net postal collections are relied on at the Exchequer as an important part of the national revenue, so long must there be a tendency, whether

at the West End or the East, to resist new expenditure, especially such as is not in its nature urgent and indispensable.

To me, and probably to most people, it would appear that the Post-Office, with which the social and commercial interests of the nation are so closely knit, must either progress in efficiency and usefulness or fall back. It can hardly stand still. If the boat rest on its oars, down-stream it will drift.

The view conveyed by the leading journal of January 10, 1890, seems the true one :

‘The Post-Office, also, since penny postage was inducted into its primacy, has toiled so assiduously as to merit a fair part of the glories of the occasion. But its officers are bound not to forget that the wonderful position their department has won is due less to the accurate performance of routine duties than to originality and inventiveness.

‘Sir Rowland Hill would never have accomplished his splendid undertaking if he had allowed himself to be baffled by external official hindrances. He fought those throughout his career ; and the best tradition he has bequeathed to the office of which he made a beacon for the world is the memory of the right he extorted for it to apply its resources for the discharge of its proper work.’

No honest servant of the State would contend that the Post-Office might properly be made wholly independent of financial control. That, under constitutional government, would clearly be not only



inexpedient but impossible; but it may be that the relations of the department towards the collective Government of the day can be so readjusted—whether under Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's plan or another—as to give full play to whatever administrative genius the Post-Office may have the good luck to command, and ensure that this 'beacon of the world' shall continuously shed a bright and steady light.

When Mr. Shaw-Lefevre left us, an honoured face which already for six years had pleasantly overlooked the officials of St. Martin's-le-Grand was again seen at headquarters. *The Duke of Rutland* (formerly Lord John Manners) became Postmaster-General for the second time on June 29, 1885. His Grace was uniformly kind in his dealings, and was held in universal esteem. He thoroughly understood the business of the Post-Office.

*George Grenfell, Lord Wolverton*, entered office on February 12, 1886. The department has reason to remember his goodness and private liberality. Nor did benefactions cease with his death, as his widow, the late Lady Georgiana, was ever the friend of the Post-Office. When her ladyship died, in January, 1894, a deputation from the Eastern Central Institution for Telegraph Boys paid the tribute of sorrow at her grave's side. Sir Arthur Blackwood once found that a sum of £500 was required to establish this institution on a durable basis. Most of the accustomed sources of private beneficence were drained dry. Where could he turn for aid? A thought

struck him. He took train for Wimbledon, and in a few words told his story. 'I think I can help you,' said her ladyship, and placed in his hands a cheque for the full amount.

*The Right Hon. Henry Cecil Raikes* was appointed Postmaster-General by letters patent dated August 5, 1886. His administration extended over five years; that is, until his death in August, 1891, at the age of fifty-three. I have many pleasant memories of this experienced politician, who never spared himself at the post of duty, who shrank from no responsibility, and ever, amidst public cares and anxieties and uncertain health, was ready to identify himself with the official functions and unofficial pastimes of his department.

Before he became Postmaster-General, Mr. Raikes had acquired considerable distinction as chairman of Committees of the House of Commons, and perhaps it was during his term of office that the rule of the House was for the first time largely enforced of naming, *i.e.*, reporting to the Speaker the name of any member who was held to disregard the authority of the chair. It will be remembered that on one historical occasion, after an all-night sitting, fourteen or fifteen members were so named.

The severe strain which the watchful exercise of the functions of chairman in those troublous times involved, unquestionably undermined his strength and told upon his constitution. In fact, he said as much to me in the year before his death.

No doubt can exist as to the vigorous grasp of Mr. Raikes of all questions which came before him to determine. He had the power of taking in at a glance the main features of every case submitted to his decision. If the judgment of the staff and his own were not always in close agreement, it must be remembered that he alone was responsible to Parliament, and that the political view and the departmental view do not necessarily concur.

The idea of personal responsibility was very strong in Mr. Raikes, and it may have been a point of conscience with him to impress on all the postal questions which he had to decide the stamp of an original and independent mind. Perhaps some untoward circumstance, in itself insignificant, may in the earlier years of his Postmaster-Generalship have given rise to the impression that the department had a will of its own apart from the will of its chief; and this impression may have coloured some of the official decisions. Of course it was not really so; the officers of the Post-Office are too devoted to the service, too loyal, too keenly sensible of the exact line of duty, to run counter avowedly to the wishes or policy of the Minister. Long experience may now and then show that in given circumstances a certain course is the best; and the permanent officers would be merely within the lines of duty in advocating such course until the Minister, by virtue of his patent rights and legal responsibility, saw fit to set precedent aside.

While Mr. Raikes certainly disliked to receive any

advice which had the appearance of being thrust upon him, he was never, to my knowledge, unwilling to give due weight to opinions which he himself requested, or which came out in the natural course of discussion.

My impression is that Mr. Raikes warmly appreciated, and was quite ready to acknowledge, any mark of good feeling which his officers sought to pay to him. He wrote to me the following graceful letter relative to the opening event of the Jubilee celebrations of 1890 :

‘The Lodge,  
‘Corpus Christi College,  
‘Cambridge,  
‘Jan., 1890.

‘DEAR MR. BAINES,

‘I should have written sooner to ask you to accept for yourself, and to convey to the committee, my grateful acknowledgments of the admirable manner in which our Jubilee banquet was organized and carried through. It was, I think, in every way worthy of the memorable occasion which it served to celebrate, and I feel sure that you and the other gentlemen who were associated with you in making your arrangements will long look back with pride and pleasure upon its unqualified success. “*Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*”

‘Yours very truly,

‘HENRY CECIL RAIKES.’

Six months later I received another letter from my

chief, the second paragraph of which must surely set at rest any question of his true attitude towards, and his regard for, those who faithfully served him in his high office :

‘ July 15, 1890.

‘ DEAR MR. BAINES,

‘ I must thank you not only for the kind invitation of your committee, but also for the very cordial and gratifying manner in which you have conveyed it.

‘ As long as I live I can never forget the ready, unsparing aid and goodwill which I have experienced from all the chief officers of the G.P.O. with whom I have had any official relations ; and it is mainly due to this cordial and loyal co-operation that we have just surmounted so serious a crisis.

‘ My doctor has ordered me to go to Royat on the earliest day that I can arrange ; and at present I expect to get away on the 26th, so I fear I ought not to make any engagement for the 28th. If, however, the 23rd should be a convenient date for the committee, I should be delighted to be their guest on that evening. If it is not, you must not scruple to say so.

‘ Believe me, with many thanks,

‘ Very truly yours,

‘ H. C. RAIKES.’

He was with us and the busy world little more than another year.

Mr. Raikes may have looked forward to a higher post in the Government than that of Postmaster-General, and it was rumoured that the appointment, when made, was not wholly to his taste. However that may have been, there was, after he had taken up office, no more diligent chief to be found amongst Ministers than the new Postmaster-General. He introduced the sample post, and laboured sedulously, as his predecessors had done, to improve the prospects and pay of the bulk of the staff. At his death the postmen were amongst the first to lay a tribute of sorrow on his grave. Her Majesty's Private Secretary, having occasion to write to me, added these words: 'The Queen . . . is much grieved for the loss of your chief, for whom she had a sincere respect;' so that sympathy prevailed from the ranks of the lowly-placed to the highest in the land. His bearing towards me was ever friendly. He gave me his portrait. The Office subscribed towards a memorial window in the church at Mold.

On the decease of Mr. Raikes, the Right Honourable *Sir James Fergusson, Bart., M.P.*, was appointed Postmaster-General. He was one of the pleasantest, most capable, and certainly most prompt Ministers within my experience. At the Post-Office he was indefatigable, never delaying papers, and often remaining at his desk when Parliament was not sitting until long after the usual official hours. He was fair-minded, did not shrink from responsibility, and had a firm grip of postal business.

Although only a year at the Post-Office, Sir James certainly made his mark, contriving by untiring application to master many difficult postal problems. But for the constitutional restraint which the Treasury, having the whole national balance-sheet within its purview, is at times bound to exercise over the revenue departments, it is my opinion that he, like some of his predecessors, would have accomplished more than technically can be placed to his credit. Lord Salisbury's Ministry went out of office on August 17, 1892, and then in a farewell letter Sir James Fergusson said that he could not quit the department without expressing to its officers and members the personal regret which he felt in the close of his connection with them, as well as the pleasure and interest which he had experienced during its brief continuance.

He, like his predecessor, recalled with the utmost satisfaction the continual and unvarying co-operation and sympathy which had existed between himself and all the responsible officers with whom he had been principally brought into contact; and he went on to say: 'But I can truly add that I have felt constantly that I was presiding over a service abounding in public servants who are pervaded with a sense of responsibility, possessed of high administrative ability, and actuated by fidelity and honourable ambition in the performance of their duty.' So true friendliness marked the parting of master and servants.

The patent of the *Right Hon. Arnold Morley, M.P.*,

dates from August, 1892. I have only had the pleasure of seeing him thrice. On all occasions he seemed disposed to accept—at all events, was ready to invite and consider—proposals for the improvement of the arrangements of the department, and in his dealings with a certain postman about to retire was all that kindness and consideration could suggest. The utterances of Mr. Morley in respect to the employment of telegraph messengers, when adult, has been personally gratifying to me, for this reason: In a paper which I prepared twenty-five years ago the following passage occurs with reference to the requisite messenger force for the new telegraph department:

‘As these boys would form, as it were, a reserve from which the ranks of the established letter-carriers would probably be recruited, it may not be amiss, although the question is not one which requires immediate settlement, to consider whether it will not be proper to devise a scheme by which their education during the period of their service as messengers may be duly cared for. By this means, in the course of a few years, the Post-Office would profit by the service of a body of letter-carriers who will have been trained from their earliest youth, under the eye of the department, to regard the service of the Post-Office as their natural calling in life.’

Other counsels prevailed, and eventually rules were laid down which disestablished boy-messengers when the adult age was reached, and took some of them into the service again only under very special conditions.



'Tis a long lane that hath no turning.' More than twenty-four years later my eyes met the following extract from the report of a speech delivered by Mr. Arnold Morley, M.P., at the Telegraph Messengers' Institute :

'There were regulations in existence, providing that at eighteen the boys should leave the service, and only re-enter it after passing through the army. He did not like that, and it had already a bad effect on the lads who had entered the service. He trusted some change would be made in that matter, so that the boys who entered the service as messengers would be enabled to continue in it so long as they had health and strength.'

This is, in my judgment, admirable counsel. It would be easy enough to show how efficiency and economy would follow in the wake of such effective reform as the quoted words imply. . It is a good example of the way in which a politician, placed at the head of the Post-Office, can mould the policy of the department without any of the technical training which might be thought necessary for such a position.

When the department took me into its service none but peers might hold the patent of Postmaster-General. Then an Act was passed (Mr. Darby Griffiths was its sponsor) enabling Commoners to be appointed, and the Marquis of Hartington was the first to take office under it.

Of all my goodly list of sixteen political chiefs, only six (counting Lord John Manners but once) have been

members of the House of Lords, and five of the six were appointed in the earlier years of my service. Thus it would appear that in effect the representation of the Post-Office has been remitted to the House of Commons. There the Post-Office is in good odour. Rarely is resistance of importance offered to any of the postal votes. Large additions to staff and salaries have been passed without a murmur. The explanation is, no doubt, to be found in two facts: (1) that never has better value been given for a penny than is represented by the collection of a letter at John o' Groats and its free delivery at the Land's End; and (2) that over and above the splendid services which the department renders to the nation at large, it pays in a snug sum approaching £3,000,000 of clear profit to the Exchequer.

Which are the Postmasters-General whose services to the State have been of most account in the last forty years may be left to be determined by future historians of the Post-Office; but on one point there will be common agreement, and that is that the most picturesque figure at St. Martin's-le-Grand since the 'pretended' Act of 1657 is that of the Minister who was in office from 1880 to 1884.

An effective sketch of that remarkable man, the Right Honourable Henry Fawcett, M.P., Professor of Political Economy at the University of Cambridge, will be found in Mr. Leslie Stephen's memoir of his departed friend. I shall only attempt here to reproduce the portrait of the blind Postmaster-General as

he presented himself in the daily intercourse of official life.

My recollection pictures Mr. Fawcett's athletic form in a room on the ground-floor of the administrative buildings of the Post-Office, on the western side of St. Martin's-le-Grand. He was usually seated at a table midway between the fireplace and the fourth window from Newgate Street, opposite to the London District Sorting Office of the old building. It was his habit to be so seated as to command the door by which his visitors entered. For although he could not see them, yet all who came were received with outstretched hand or cheerful word, as though he actually beheld them.

All letters to the Treasury, contracts, conventions, and important papers requiring the Postmaster-General's signature were signed by Mr. Fawcett himself in full, in a bold, clear hand. The general instructions he gave were embodied by the Secretary in drafts, which were read over to him and amended as he saw fit, and then were fairly copied and read over to him again prior to signature. In frequent instances he would himself dictate to an amanuensis communications of moment; and he took especial pains to draft answers to questions to be put to him in the House of Commons in frank and intelligible terms, which, of course, he had to learn by heart.

In Mr. Fawcett's time I saw more than in previous years of statesmen in office, and had with him many

highly interesting visits to Whitehall. One such visit is fraught with mournful associations. The late Lord Frederick Cavendish was then the Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Fawcett took me to a consultation, at which was discussed a new classification of the pay and grades of sorting clerks and telegraphists. They formed a body of many thousands, and the improvement of pay conceded eventually cost £150,000 or £200,000 a year. It was a large question to decide. Nearly a year had been spent at the Post-Office in working out various schemes and selecting the best. Ultimately Mr. Fawcett, in full conclave, settled that he would accept the advice he had allowed me to tender on the subject, and he therefore desired me to accompany him to the Treasury.

Memory recalls the figure of Lord Frederick bending over his desk in quiet attention to the flow of argument, and being called away to his duties in the House of Commons before the talk was ended. He was but too soon called away in another and final sense. A few weeks after that interview he was appointed Irish Secretary, and on taking up his new duties in Dublin was, as all my readers will remember, murdered with Mr. Burke on a sunny afternoon in the Phœnix Park.

Mr. Fawcett had required me to be present at many official discussions, and he was no longer a stranger to me; still, it was an agreeable surprise to receive from him on December 9, 1881, a letter notifying my appointment as Assistant-Secretary. From that

time forward he sent for me almost daily, the conversation turning in the main on questions of railway administration, but also on the lines of the contemplated parcel post, so that my opportunities of estimating his character and ability were frequent.

One charm of Mr. Fawcett's administrative methods was his eagerness to recognise good work wherever he found it. Conscious of a full grasp of the department he administered, he was well content that others should have their share in official argument with persons in authority. He had no jealousy of semi-official interviews at the Treasury, provided that he was kept aware of what was going on.

In the parcel post, which he established in 1883, Mr. Fawcett took great personal interest. It was, perhaps, his main, at any rate his most conspicuous, work. But he was just as willing for the solicitor of the Post-Office and me to have dealings with the Secretary of the Treasury on the subject, as to go to Whitehall himself. He was ever pleasant and confidential in his official relations. Once his life was threatened during a period of political strife, but the menace did not trouble his courageous spirit.

Engrossing as were the Professor's official functions at the Post-Office, he had time for other matters: for his duties in Parliament, for lectures at Cambridge, and for innumerable engagements, social and political. One of his great objects, the preservation of open spaces for those who could see and enjoy them, always commanded his energetic and beneficent atten-

tion. This feature of Mr. Fawcett's public life is ably treated in Mr. Leslie Stephen's work, in a chapter which appears to have been mainly composed by Mr. (now Sir) Robert Hunter, who had very ample means of writing on the subject with force and authority.

Any special bit of news of the work of his department was always interesting to its chief. Witness this telegram at Christmas-time in 1883 :

*'Henry Fawcett, Cambridge, to F. E. Baines, London.*

'9 p.m.—I have just received with the greatest pleasure your telegram telling me of the successful way in which the pressure with regard to parcels and general post work is being got through. I shall be glad if you will convey to the staff my appreciation of the zeal with which they are working.'

A few days later the telegram was followed up by a full letter acknowledging the good work of the staff.

A principal source of Mr. Fawcett's great popularity and influence in the department lay in his thought and consideration for others, whether he was at work in London or snatching a brief holiday in the country. An unflinching grasp of the duties of his office did not debar him from keeping in mind the welfare of his officers, nor from allowing them to be interested in matters personal to himself. He made his coadjutors feel that blood is thicker than water drawn from the official well, and that their private anxieties concerned him as much as his own.

Mr. Fawcett returned to the Post-Office in the spring of 1883, after an absence of some months, with his health apparently re-established as firmly as ever, but his resumption of duty was of short duration.

The following extract from one of the published letters of the Baroness Bunsen had an exact application in the case of Mr. Fawcett :

‘ I enjoyed the other day going over the well-known fine collection of pictures at Blaise Castle, which poor Mr. Harford, in total blindness, *showed* me himself with perfect *savoir faire*, knowing by heart all the points to be remarked, and directing towards what corner a chair should be placed from whence I could have the best light upon each. I had been afraid that I should have been bound to look by stealth, to avoid reminding him of his calamity, but found that images before the mind’s eye constitute his chief pleasure in his life of bodily darkness.’

The blind Professor could both enjoy and describe good pictures ; he fished in trout and salmon streams, and took pleasure in the description of fine scenery. He resided when in London at The Lawn, Lambeth, in a house since swept away in the improvements which have made The Lawn an open space. That the spot where he dwelt should be dedicated to the enjoyment of the public for ever would be in true harmony with his aim in life, but that his actual abode should have been destroyed is a matter of regret.

As far as was possible this misadventure has been

remedied by the public liberality of Sir Henry Doulton. That gentleman has provided, at his own expense, a colossal group of statuary in Vauxhall Park—as The Lawn has been renamed—representing Mr. Fawcett seated, attended by Victory and other allegorical figures. The Archbishop of Canterbury unveiled the memorial on June 7, 1893.

Mr. Fawcett was beloved at the Post-Office, being a just and capable man, and untiring in his efforts to do rightly in his relations with the service and the public. He was kindly and courteous, and all who were brought in contact with him felt instinctively that his heart was in his work and with his officers. He died on November 6, 1884, just fifty-one years of age.





THE RIGHT HON. HENRY LAWCKETT,  
HER MAJESTY'S POSTMASTER-GENERAL.  
(O<sup>o</sup>, 1881.)

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HER MAJESTY'S POSTMASTER-GENERAL.  
(*Ob.* 1884.)



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE EXECUTIVE.

IN these latter days—say, since Sir Rowland Hill gave proof of what the department, properly organized, could accomplish—the aim of the Post-Office has been to frame and carry out with ease, at least with success, such great measures as the public demand and Parliament or the Treasury sanction, and at the same time to hold in its hands the threads of the most minute official web which may spin itself even in the remotest corner of the British Isles.

It is one of the chief duties of the controlling power at headquarters to see that full efficiency is maintained, and that, through its executive, the department generally is kept abreast of the age. The measure of success which it attains in this respect rests on the broad basis of a perfected organization.

Apart from its resources in the Metropolis, the administration has an immense reserve of organizing and executive strength in its provincial officers, its

Postmasters and their Surveyors. The zeal and devotion which are to be found amongst them, as well as the untiring efforts to promote efficiency and the capacity of meeting emergent calls, have rarely been equalled in the public service—have certainly never been surpassed.

Many years of my official life have been spent in roving the country from end to end, and the insight so gained enables me to speak not without warrant, inasmuch as at one time my acquaintance with officials extended beyond those of the Metropolis to almost every provincial colleague of standing, and included some personal knowledge of the capacity of a very large number of the subordinate officers.

The army of 130,000 Post-Office servants, established and auxiliary, scattered over the face of the land must be as exact and well ordered as would be an army in the field in fine condition and perfect discipline. But, unlike the soldier, who moves as one of a mass, each man in the Post-Office has his distinct sphere of action. He must, however, act in harmony so complete with his distant comrades that an irregularity at John o' Groats shall not affect the due delivery of letters at Land's End. By what means is this accomplished?

At the head of the executive stands the Secretary; but he is, of course, a chief administrator, too. The 'Secretary' means one high functionary, and also some scores of auxiliaries and subordinates. Sir

Arthur Blackwood compared himself, not inaptly, to the managing director who is found next the chairman in private corporations. There are, it is true, a Financial Secretary and a Third Secretary, who, as well as the Secretary himself, advise the Postmaster-General on points within their allotted spheres. And there are also Assistant-Secretaries, one of whom combines with his office the functions of Inspector-General of Mails; another holds also the office of Controller of the Packet Service. But all act for or with the Secretary-in-chief, and alike are subject to his instructions and supervision.

Then come the heads of departments—a Solicitor, whose hands are full of weighty matters from early morn to dewy eve, and, in the case of the present incumbent at least, one who, be the cares of office what they may, has yet a free mind for other works of public utility and far-reaching benefit. Let the Open Spaces Preservation Society sound his praises, and Wimbledon Common, Epping Forest, and Parliament Hill Fields point the tale.

There is a Controller of the London Postal Service, who, as I have shown, carries on his shoulders more weight than most men would choose to bear. There is also a Receiver and Accountant-General, who can tell every morning what cash and postage-stamps were, or ought to have been, the day before yesterday in the hands of a postmaster of some little town in the wilds of Devon or of a colossal city of the North. He is as familiar with the nature of all items of

expenditure as with the origin of the millions which he pays into the Exchequer.

Let us turn aside for a moment to glance at finance. In the last year of the old rates of postage the expenditure of the Post-Office was £756,999. For the financial year 1893-94, Parliament provided for posts and telegraphs the not inconsiderable sum of £10,264,607.

In the year ended March, 1893, after deducting out of receipts payments due to other bodies, on whose behalf cash had been collected by the department, there remained on postal account a receipt of more than £10,250,000, and on telegraph account nearly £2,500,000, so that the total revenue was approximately £12,750,000. Hence, between 10¼ millions voted and 12¾ millions received, there is in round figures a profit on the Post-Office as a whole of £2,500,000. The last year of the old rates of postage yielded rather more than £1,500,000 of net revenue.

Roughly, the financial facts may be stated thus: The Post-Office, taken alone, yields a large profit; the telegraphs, if interest on loan debt be also reckoned with, exhibit a large deficiency. If the whole be lumped together, and if the Post-Office paid full interest, and provided a sinking fund out of revenue for the redemption of telegraph consols, there would still be left about £2,000,000 of net profit.

'Valentines' at one time yielded considerable postage: in 1855, £4,000; in 1867, £11,000 or



£12,000, but they have now almost disappeared from the post. They dated from 271—at least, such is the year of the reputed martyrdom of the saint—so that their reign was a long one.

One important principle underlies the whole system of account-keeping in the Post-Office. Many years ago Mr. Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, laid down the golden rule that all revenue collections should be paid into the Exchequer without deduction, and that the money required for current services should be issued by the Paymaster-General out of the supplies voted by Parliament. This is straightforward account-keeping. The incomings are kept rigidly clear of the outgoings.

Once a certain rate-collector of my acquaintance got into a quandary with his accounts :

‘You collected £20 on the 1st, and only paid £15 into the bank. Why?’ asked the investigator.

‘Because I had £5 worth of bills to settle,’ the collector replied.

‘Again, on the 10th, as your vouchers show, you paid bills to the amount of £7; but you have only claimed £3. Why?’

‘I am not sure, but I think it was this way. I had collected £6 of the new rate, and £2 of the old one; so I took £4, out of that £8, and put the other £4 into the bank, as I had paid no money in for some time, and that left me £3 short, which I advanced out of my own pocket.’

Under the golden rule my poor collector would have paid into the bank all that he collected—the £20 and the £6 and the £2—and obtained from the parish treasurer separate cheques for the £5 and the

£7 to pay bills with. His accounts would then have been plain and aboveboard.

A principal feature of Post-Office management is that accounts all over the country are balanced and rendered daily. Every morning there is in the hand of the Receiver and Accountant-General a statement of the account of the Post-Office up to the night but one previous. The form is quite simple; even the inexpert could easily fill up its blanks. The accuracy of the balance admits of a ready test, and the surveying officer, on making a chance visit to a post-office, verifies the daily account as he finds it in the postmaster's books, and then sends a transcript of the previous day's entries to the Metropolitan office for comparison with the Accountant's record.

Once a certain postmaster was known to be in default. His Surveyor pounced down on him; all was right to a penny. So it happened a second and even a third time. Still, that there existed a money deficiency was morally certain. The town was ten miles from a railway-station. A thought struck the Surveyor. He made a fourth visit. Again all was correct.

'Order me a fly for the up-train, Mr. Postmaster, please.'

He drove off. Five miles on the road the fly was turned round and driven back.

'Produce your balance, Mr. Postmaster.'

There was the suspected deficiency. Getting early word of the Surveyor's arrival at the station, the

postmaster had each time borrowed the money, and, on the checking of the accounts being completed, had swiftly returned it.

Many able men have filled the office of Receiver and Accountant-General. Messrs. Hide, Scudamore, C.B., Chetwynd, C.B., and Richardson have done so in my time. Mr. J. J. Cardin now holds the appointment. Men of conspicuous ability have been drawn from time to time from the roll of the branch.

Properly speaking, the Receiver and Accountant-General's branch is the head and front of all account-keeping. But there are two other financial branches—the Savings Bank and the Money-order Office. The Controller of the former has £67,000,000 in his strong box, and knows his way about amongst 15,000,000 accounts, old and new, 113,000,000 deposits, and 39,000,000 withdrawals. Through the hands of successive Controllers, from the beginning in Lord Stanley of Alderley's time up to (say) December 31, 1890, have passed no less than £304,000,000; so vast is the outcome of an idea which floated through the brain of a Huddersfield banker.

The formation of a Post-Office Savings Bank, as broached by Charles W. Sikes, now more than thirty years ago, was one of those happy thoughts which, like the invention of lucifer matches and the 'fishing' of rails, had only to be propounded to secure instant recognition as supplying a want of the age. Yet this project had already simmered in

the brains of publicists for half a century. As far back as 1807 Mr. Whitbread, it is considered, clearly foreshadowed such an undertaking in a speech in the House of Commons.

No sooner, however, had Sir Charles (then Mr.) Sikes emitted his idea than the Member for Leeds, the Secretary of the Post-Office, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Parliament, and the country at once caught it up, and gave it substance and vitality.

The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, as Chancellor, threw himself with characteristic warmth and energy into the project. Touching on this subject, Mr. Scudamore told me, in instancing Mr. Gladstone's power of rapidly assimilating information, that being one day summoned to the Treasury for the purpose, he spent an hour, between two and three o'clock, in explaining verbally to the Chancellor the intricate details of the scheme as finally arranged at the Post-Office. At three o'clock Mr. Gladstone said that he must then break off the conference, as he had to think over what had been told him and be at the House by four.

An hour or two later he explained to the House of Commons, in Mr. Scudamore's hearing, the whole plan, principles and details included, in a luminous speech, from which not a single item of information essential to its complete exposition was omitted.

Lord Stanley of Alderley, as Postmaster-General, also took lively interest in the matter, and Messrs. Scudamore and Chetwynd, as already mentioned,

brought their constructive genius to bear in the elaboration of a workable scheme, and in 1861 Post-Office Savings Banks were established by law. The department entered on a new sphere of activity, and every corner in the old building at St. Martin's-le-Grand soon swarmed with busy bees gathering up the honey of the provident.

Soon, lest the legitimate occupants of Sir R. Smirke's edifice should be disestablished by the invasion of the new comers, fresh accommodation was provided in St. Paul's Churchyard, and ultimately in Queen Victoria Street.

It is here that Mr. C. D. Lang presides over no fewer than 1,651 persons, most of them hard at work in balancing ledgers, examining depositors' books, and attending to advices of deposit and notices of withdrawal. Their salaries amount to the not insignificant sum of £216,323 per annum, and those who search for suitable employment for women will rejoice in the fact that of the total force employed—viz., 1,651 persons—no fewer than 706 are of the gentler sex.

A system described as 'cross entry' is in force, which enables depositors to make use of any of the 11,000 money-order Post-Office Savings Banks in the United Kingdom—a privilege which can only be maintained by performing the work attendant on it at one centre. The facility for depositing or withdrawing money wherever a depositor may go within the limits of the British Isles has been well described

as the 'ubiquity' of the Post-Office Savings Bank system.

To me it is surprising that, looking at the vigour, stability, and assured resources of this great establishment, trustees of savings banks all over the country do not close their doors, and hand over responsibility and funds to the Government bank forthwith.

The Money-Order Office still gives evidence of vigorous life, notwithstanding the enormous development of the use of postal orders, the management of which business is conducted by the Receiver and Accountant-General. It can yet boast of annually dealing with £28,000,000.

The Medical Department has a history. It took its rise in the cholera year of 1854, and Dr. Hector Gavin, who afterwards fell a victim to professional zeal in the Crimea, was its first and, it may be added, its beloved physician. So skilful was he that, out of a total staff of 3,000 persons in his charge, only two died during the epidemic.

Soon a permanent head, in the person of the late Dr. Waller Lewis, was appointed. Then the Telegraph Branch had to be looked after medically, and Mr. G. C. Steet (appointed just after the transfer of 1870) for years was, under Dr. Lewis, Medical Officer for the telegraph staff. At length he became Chief Medical Officer, and continued as such until 1892.

There are postal doctors at all the large towns,

although they are not, as at St. Martin's-le-Grand, exclusively employed by the department; and besides the chief officials stationed at headquarters, a great many are also permanently, but not exclusively, engaged to look after the staff employed in the postal districts and sub-districts of the Metropolis. Altogether the Post-Office retains the services of 427 medical men and of 3 medical women—one in London and 2 in the provinces. No pains and expense are spared to preserve the health of the staff.

Vital statistics, however, are 'kittle cattle,' and require to be arranged by an adept before a definite conclusion can safely be drawn from them. Still, a comparison may be made between early and recent figures suggestive of further examination by the trained and competent hand.

In the second annual report of the first permanent Medical Officer of the Post-Office, Dr. Lewis records that in the year 1856 there were 1,612 cases of illness amongst the staff of the minor establishment at the chief office, which consisted of 1,638 persons. This would look like an illness per annum for almost every person employed. But all cases did not occasion absence from duty. Only 716 persons failed in attendance from this cause, and they were absent in the aggregate 11,934 days, equal to  $16\frac{1}{2}$  days per head. However, several persons were away from the office for a whole year, and never returned to duty at all; so Dr. Lewis eliminates the figures relating to

them, and adjusts the normal absence from sickness to  $13\frac{1}{2}$  days per invalid.

In 1892-3 the average duration of absence of each sick man was, at the chief office, 14, and in the Metropolitan districts 15 days; so that if this comparison is actually of like with like, the result is rather disappointing. The percentage of staff absent from illness is, however, much less; due in part to greater care in rejecting candidates physically unsound.

If one point more than another is sedulously regarded at the Post-Office, it is the health of its staff. Economy, as well as benevolence, points to close attention being given to every sanitary condition which the department can influence or control. Medical supervision, space, ventilation, drainage, water, warmth, lighting, holidays, leave on full pay to officials in contact with infectious disease—all these salutary precautions are taken in order to promote the civil servant's health. Yet it would seem that everyone who falls sick is in no better condition now to resist disease than was his father or uncle forty years before him.

In conducting the business of the Post-Office, it is not safe to assume that any fraction of its work, even the mere collection of a letter, can be done for nothing. Sometimes the last straw necessitates a fresh camel, *i.e.*, a new bag, an extra cart; and even to open an undelivered letter represents a charge—microscopic it may be, but, still, a charge on the revenues of the land, which, on the aggregate of many letters, looms



large in the estimates. In London alone it costs £18,020 a year to return undelivered letters and parcels to the senders.

It need hardly be said that the Returned Letter Office is the harbourage of romance and the recipient of truths which are stranger than fiction. For writers sometimes lay bare the secrets of the heart in letters which cannot be delivered, and which, opened for the purpose of procuring a clue to their origin, possess the officials with so wide an experience of the sources of human action, and so deep an insight into the mysteries of human life, as to surpass even the liveliest conjecture.

‘All phases of human character—the loveliest and the unloveliest’—have been revealed to Mr. G. R. Smith in his experience of half a century in this wonderful establishment now housed at Mount Pleasant.

However, the Returned Letter Office does not only return undelivered postal packets; it seeks, as far as possible, even at the last moment, to put them in train for delivery.

The instances of distorted addresses are legion, but the phonetic are perhaps the most curious of all. The direction of a letter for

‘Mr. Owl o Neill,  
General Post Office,’

puzzled the most accomplished postman; but read aloud in the Returned Letter Office, ‘Mister Owlon

Eill,' 'Mr. Rowland Hill' came clear to the ear, and the letter was soon sent out again, properly addressed.

Perhaps the parallel, in the sister service, to this story is that of the telegram handed in at the Derby Post-Office by a fine strapping Americo-Portuguese, dressed in gorgeous Indian costume. It was couched in these terms: 'Is are 8.' The foreigner had a smattering of English, and this proved to be his phonetically-spelt equivalent of, 'It's all right'—'Is' (It's) 'a' (all) 're-eight' (right).

Once a letter from a conscientious—at any rate, a considerate—thief came under notice. He had stolen a great-coat and an uncrossed cheque for £15. The one he kept on his back; the other he returned in a misdirected letter written in terms as courteous as he could frame:

' SIR,

' In tramping through London last night I wish to thank you for your coat, which will keep me warm on my road to York. A warm coat is more serviceable to me than money, so I enclose your check, as it might be a heavy loss to you. You know, times are hard and overcoats very scarce; so, hoping the return of your check will cover the loss of your coat,

' Believe me, Yours,

' A CONSCIENTIOUS BORROWER.'

The address of the drawer of the cheque was traced,

and although he lost his coat he saved his money, thanks to the scruples of a tender conscience.

The country branches have singular experiences. One day a thick book, a Clergy List in fact, which had been scooped out to form a kind of well, was stopped for examination in the Derby Post-Office, and found to contain four fat toads, of different colours, all alive. They had been posted by a clergyman in Derbyshire to a lady in Ireland, who professed to be desirous of re-introducing to her native land the species in which she affirmed it had been deficient since the days of St. Patrick. Unhappily, the postal rule was rigorous; the toads had to be fetched away by the sender, with the only result that the imperial revenue was the richer by the postage of 7s. 6d., payable for conveyance from the rural district, where the toads resided, to the head post-office at Derby, where they were stopped in transit.

There are other curious returned letter experiences. The letter which was found behind a panel in a Paris post-office, and, after having lain there for fifty years, was actually delivered to the addressee, has its parallel. The French Post-Office a long while ago gave orders that innkeepers were to return to that department all undelivered letters of whatever date. Some in consequence came back to this country which had been addressed to English people in Paris during its occupation by the Allied Forces after the battle of Waterloo, and, what is more remarkable still, in a few cases were delivered to

the addressees or given back to the still living writers.

But, in my judgment, both these singular stories are outshone by the vagaries of a mysterious letter which was posted in the western postal district of London on July 1, 1867, addressed to Portland Place, Regent's Park, but which could not be delivered. Then it vanished into space for twenty-four years, and on June 27, 1891, it turned up again in the post-office at Pimlico.

The Returned Letter Office has continued to grow in importance. In the course of the year it deals with nearly 6,500,000 letters, 9,000,000 book-packets and circulars, and perhaps 1,500,000 other postal packets. When I first knew something of the office, it returned only 2,400,000 letters and 600,000 newspapers — 3,000,000 of all sorts, against 17,000,000. So much for increasing care and intelligence in the public at large!

There is a high official, the Electrician and Engineer-in-chief of the Post-Office, who is hoping some day to telegraph without wires; there is a Nautical Adviser, who can assess to a nicety the effect, on the voyage of a mail-packet, of trade-winds or a south-westerly monsoon; and finally, we come upon the Commodore of the modest telegraph fleet of the Post-Office—the Captain of the *Monarch*—not the sturdy old vessel which used to roll about in the North Sea, but a buoyant craft of beautiful lines and yacht-like proportions.

The provinces are not left to take care of themselves; far from it. Scotland, if it be excusable to class her as provincial, has at Edinburgh an official hierarchy all to herself; her chief functionary is again styled Secretary, a title borne with distinction for a great length of time by the late Mr. Francis Abbott.

A bust of this gentleman has been placed in the elegant building which serves as a post-office in Edinburgh, an edifice, by the way, which is associated with the name of the Prince Consort, who laid its foundation-stone. Mr. Abbott entered the General Post-Office in Lombard Street in 1822, and was appointed Secretary in Edinburgh in 1846. There he laboured as a good man and true for twenty-two years. He died in 1893 at the patriarchal age of ninety-three.

After Mr. Abbott's retirement the title of Secretary was changed to Surveyor-General for Scotland, which from that time until the present year has been borne by Mr. A. M. Cunynghame. To him has recently succeeded Mr. William Mitford as Secretary.

Fair Erin can boast of a Secretary, a Solicitor, an Accountant, a Controller, and an Inspector of Mails, installed in a grand building, which, when I last saw it, pensively contemplated the great Nelson's monument in Sackville Street.

There is a cherubic band known as Surveyors, which throughout the British Isles incessantly watches over the fortunes of poor Jack, the postman, and the transit of the letters of the British public, his well-

affected master. Each Surveyor takes a county or two under his ken, and knows to a nicety the postal wants of every town or hamlet therein, and how they can best be met.

Like his chief who sits in Parliament, the Surveyor is pursued by the relentless pouch. In his stationary office he feels the slightest drag on the punctuality of the far-distant mail-cart, and is aware of the delayed walk of the rural postman by the flooding of the lane ; he knows why the much-enduring sub-postmaster cannot give up another foot of shop-counter to the postal service of a fretful public ; even the misfit of the mail-porter's new suit of uniform at the main railway junction in the county is a weight upon his official mind.

Great authorities have declared the Surveyors to be the eyes of the Post-Office. Not only, however, do they see and report, but also they plan and act. An efficient postmaster is a man to be trusted and encouraged ; an efficient Surveyor, one to be regarded as a pillar of the service. Good luck in the way of honour, preferment, and liberality of stipend has not yet attended the path of these valuable public servants, who for the most part work out of sight, and during long hours of the day and night ; having anxieties which never cease, and functions which, rightly understood and performed, are essential to the prosperity of the Post-Office.

As a postmaster in London reports to the Controller, so the postmaster of a country town and sub-

jacent area reports to the Surveyor. There is no one between the Surveyor and the Secretary, nor between the Controller and the Secretary. Hence, the Chief holds every thread in his hand. Of course, each superior officer sifts the reportable matter. Some he keeps, the rest he sends on.

Lastly, there come the postmasters, and with them the tale of the controlling force is practically told. They, too, under encouragement which has grown of recent years, hold for the most part the threads of the local web with a sagacity that rarely fails. Is another town delivery required? Should the post to the squire's house take in Hawthorn Cottages (nine letters a week), or should it not? They can tell to a penny what such extension of service is likely to cost, what time will be lost by the lengthened journey, and then the higher powers are left to decide the issue. They control large bodies of men, are answerable for the punctual and effective distribution and collection of letters and the prompt and accurate transmission of telegrams. Moreover, they are accountable for very large sums of money.

Peace, we know, has its victories as well as war. In the year in which this page is written, the postmasters of many great towns of the United Kingdom—amongst them those of Leeds and Newcastle-on-Tyne—have retired from their respective offices. Both the latter look back on a service of great duration, on difficulties surmounted and postal efficiency ensured.

The post-office at Leeds is conducted at a cost to

the State of £65,000, that at Newcastle of £59,000, a year. Let us see what the country takes by this liberal expenditure at the cities on the Aire and the Tyne. When in 1879 Mr. J. Leal was appointed to the postmastership of Leeds, he found a head-office staff of 383 persons, dealing with 670,000 letters and 24,000 telegrams in a week. There are now at work 812 persons, who in a week grapple with 1,250,000 postal packets and 64,000 telegrams. The sub-offices have been doubled in number, the pillar letter-boxes trebled. The daily deliveries have been increased by 50 per cent. In the rural districts deliveries have been extended and accelerated, and receptacles for letters multiplied almost fourfold. So there is something to show for the money. The public press declared that the ex-postmaster had proved himself 'an admirable officer, one earnest in his work and beloved by his staff.' Public opinion ratified these views by a gift of £500. Good service, extending over forty-eight years, does not pass unnoticed in Yorkshire.

Not less remarkable are the figures which Mr. Thomas Hunter might have adduced on bringing to a close, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, fifty years' service in the Post-Office, thirteen of which have been spent as postmaster; and not less substantial than in the foregoing instance has been the public acknowledgment of his services.

Letters posted in Newcastle, letters delivered there, and letters passing through from other post-towns to towns beyond, now total up in a week to 1,100,000,



as compared with 600,000 thirteen years ago. In 1824 there was but a single postman in this city.

Parcels of all sorts have grown under Mr. Hunter's hand from 600,000 to 1,200,000 in a year, and money-order and postal-order transactions from fewer than 200,000 to more than 500,000. Telegrams in both directions, stimulated by Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's sixpenny rate, have expanded from an annual total of 1,500,000 to 3,500,000. Finally—and this is the touchstone of the whole—cash receipts have risen from £471,000 to £828,000 a year. What ordinary person would covet the responsibility of taking charge, whether at Newcastle or elsewhere, of these stupendous amounts of other persons' money?

Looking back sixty years, one is struck by the superior cheapness of administration in the old days. Of course, there was less work to do. Take the comparative cost in the early sixties and the present day of a few post-towns :

Post Town.	Name of old Postmaster.	Annual cost.		Name of present Postmaster.
		Then.	Now.	
		£	£	
Barnet.....	G. C. Hudson ...	101	2,537	J. L. Winkup
Bath .....	T. M. Musgrave	816	22,849	E. Blakeney
Bournemouth	(Did not exist)...	.....	12,404	W. Dunn
Bristol.....	T. Todd Walton	1,947	22,849	R. C. Tombs
Exeter.....	P. Measor.....	1,192	23,979	J. Irish
Hull.....	T. Rodwell .....	591	30,697	J. A. Duesbury
Leeds .....	J. Temple.....	1,301	68,802	F. Salisbury
Liverpool ...	W. Banning.....	1,854	167,790	J. D. Rich
Manchester...	R. P. Wilcock ...	1,508	170,741	H. Harley
Newcastle ...	J. L. Lorraine...	899	63,127	T. Stevenson
Southampton	M. A. Watson ...	741	25,415	E. R. Carter
Glasgow .....	— Bannatyne ...	2,835	152,016	F. Braid
Belfast.....	James Dickie ...	490	44,720	H. J. Shepperd

Of course, it is only right to admit that the comparison, though exact as far as it goes, is not strictly of like with like. Present expenditure includes the cost of the telegraphs, whereas in 1836 Cooke and Wheatstone were yet experimenting at Euston Square and Chalk Farm. Nor does the earlier account include the outlay for the rural posts and sub-post-offices, which the later one covers, so there is something to add to the smaller sums.

In the peaceful calling of a postmaster the inquiring mind would scarce expect to discover military experience gathered in the tented field; yet the search would be rewarded, for the names of sundry colleagues of warlike cast float across the sea of memory as these lines are written.

. Many years ago the Postmaster of York, the late Mr. N. H. Harrington, was one of a British legion in the Peninsula, and wore a medal for good service. He was led by the brave General Sir De Lacy Evans, who later on fought in the Crimea.

One anecdote of his experience as postmaster came to me from Mr. Harrington's own lips. He had been directed to interview and, if possible, appease the anger of a gentleman who constantly complained of arrangements which the department was powerless to remedy, in the region of Holme-upon-Spalding-Moor. All the official letters, were their accents never so honeyed, had failed to propitiate him. Mr. Harrington set out, and, finding himself in a park, had to scale a high barbed and padlocked gate which stopped

the way. On reaching the house he rang a bell. A nightcapped form appeared at a first-floor window. 'Your business?' it demanded. 'I come from the post-office,' was the reply, 'about the North mail letters, and the Secretary wishes me to see you and make a report.' 'Be off with you! Tell the Secretary that you have seen me as you see me now, and' (bang went a pistol) 'there is your report!' A swift strategic movement by Harrington to the rear brought the interview to a close.

Whose is this tall straight figure? It is that of the postmaster of another great Yorkshire town, the late Mr. E. J. Smith, a man capable and experienced, acquainted with general officers of renown, and while at Constantinople with the great Elchi, Sir Stratford Canning, himself. He was at one time Deputy-Controller of the London Circulation Office; then Postmaster of the British Army in the East; for a time he acted as postal adviser to the Turkish Government; and at length, preceding Mr. Leal, became Postmaster of Leeds. He was one who saw the glorious but ill-fated charge of the Light Brigade of cavalry at Balaklava, and told me that he had heard poor Nolan transmit the fateful order; had seen him, when the squadrons began to move, wildly wave his sword as if misunderstood, and then had beheld the bursting shell which ended the career of one of the most brilliant and promising young cavalry officers in the Crimea.

My blithe and valued colleague of many years—

Captain Angell, of the Civil Service Volunteers, was a Crimean veteran also. He enjoyed but briefly retirement from active life; for, after a few months' repose, the office, the club, the assembly of good fellows knew him no more. He was one of those cheery men who never grow old, bearing himself as lightly when half a century of service lay behind him as when his orderlies flew hither and thither with mail-bags for the camp on the bleak plateau which overlooks Sebastopol.

'Mike,' said Captain Angell to his servant, 'the General is to dine with me to-morrow. What can we get to eat? Go down to Balaklava and look about.'

'Ah! dinner is it? then be easy, Captain dear,' replied the resourceful Mike.

So that night his master's head, free from all anxiety about the dinner, lay peacefully on the regulation pillow, as though the thousand guns of the Malakoff, the Mamelon and the Redan were but the harmless prize-winning small-bores popping away, as perhaps they do to this day, along the chalk hills which go to form the pleasant Caterham Valley. Next day came. There was a noble dinner. The General, the Major, the Doctor and the host revelled on a fat roast goose, with stuffing which suggested new-born sage and the daintiest of infant onions. To flank it were, as Mike would say, 'lashings' of whisky and tobacco of the finest quality.

'Boys,' said the General, 'ye'll all dine with me to-morrow sharp at six o'clock. I, too, have a fat

goose, and if no whisky, yet just a taste of passable madeira.'

The next night came. All were punctual at the General's tent. Behold that warrior in a tearing temper! Some scoundrel had the day before looted the precious goose. His servant had only told him when he came from the front. A qualm disturbed my Angell's just and generous heart. However, a juicy ham was to the fore, a plum-pudding had come out with the mail-boat, and there was also the old madeira. So, after all, they had a good time, and the General's serenity returned.

'Mike,' sternly demanded the Captain at a later hour, 'where did last night's goose come from?'

'The goose is it, sir?' said Mike, and fled his master's eye.

There is yet another postmaster who has seen 'battle's magnificently stern array.' One memorable day, in September, 1882, with his Volunteers from the G.P.O. around him, Major Sturgeon, amidst the shot and shell of Kassassin, sorted the 'inward' army mail. Have the sultry suns of Egypt, the white sands of the scorching plains between Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir, and all the hardships of that brief campaign, yet faded from the memory of the postmaster of Norwich?

Alas! poor Captain Vyle, the staunch, the gentle, and the brave! He has passed from sight but not without many a sigh of sorrow for our common loss.

Not to be forgotten are the sub-postmasters, who

are almost invariably engaged in trade. A worthier class of men and one more vigilant in looking after the alien work they undertake to supervise cannot be easily found.

Then come the great battalions of the clerical staff, the superintendents, the inspectors and overseers, the sorting-clerks and telegraphists. How as to them? By their toil, whether by day or night, the work goes on; the Vestal fire of the Post is kept alight by watchfulness which never fails.

Not alone in the higher grades have been found those whose career includes a period under arms. Let me instance the case of James Smith, who died at Basingstoke on September 27, 1893, in his 102nd year.

He enlisted in the old 66th—now the Berkshire regiment—in 1809; served in India, and finally mounted guard over Napoleon Bonaparte at St. Helena. Sustaining an injury, he was discharged as an invalid from further military duty. Getting better, he worked upon the Hampshire roads from 1820 to 1846. Then, one would suppose, after thirty-seven years of soldiering and road-making, would have come the time for rest. Not so. There is before me the original paper notifying his appointment by the Marquis of Clanricarde to the office of postal messenger from Basingstoke to Dunmer and North Waltham in 1846.

On this rural walk of sixteen miles my colleague worked for more than twenty years. It is not every

man of fifty-four who can embark on a task of daily letter-carrying and keep at it in all weathers for the better part of a quarter of a century. When at length he retired within sight of fourscore years of age, he contrived to exist — with what other aid is not known—on the small pension of 3s. 6d. a week, which was all that the Superannuation Act could allow the Post-Office to pay to him.

The old man held on for yet another quarter of a century, and then a pathetic ending came. He had no military pension, but a grant of 6d. a day, to date from February, 1892, had in September, 1893, been procured from the War Office. But when an army order for the arrears of pension due to the old soldier arrived at Basingstoke, the stout centenarian had two days before grounded the arms of life and departed for the barracks of Light and Eternity.

Edward Phillips, whose memory is honoured by a brass in St. George's Chapel at Windsor, served both King Charles II. and King James II. in the Post-Office; and then as yeoman of the guard of William and Mary, of Anne and of George I., he rendered suit and service to the Crown. There are other men whose names should be preserved.

What shall be said of the Scotch mail messenger, who, blinded and frozen by the snowstorm, hung the mail-bag on a tree, so that his charge might at least be saved, and then lay down to die beneath it? or of Mr. Robert Paton, the Northumberland mail-cart contractor of 1889, who, not daunted by a raging

storm, essayed to drive across the moor because he saw his duty plain before him, and gave up his life in doing it?

It is not forgotten how Samuel Bennett, the mail-guard, badly injured in a railway collision, thought less of his mangled body than of collecting the contents of the mail-bags. Before being pensioned in 1866 he had met with a series of accidents whilst in the discharge of his official duties. The first occurred in 1836, when he sustained a fracture of the arm, owing to the upsetting of the Liverpool and Birmingham mail-coach, upon which he was riding as guard. He fared no better on the rail. In 1847 he was severely shaken, owing to the Bath and Birmingham mail-train running off the line. In 1853 he nearly lost his life in a collision between Birmingham and Bristol, having been so severely cut and bruised about the head as to be rendered insensible and taken up for dead. Nevertheless, on recovering consciousness he collected some of the mail-bags and proceeded with them to Bristol. The *Gloucester Journal* said: 'Samuel Bennett, the guard of the mail-bags, appeared dead when found, and was dreadfully cut, but on recovering he manifested great anxiety for the bags. When the special train arrived in which the wounded passengers were conveyed to an inn, Bennett, with great courage, determined to take the bags by this train, which was done.' And the *Bristol Mercury* wrote of him as follows: 'The mail-guard, Samuel Bennett, was very much cut over



the face and head, and bled profusely. Happily, he was not rendered long unconscious or disabled, and with a conscientious and self-denying attention to duty not often met with, he refused any attention to his hurts until he had gathered up the mutilated letter-bags and their contents and made provision for bringing them on to this city.' Surely this was a hero!

Of the devotion of Marine Mail-Guard Mortleman and Mr. Silk I write on another page.

From the laurel leaf to the myrtle! In the present year there died one of the two postmen-poets of the Victorian age—Edward Capern, the rural letter-carrier from Bideford to Buckland Brewer. He wrote, apparently of himself:

'He owns neither houses nor lands;  
His wealth is a character good,  
A pair of industrious hands,  
A drop of poetical blood.'

The British public has long since taken the postmen to its bosom, and, whether in the cities or in rural parts, rejoices when modest cakes and ale fall to their deserving lot.

## CHAPTER X.

## PILLARS OF THE LAW.

THE legal staff of the Post-Office consists in England of the Solicitor and Assistant-Solicitor, with eight professional assistants (besides clerks); of a Solicitor, with a limited staff, in Ireland, and a Solicitor (in private practice, and who therefore employs his own establishment) in Scotland. There are also a number of Standing Counsel appointed by the Attorney-General, to conduct prosecutions and for other special purposes.

Why the posting of a letter should be thickly surrounded by a thorny hedge of legal defence will cease to be matter of surprise if my readers will but address themselves to the consideration of a single task, as one of many which bestrew the legal path—that of drawing up the definition of a letter. What is a letter?

For my part, I should see no chance of success in making the attempt, especially as a valued colleague, well qualified by long service in the Post-Office and intimate acquaintance with postal legisla-

tion to decide questions of the kind, once in my hearing gave an opinion to the effect that a strict exposition of the Postmaster-General's monopoly would go far to include all packages closed against inspection which are transmitted to a distance.

Habit and common-sense, practice and public opinion, have put limits, generally understood and to a great extent defined by Treasury warrant, to the exercise of the postal monopoly; but, still, it is the fact that while the carriage of a portmanteau, safely locked, exposes the carrier to no risk of a Post-Office prosecution, yet the conveyance of a letter closed against inspection, or even open, unless it come within the provision of some saving clause, renders the person who conveys it liable to pains and penalties which are real and not fanciful.

But no Act of Parliament or binding warrant, to my knowledge, positively declares in what a letter consists, nor where the monopoly of the Postmaster-General actually begins and where it ends.

The definition of a letter has not improbably cost the Post-Office vast sums of money—not in obtaining declarations of its rights, but in conceding a lower rate of postage when the doubtful packet, in reality a letter, chanced to be on the boundary-line of the monopoly, and public opinion and public policy were alike against a strict enforcement of the law and in favour of admission of the packet to the half-penny rate of postage.

At one time the following curious distinction was

recognised. 'Empties to be returned,' when printed with other notifications and sent by post, was admitted to be a phrase not imparting any private communication, and therefore permissible as a circular; but 'Please return empties' was regarded as a private and confidential communication—only a shade less personal than a love-letter.

One does not say 'please' in print to the million—it is to the individual that so persuasive, so caressing, a verb is addressed; hence, in the past, penny postage had to be paid by the sender of this choice specimen of polite notifications about empty beer-barrels, or the Post-Office would have been on his trail. It is but fair to the Solicitor to say that he was not responsible for this refined distinction, which has now been discarded.

But there are other matters than definitions which come into the legal branch for settlement: there is the civil, criminal, Parliamentary, and advisory business of the Post-Office. There are contracts, conveyances, leases and warrants to be regulated; Bills preliminary to Acts, construction of Acts, amendments, prosecutions, civil actions, defence of monopolies—where shall the list end? How little is the public aware of the legal intricacies, the subtle questions of law, which surround the mere posting of a letter!

Let us, however, first have regard to persons.

The department has been fortunate in its chiefs of the law branch. From 1825, when Mr. Mark Beau-

champ Peacock was appointed Solicitor of the Post-Office, until the present date, four men of parts have been its responsible legal guides. The Solicitor has always held, as things go in the Civil Service, a fairly-paid post, ranging, as it does in salary, on an equality with the Secretary's. His duty is to advise the Postmaster-General and the Secretary on all legal questions arising in the course of the administration of the Post-Office. He has also to instruct counsel to protect the Postmaster-General's interests in relation to the purchase and hiring of buildings for Post-Office purposes, and generally to transact all such business as a private solicitor would transact for a private client. When the complex and often delicate relations of the Post-Office with the public and Parliament; with railway companies, telephone companies, and other bodies and persons, are considered, it is obvious that the position of a legal adviser is both onerous and responsible.

With Mr. Peacock, caution in official advice was so marked a characteristic that it is not likely that he took any active part in the penny postage discussions which occurred in the thirties—certainly no part hostile to the reformer. It is, however, on record that in 1838, with great sagacity, he held and expressed the opinion that the Post-Office should recommend itself to the public and secure a virtual monopoly, not by strong powers to be obtained from the Legislature, but 'by the greater security, expedition, punctuality and cheapness' with which it transmitted letters.

'He was a courtly old gentleman,' writes one who remembers Mr. Peacock even better than I do, 'who always gave a safe opinion and would not be pinned in a corner.'

A joke against him, as exemplifying his cautious habit of mind, has it that, being greeted one morning by a colleague with the not unusual remark, 'It is a fine day,' he put on his glasses, looked out of the window, and, after full consideration, replied, 'Yes, I think it is a fine day.'

From 1825 to 1862, when Mr. Peacock died in harness, no legal difficulty of any kind that can be called to mind embroiled the Post-Office. His chief work, no doubt, was a share in preparing the Penny Postage Bill of 1839; a thorn in his side, perhaps, was the notorious Joseph Ady, a begging-letter writer of my time, who posted his letters unpaid by the bushel, and had the Solicitor's hand ever against him.

To Mr. Peacock succeeded Mr. W. H. Ashurst, of the firm of Messrs. Ashurst, Morris and Co., in Old Jewry. Mr. Ashurst's father had rendered good help in furthering the penny postage scheme, and Rowland Hill never forgot a service done to him. It must have been a pleasure to Sir Rowland to procure the vacant appointment for the son of his old friend, and plant at the Post-Office the kindly and capable man who afterwards dealt with the mass of legal business to which the telegraph transfer gave rise.

Mr. Ashurst—a brother-in-law of the Right Hon. James Stansfeld, M.P., whose name at one time, when he held Ministerial office, was much associated with Mazzini's—is said to have been a friend of Garibaldi, and probably knew both the patriots. He was strongly in favour of all avenues of employment being freely opened to women—indeed, he held liberal, perhaps even advanced, views on many important questions. His wit, geniality and social qualities endeared him to his staff and private friends.

To run into the Solicitor's room with an official paper and gossip for a minute or two on any public question was always a refreshment in the busiest times; and the equable nature of the incumbent was such that, however pressing were his engagements, he was never known to be in a hurry or impatient of interruption. In July, 1879, to the regret of all, Mr. Ashurst died.

After him came Mr. Horace Watson, one who was found, by those who knew him sufficiently, to be a truly amiable personage. He had held the post of Solicitor to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, and, falling ill, had retired from official life. Regaining his health, he came to the Post-Office. But his period of service was short. Appointed in 1879, he died in 1881, living long enough, however, to become sincerely attached to the department, to signalize himself officially by establishing the Postmaster-General's legal right to a monopoly of public

telephones, and socially by convincing all those around that under a reserved, perhaps a cold, exterior there beat a warm heart.

Then, in 1882, came Mr. (now Sir) Robert Hunter, of whom more anon.

Connecting all points of this long period of nearly seventy years, two able servants of the State have served in the office of Assistant-Solicitor. Mr. Robert William Peacock (Mark Beauchamp's brother), who died in 1887, came into the service in 1827, and attended for forty-eight years to the criminal side of the Solicitor's branch—to the prosecution, in short, of offenders against the Post-Office Acts. Never had the Crown a better servant. He acquired in court a solid reputation, for the briefs which he prepared were unassailable—every fact could be established, no link was omitted.

'If,' said a Post-Office Counsel (post-prandially, it must be owned), 'Mr. Peacock should insert in my brief that the ball of St. Paul's would walk down, I should expect it to do so.'

Mr. R. W. Peacock's mantle fell on his colleague, Mr. E. Breton Osborn, who was admitted as a solicitor in the High Court in Hilary term, 1858. Happily, the Crown still reaps the full benefit of the latter's tried services. He came to the Post-Office in 1857, while the elder Peacock was still the Solicitor, and so commands the ripe experience of thirty-seven years of legal work—of eighteen years, that is, in service under one or both of the Peacocks, and nine-



teen years under Mark Peacock's successors. Three or four of the many remarkable cases conducted by these two Assistant-Solicitors strike me as standing out from the rest.

There was the Nether Stowey money-order fraud. A dismissed clerk who knew the ways of the service visited Nether Stowey, a village post-office subordinate to Bridgwater, an hour or so before post-time, and said that he was from the Surveyor's office, and had come to investigate complaints, which he hoped the sub-postmaster could satisfactorily explain.

During the discussion, which probably flustered the official not a little, he contrived to abstract a number of money-order forms and advices. Then he conciliated the sub-postmaster by declaring that he was quite satisfied with the explanation furnished, and that he would send in a good report to Mr. Creswell, the Surveyor. He begged that the mail-bag might be kept open for his report until the very latest moment, so that he might make it as full and conclusive as possible. Finally, he borrowed the dated stamp of the office, assigning some plausible reason, and hied him to his inn for a time.

There the delinquent filled up the blank orders for £10 each, the maximum sum allowable, drew out the proper advices, stamped each order and advice with the dated stamp of Nether Stowey Post-Office, put the sub-postmaster's name to all the forms, and then betook himself, with a dummy envelope addressed to the Surveyor, back to the post-office.

He restored the dated stamp, praising its condition. While the official was occupied in impressing it on the Surveyor's letter he popped his money-order advices into the mail-bag, saw it tied and sealed, and then went off from the nearest station by the same train as the bag to Bristol, Gloucester and elsewhere, to cash the forged orders.

At Bridgwater, the head post-office for Nether Stowey, was a young clerk, now the postmaster of a city in the West. He opened the Nether Stowey bag, remarked the bundle of £10 advices, representing a total sum of about £500, saw there were no corresponding entries on the sub-postmaster's account, and demonstrated to the senior officer on duty that the orders were forged.

But with a strange fatuity the official in authority bade him send on the advices, and not until next day, when some of the orders had been cashed, could the police be put on the evil-doer's track. Eventually, this adroit personage was caught in Dublin, but not until he had realized a good round sum, as, of course, the orders and advices had all the appearance of being genuine. The case in its earlier stages was in Mr. R. W. Peacock's official charge. Afterwards the Solicitor in Dublin successfully conducted it.

A very similar fraud occurred some years later at St. Albans, where an utterer of false Bank of England notes forged eighteen money orders for £158 11s. 1d. This offence was brought home to the offender by Mr. Osborn.

The case of the great registered-letter robbery which took place in 1886 fell also to Mr. Osborn. Mr. Mulock, then the Director, or Mr. Philips, now the Director, of the Confidential Inquiry Branch, could tell the tale with greater effect than I can; for this, in Post-Office annals, was a *cause célèbre*. Mr. Mulock had to originate inquiry, while Mr. Osborn regulated the action of the law.

Briefly stated, however, the facts were that in the year mentioned the Continental mails were cleverly robbed while in transit between London and Berlin. The registered-letter bag contained sixty-two letters, and when this bag was opened in ordinary course in Germany, it was found that forty-eight of them had been stolen or tampered with. One letter alone contained negotiable property of the value of £4,000. Another packet, sent by a foreign banking firm in London, had contained twenty Russian 100-rouble notes. The notes were taken out, the cover itself being left behind in the mail-bag.

A few days after the robbery the thief walked into the lion's mouth, for he called at the foreign bankers' office in Threadneedle Street, and produced for change three Russian 100-rouble notes, which were immediately recognised as part of the lost property. The culprit was detained and handed over to the police, who charged him with unlawful possession. At the remand at the Mansion House, Mr. Osborn took up the prosecution, and altered the charge to one of theft from the mail-bag; and in order to bring the

case within the jurisdiction of the English courts, set up the theory that the robbery of the mails, although discovered whilst in transit through Germany, had, in fact, been perpetrated between London and Dover. The prisoner was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a term of penal servitude.

No fewer than eighty witnesses (nearly one half coming from abroad) were called to establish the case. All their testimony had to be examined, wrought into a continuous chain, and presented to counsel in the prosecuting brief in such sequence of proof that not a single link in the evidence should be defective. It must have involved no small mental effort to bring eighty independent statements into line in one harmonious, intelligible and unassailable narrative.

*Regina versus M*—, in 1872, probably cost the country a pretty penny; but if it exhibited the glorious uncertainty of the law, it also affirmed a principle—and that in the legal purview, no doubt, goes far to cover a multitude of charges. Ten shillings had to be paid out of the Savings Bank to a depositor, and the sum of £8 16s. 10d. was given to him by mistake. With the larger amount the recipient walked away. Mr. Osborn was promptly on his track, and charged him before the court with stealing money—a view which the jury as promptly adopted. The Recorder of London, however, before whom the case was tried, apparently dissented from the finding; at any rate, he had a doubt, inasmuch as he reserved

for the decision of a higher court the material point whether the offence of which the prisoner had been convicted was larceny or not.

From the Recorder, the matter went before three judges. They could not agree in opinion. Then the whole bench of fifteen judges had to be invoked. The case was argued out before them. No less a person than Mr. Attorney-General (the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge) appeared in support of the conviction. Even this numerous and learned body were for a time unsettled in mind, but eventually and after some months of consideration they affirmed the verdict of the jury in the court below, not, indeed, unanimously, but by a large majority. Then the prisoner was brought up, sentenced, and almost immediately released, having been, as it was, five months in prison.

But had the point been settled in his favour, how then? How would the wrongful imprisonment have been redressed? Justice, like Lord Nelson, finds it convenient sometimes to turn a sightless orb on what she does not care to see.

Legal cases, even in the Post-Office, are not always devoid of romance. *Regina versus H— alias G—*, a Post-Office prosecution of 1880, tells a story which, if the criminal element could be eliminated, would be altogether humorous, and would certainly have been one entirely congenial to the late Charles Dickens. It was that of a postman retiring from so respectable and umbrageous a locality as St. John's Wood, to take

his ease in a species of lake-dwelling in the Thames marshes.

Here, in a rough cabin, the hermit entrenched himself, a dog being his sole companion, and here a variety of commodities—a collection of milk-cans picked up on his rounds, scaffold-poles, hat-brims, cutlery, sawdust, etc.—were carefully hoarded; water-rats freely scuttling about the treasure-house, meanwhile.

But however honestly the bulk of the hermit's acquisitions may have been come by, 2,000 undelivered post-letters found amongst them told a sorry tale, and were ultimately the cause of his undoing. For one morning this new Robinson Crusoe, on surveying his entrenchments, espied, or might have done so, the imprint in the sand—that is, on the soft mud which fringed his works—of a man's foot! To select a fine microscope from the heap of unassorted lumber in his wigwam, to apply its strongest lens to the indentation, and to recognise on the heel of the impression the tribal mark inverted (.viC.2), of an active and well-remembered race was, it may be conjectured, but the work of a moment. Nor did the much-dreaded invader keep poor Crusoe long in suspense. For soon a canoe put off from the opposite shore, fully manned by blue-coated warriors, who were armed with clubs and equipped with a kind of bangle, or armet, but quite unlike any South Sea Islanders known to the hermit, and certainly never seen in Juan Fernandez, and crossed the silver Thames.

The enemy surrounded Robinson Crusoe's hut, impounded his goods, and resistance being in vain, carried him into captivity, and kept him there for eighteen dreary months.

The Confidential Inquiry Branch, just referred to, is, properly speaking, an offshoot of the Secretary's office, but it works hand and glove with the Solicitor's office, although it also deals with cases which present no suggestion of a contravention of the law, such as those of missing letters, not stolen, but mislaid or destroyed.

Of such, two occur to me as types of a thousand. Some years ago a country postmaster related how a merchant, who lived a mile or two out of town, having sold produce at a Channel port for £650, received a telegram from his agents informing him that a cheque for that amount was to follow by post.

The post arrived, but with it, the merchant alleged, neither cheque nor letter. Inquiry began. The postman of the walk recollected the missing packet distinctly—its shape, colour and postmark. He had, according to habit, so he said, poked it under the house-door with two other letters and a newspaper. The merchant's wife had picked up three packets, and was positive there had not been a fourth.

The postmaster came; he examined the house carefully. Then he looked into the back garden. His eye alighted on a litter of puppies. A thought struck him.

'Have the dog-kennel cleared out, please.'

'Nonsense! why?'

'Kindly have it cleared.'

'Well, if it must be—Thomas, take out the straw.'

On the floor of the kennel, torn in a hundred bits, lay the missing letter; in the bits, the shreds of the cheque. A current of air along the passage had blown the letter, a light one, about; the puppies, seeing it, had pounced upon it, and had had a good time.

But if the puppies were chargeable with a mild kind of larceny, their behaviour was innocence itself compared with the conduct some time previously of a tame raven in Kelvedon, in Essex. This malefactor committed highway robbery with violence. As the postman was in the act of delivering a letter containing a cheque (in this case for £30), the raven pounced down from a height, dashed at the letter, forced it from the man's hand, flew with it around the town, alighted, and deliberately tore both the letter and cheque to pieces.

Delay in delivery, it cannot be denied, does sometimes occur. But the Post-Office has only once, to my knowledge, taken twelve years to deliver a letter. That particular missive contained a £5 note. It had slipped behind the panelling of a sorting-carriage, and there it lay until the vehicle went into the repairing-shop for overhaul and was stripped to its ribs. Then the letter was found,



returned to the Post-Office, and delivered to the rejoicing addressee.

Yet are losses sometimes charged on the department of letters which never come into its possession. Once a merchant complained of the loss of one containing some hundreds of pounds in Bank of England notes. He was clear in his recollection on all essential points. The case was shrouded in impenetrable mystery.

At last a choice expert made a special call at the counting-house. 'Believe me, sir,' said he, 'I have an object in what I ask. Will you kindly sit at your desk and recall each operation connected with the missing letter?'

'With pleasure. I sit here. I take a sheet of this note-paper and one of those covers. Then I write my letter and fold it up so. Next I go to my safe and take out the notes, enter their numbers, fold them, put them into the letter, and the letter into the cover. Then I seal them all up as you now see me do.'

'Just so; and what next?'

'Why, my clerk comes in and clears off my letters for the post.'

'But you wrote this one at noon, and the post does not go out before night.'

'Oh yes, of course. I quite forgot to say that a money letter, for greater security, I put in a left-hand drawer.'

'Which one?'

'Which? why, this one. I open it so, and I— Bless my soul! goodness me! I am very sorry for all the trouble I've given. Here *is* the letter!'

Cases such as these require the most careful investigation, and that, too, by officers of great experience and acumen.

In 1856, it happened that so lofty a being as the Lord Chancellor of the day complained of the loss of a letter. Evidence had been adduced which convinced the august legal mind of the *bonâ-fide* posting of the letter, which Lord Cranworth stated with absolute confidence had never reached him. The case against the Post-Office seemed clear, when, after a time, his lordship turned over a heap of old papers, and found the letter beneath them! My lord thereupon handsomely absolved all persons from blame, except himself.

Droll circumstances sometimes arise. Once a friend wrote to me in substance as follows:

'I posted a letter at A, at half-past eleven, for B, in the same postal district. It ought to have been delivered at three. It was not delivered at three, nor at any time on that day. What shameful neglect! I have some political interest at C., where your Post-master-General seeks re-election. My friends and I mean to vote for his opponent. Such mismanagement on his part is insufferable.'

The answer may have been to the effect that, in my belief, if there was one thing dearer to the heart of the

Postmaster-General than another, it was the efficiency of the post between A and B, and that his sorrow for the failure in delivery of the missing letter, when he came to know of it, would be deep and sincere; that meanwhile it was hoped that my correspondent and his friends would not endanger the constitution by opposing the Ministerial candidature, but suspend judgment until inquiry could be made. It turned out that the letter had been duly delivered at three o'clock on the day of posting, and that a maidservant had laid it aside and forgotten it. So the Postmaster-General was re-elected after all! However, to revert to the legal branches.

Although the practice of the Irish law-courts tallies in all essential points with that of the High Court of Justice, legislation operative in the one kingdom is not necessarily applicable to the other. For this reason alone it would be needful to maintain at Dublin a Solicitor of the Post-Office, who should keep the administration in touch with the law as it affects Ireland.

Apart from this speciality, however, there is abundance of legal work associated with Irish postal matters to sustain the Solicitor's office in full activity, especially as, in Ireland, the Solicitor, unlike the head of the firm in England, has to rove the country from end to end; at any rate, to spend portions of the year in Belfast, Cork, Londonderry, etc., as well as at head-quarters, following the movements of the judges.

The bright and shining light of the law, when official business took me to Dublin most, *i.e.*, in the early seventies, was the late Mr. Robert Thompson. A sound lawyer, a master of pure trenchant English, he possessed, like most cultivated Irishmen, an inexhaustible store of racy anecdote; and what in him, perhaps, attracted me most was the fact that he threw himself heart and soul into his official work. For it was a period of much anxiety and incessant labour in the Post-Office when we first met, and those who gave their aid quickly gave it twice, and endeared themselves to their fellow-workers.

Taxing my own knowledge, but relying chiefly on that of others, of the official attainments of Mr. Thompson, it would be within bounds for me to say that as a lawyer he was held in high estimation by the profession, as he was by all with whom he came in contact in official and social life. He combined great firmness of character with a most genial disposition. Besides his thorough knowledge of the law, his main qualifications were a rapid discernment of the true bearings of a case, a shrewd appreciation of the strength or weakness of an opponent's contention, and thoroughness in working out all points in matters remitted to him for settlement.

Of this he gave good proof in the case of *Regina versus N—*, *alias V—*, in which he carried to a climax the Nether Stowey case, and brought to justice the prime offender in Dublin. N—'s career of crime was a strange one. He had been at one time

a clerk in the Bridgwater Post-Office, and had stolen the mail-bag for London from the platform of the railway-station while the messenger who had charge of it was sewing a button on the coat of a townsman who was going to London.

After that offence followed the Nether Stowey fraud; and when released from penal servitude, as the consequence of forging money-orders, N—— stole a registered-letter bag in London containing diamonds. So the arm of the law failed to amend his ways.

Like the blind Postmaster-General, Mr. Thompson found rest and refreshment in the rod, and in his rare and brief holidays the pleasant running streams and mountain rivers of County Wicklow yielded up to him 'here and there a dusky trout,' and perhaps 'here and there a grayling.' A ramble over Killiney Hill produced more than once the solution of difficult official questions.

To Mr. Thompson succeeded the bright and versatile lawyer who now draws the briefs of Irish Post-Office counsel. The rise of Mr. Baillie-Gage in the service has been rapid beyond precedent. On his admission to the roll of solicitors Mr. Thompson engaged him as his temporary assistant. Probably his first official discussion was on the occasion in which we all three met, accompanied by the late Mr. Sanger, in Cork in 1870, to talk over the form of certain proposed railway agreements. Two years later he became chief clerk; three years later still, Solicitor. To spring

from an unestablished position, fresh from the articles of novitiate, to the top of the official tree in five years implied the possession of qualities which the Duke of Rutland was not slow to discern and appreciate. Nor have the Irish judiciary refrained from expressing the opinion that no proceedings taken before them are better conducted than those which originate in the office of the Post-Office Solicitor.

In Edinburgh the department has not been less fortunate in its Solicitors. Legal procedure in Scotland, as most people know, differs from the law and practice of English courts. Scotch law business could not with advantage be managed from London, so a Solicitor on the spot is a necessity; and from the year (1855) of my own entry into the Post-Office until 1892, the year before I left it—that is, for thirty-seven years—the department in Scotland found in the late Mr. John Cay, member of the Society of Writers to her Majesty's Signet, a sound and judicious adviser. He came of a good legal stock. His father was Sheriff of Linlithgowshire and Convener of the Sheriffs of Scotland.

A valued colleague, who knew Mr. John Cay well, describes him as one of the truest, best, most conscientious, and most courteous of men—an admirable type of the good Scottish lawyer of the old school. He similarly impressed me. On his demise the office of Solicitor in Scotland was filled up by the selection of Mr. Pitman.

The Solicitor-in-chief of the Post-Office, Sir Robert

Hunter, knighted in 1894, was a member of the firm which is now that of Messrs. Horne and Birkett, solicitors, of Lincoln's Inn Fields. He received his appointment to the Post-Office from Professor Fawcett, on the death of Mr. Watson. It is needless to say that the choice of the Minister has been approved by the experience of thirteen years, seeing that it has been ratified by a mark of the favour of the Sovereign.

Although it is as yet too early to take a comprehensive review of the successful labours of one who is still in the heyday of his career dealing with the knotty problems which Post-Office legislation and practice but too often present, it may, at any rate, be mentioned that one uniform plan of procedure has marked his course from the first—that of mastering every point of postal administration as it came under his notice.

To be a sound lawyer, and at the same time to possess a thorough acquaintance with the actual working of a great department in all its branches, is not given to every man in a similar position. To apply the law with discretion, a powerful aid is a thorough knowledge of the subject of litigation. Sir Henry James, Q.C., who, as counsel for the Post-Office, argued the telephone case for the Postmaster-General, made himself a complete master of the theory of electricity as accepted in practical telegraphy before he went into court. This is a line of conduct which, within my observation, Sir Robert has invariably followed. In his time a greater number

of large and difficult questions has arisen than probably in any previous period in the history of the Post-Office.

A glance at the Statute-Book alone would satisfy most people that, so far, the twelve or thirteen years of Sir Robert Hunter's tenure of office has not been an idle period, even from a single point of view—the Parliamentary—inasmuch as during that period twelve postal Acts have become law, besides hybrid Bills and private Bills which called for his intervention.

The first-fruit of Sir Robert's handiwork was the Parcel Post Act of 1882 (45 and 46 Vict., cap. 74). Not a single doubt has, to my knowledge, ever arisen as to the true meaning and construction of any one of its sections. It was a sound piece of drafting, which has stood the test of time.

The Government Annuities Act, founded on the report of a Select Committee, dealt with details of a somewhat intricate character. It authorized the present system of payment of annuities and life insurances through the Post-Office Savings Banks.

The Telegraph Acts of 1885 and 1892 were important measures, the former legalizing sixpenny telegrams, and providing for the protection of submarine cables, and the latter placing the telephone system of the country on a new basis.

Eight purely postal Acts sanctioned the acquisition of sites (including Coldbath Fields Prison), effected important alterations of parcel rates of postage, and controlled the conveyance of mails by more particu-



larly defining the authority, regulations, and rights of the Postmaster-General with regard to ship-letters, and by giving a new jurisdiction to the Railway Commissioners in disputes concerning payment for the conveyance of mails.

It may be mentioned in passing that there are several Savings Bank Acts, but that (56 and 57 Vict., cap. 69) of 1893 has, according to the testimony of the Postmaster-General in the House of Commons on March 19, 1894, already borne excellent fruit. It enables depositors to increase the amount of their deposits and their purchases of Government stock to a higher statutory limit, and advantage has already been freely taken of this salutary provision.

The preparation of instructions for the Bills or the consideration of drafts for these twelve Acts of Parliament represents a large amount of intellectual labour, but has been only a part of the legislative business of the Solicitor's Office. All Bills affecting the Post-Office which the Postmaster-General introduced were prepared by the Treasury draughtsman on the instructions of the Solicitor of the Post-Office, and examined and revised at the various stages in consultation. The Solicitor, in these and in other similar cases, attended the House when the Bills were in Committee to give advice and aid in drafting any necessary amendments.

Private Bills and Bills introduced by other Government departments have to be examined, and the former watched in their course through Parliament,

lest provisions unacceptable to the Post-Office should be passed without alteration. Amendments and new clauses have to be prepared, and tendered to the agents for the Bill.

Again, of late years—that is, since the appointment of the present Solicitor—departmental committees have made large drafts on his time. I recall several, having been concerned in some of them myself: viz., the Post-Office Rates Committee, which advised modifications of the parcels tariff, a reduction of the high rates of postage on letters above 12 ounces in weight, and the abolition of the charge for the redirection of inland letters; the Express Delivery Service Committee; committees on insurance, registration, etc.; the Monopoly Infringement Committee; one on postal bonds, another on the security of postal orders, and so on.

While this heavy work goes on, arbitrations, framing Treasury warrants, consolidating postal and savings bank law, and other matters, fill up every chink of what by a pleasantry may be termed the Solicitor's leisure, *i.e.*, the time left unabsorbed by the current demands of a great branch of the Post-Office.

To the lay mind, an arbitration seems to afford the greatest scope for tactical and legal skill, inasmuch as the notice of an opponent's claim is very far from disclosing the points of law or the material facts on which he intends to rely; and readiness of resource in setting up rebutting proof is a main element of successful resistance. There have been many such

cases in postal experience, in acquiring sites, in buying up telegraph interests, and in arranging terms with various corporations.

It may be that, on the whole, justice is secured by arbitration. But in some cases this is very far from the fact. Human judgment being fallible, the award of one man—for the umpire is autocratic where the arbitrators differ—must at times be open to comment.

Before Sir Robert's time, a company whose capital was only £150,000 received in compensation, under an award made by an eminent judge, after a protracted and hard-fought arbitration, £726,000. Yet, there is another side to the picture. Early in the seventies, claims which amounted in the aggregate to £3,312,927 were, to the best of my recollection, settled, some by arbitration and some by agreement, for little more than a twentieth part of that sum, viz., £176,299 11s. 9d. In this important matter the late Mr. E. Graves, though an engineer and not a solicitor, rendered good service. The claims under the Post-Office Sites Act of 1885, the burden of the settlement of which fell on the Solicitor, were reduced to the extent of little short of a quarter of a million pounds.

As a rule, arbitrations, from the official point of view, are thankless enterprises, leaving nothing behind them but a big bill and an infinity of worry and trouble. The abiding-place of the law officers of the department is not always a bed of roses.



*PART III.*

CHAPTER XI.—SCHEMES.

CHAPTER XII.—FATHERS IN TELEGRAPHY.



## CHAPTER XI.

## SCHEMES.

For several months in the year 1855, my work at St. Martin's-le-Grand lay in the General Correspondence Branch, under its talented and experienced chief, Mr. George Hardy; but the end of the year found me in the Home Mails Branch, where, having some small knowledge of the railway system, my services, Sir Rowland thought, might be useful. There, sitting alone in a small room, with nothing particular before me, the old familiar subjects—telegraphs and railways—came back into my mind. The circulation map of the Post-Office forced upon me a picture of the wonderful ramifications of the department, of the numerous agencies which it possessed throughout the kingdom, of the ease with which it exercised supervision and control, and of its readily-adaptable machinery for a postal telegraph system.

And so the idea of telegraphs within the Post-Office grew up, and in 1856 it occurred to me to draw out, and, with the permission of the Duke of

Argyll, K.G., then Postmaster-General, to present to the Lords of the Treasury a letter of proposals.

It was not alone the aptness of the Post-Office for undertaking telegraphy which struck me, but also the simplicity and convenience of its uniform rates of charge. The telegraph companies, after a brief period of active competition and a lowered tariff, had combined and raised their charges; and although telegrams no longer cost the fabulous sums which were levied upon them in 1851, yet the expense of telegraphing was still high.

Twenty words from London to Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Hull, or Newcastle, cost 4s., and to Dublin 5s. Into only a few towns and villages had the telegraph been carried. Where there was a wire, it as a rule stopped short at the railway-station. Here was a tariff to be reformed, a system to be enlarged!

The main features of my scheme were:

(a) A Government system of electric telegraphs, with the privilege of exclusive transmission of public telegrams, similar to that enjoyed by the Post-Office in respect of letters; in short, a monopoly.

(b) The incorporation of the proposed system with the Post-Office, and extension of the wires in the first instance to the post-office of every post-town in England, Wales, and Scotland.

(The communication with Ireland was separately referred to.)

(c) The adoption of a uniform charge of 6d. for each message of twenty words between any two post-



towns, inclusive of delivery within the limits of the terminal town.

Except at eighty towns, which to some extent communicated by wires expressly set apart for public business, private messages had always to run the gauntlet of delays on wires provided for the business and regulation of railway traffic. Here was a radical fault to correct.

At some railway-stations it was next to impossible for a distant office to gain attention, except at train-times—not always then. Cases, indeed, occur to me in which it was not unusual for the clerk at a telegraph company's station to send word by train to a neighbouring railway-station that a message was waiting.

Railway messages, as was proper, had, to a large extent, priority, and delays of half an hour, or even an hour, to private telegrams were, on wires used for both purposes, the rule rather than the exception. Even over the so-called commercial wires, messages lingered. Rapid intercourse with Stock Exchanges and towns on special circuits was the only approach to that instantaneous communication to all parts of the kingdom with the promise of which public telegraphy originally started. Here were blots to efface! Indispensable, in my judgment, was the separation of the two services, public and railway, as also the speed and cheapness which the Post-Office, with an admirable mastery of the true principles of telegraphy, has since realized.

Under the plan proposed it was claimed—as, indeed, was obvious from the facts adduced—that :

(1) The Government departments would be placed in possession of a reliable means of instantaneous communication with all the out-ports and inland towns, as well as with the dock-yards and arsenals of Portsmouth, Plymouth, Pembroke, Sheerness, Woolwich, Chatham, etc., and that the same advantage would be afforded to the public at a reasonable charge.

(2) Central telegraph offices would be opened at 470 post-towns which previously had no telegraphic communication whatever; and at 210 post-towns there would be central Post-Office telegraphs instead of railway-station telegraphs; so that a total of 780 post-towns in Great Britain would have central telegraph offices; and there was to be eventually an extension of the wires to a part of the 8,000 or 9,000 sub-post-offices, if not to all.

(3) Remote districts of Great Britain would be brought into immediate communication with the centres of commerce; their trade would be facilitated, and their progress assisted.

(4) A complete separation of the railway telegraphic service from that of the public, which was strongly advocated, would tend to the safety of passengers travelling by railway, and the rapid transmission of public despatches.

(5) The consolidation of the system under one management would, it was clear, remove the liability to error resulting from the repetition of despatches at the termini of distinct telegraph companies' lines.

(6) Lastly, a progressive accession to the net public revenue, rising from a minimum of upwards of £50,000 a year, could be, not without reason, anticipated.

If these were merely the fanciful ideas of a young man of twenty-four, which had little to recommend them, and which eventually came to nothing, there would be small warrant for reproducing them here. But all which was planned out in 1856 has come to

pass—all, that is, except the net revenue; but, then, mine was a scheme for spending not more than a million and a quarter on postal telegraphs, whereas, thanks mainly to hesitation in adopting some such plan, about £11,000,000 have been laid out.

In the early part of 1857 a copy of the letter sent to the Treasury was furnished to the late Lord Stanley of Alderley—who was known to be in favour of telegraphs worked by the Post-Office—and to Lord Stanley, the late Earl of Derby. The idea of Post-Office telegraphs had been in Lord Stanley of Alderley's mind (as, indeed, his lordship's letter shows) long before my paper reached him, though Mr. Scudamore in his printed reports, generously desirous of giving me all possible credit, has expressed the contrary opinion.

The letter of Lord Stanley of Alderley ran as follows:

‘ Dover Street,  
‘ March 8, 1857.

‘ SIR,

‘ I am much obliged to you for your letter and the copy of your scheme for establishing a complete system of electric telegraph communication in England in connection with the Post-Office. This has long been the view which I have taken of the subject.

‘ The expense would have been small, and the facilities afforded by a department of the executive like the Post-Office for carrying it into effect would have been very great.

‘ Even now, according to your statement, the value of all the shares of the different telegraphs in England is under £1,000,000.

‘ To make the plan complete, the value of the submarine lines to Ireland, and, in my opinion, to the Continent also, should be added. I have no means at hand of ascertaining what the value of these lines is, and if you possess the information I should be glad to have it.

‘ If properly worked, I am inclined to think these telegraphic communications could be worked by the Post-Office not only without expense to the country, but with a profit.

‘ At the same time, the security and regularity of the communications would be greater, and the benefits much more widely extended, than could be attained under any private companies. There are also many other arguments in favour of the plan, particularly in connection with foreign lines.

‘ I am, your obedient servant,

‘ STANLEY OF ALDERLEY.’

The letter of Lord Stanley, M.P. (afterwards Earl of Derby), was couched in these terms :

‘ St. James’s Square,

‘ February 3, 1857.

‘ SIR,

‘ I have pleasure in acknowledging the letter and plan received from you yesterday.

‘ Whether your scheme be practicable would require a longer consideration to decide. It is certainly large, original, and recommended by the analogy of the Post-Office. I shall keep the paper and consult others upon it.

‘ Your obedient servant,

‘ STANLEY.’

It was a long time before anything came of the scheme. Mr. James Wilson, M.P., Financial Secretary of the Treasury, had, no doubt, his hands full of other matters. Sir Rowland Hill was still actively engaged in completing his plans of Postal Reform, and a junior clerk in the Post-Office had no means of ascertaining how his proposals were viewed at Whitehall, nor, without offence to the superiors, of combating objections or overcoming prejudice. Eventually, however, my plan became public, being printed as part of a Parliamentary Paper (House of Commons, No. 202) on April 3, 1868, just twelve years after it had been launched.

It is a satisfaction to me to repeat that every part of the scheme of 1856—central offices, separation of wires, free delivery within a mile or so, a legal monopoly, and a sixpenny rate—is now in full operation.

Telegraphy is too attractive to those who have once been associated with it to be wholly put aside, even when their professional duties lie another way; and while awaiting the upshot of the letter to the

Treasury, two or three other plans engaged my attention.

One was a scheme of ocean telegraphy, which contemplated the laying of a cable from England to the Canary Islands, across the South Atlantic to Barbadoes, and so along the chain of West India Islands. Something of the kind was ultimately carried out, an extension to Brazil being also effected.

Another scheme had also in view an oceanic system of telegraphy, the cable of which, following the first-named line to the Canary Islands, was to go south, *viâ* Ascension and St. Helena, to the Cape of Good Hope, then onwards to the island of St. Paul in the South Seas, next to another very southerly point (Kerguelen Island), and so to Port Philip Heads in the colony of Victoria, and Australia generally. The cable to Australia was laid many years later, but by the route of the Red Sea and the South Indian Ocean.

The course advocated no doubt had its drawbacks in the vast length of the several spans, but once down, no harm could have come to it on the Australian side of the Cape. James Anthony Froude might then have written from Australasia in 1885 in other terms than these :

‘The answer from Lord Derby (then Secretary of State for the Colonies) had been delayed. Something was said to be wrong with the telegraph on the

Persian frontier. Strange to think that communication between London and an island at the Antipodes should be carried on through ancient Parthia and across the rivers of Ecbatana and Babylon !

As it struck Mr. Froude in 1885, so, thirty years earlier, in 1856, had it appeared strange to me that a British colonial telegraph should have to cross foreign territory. A sea route, avoiding foreign frontiers, seemed to be the only safe line for a great colonial cable to take. There are, it is true, rollers off Ascension and St. Helena which might have been hurtful to a cable, but special observation would soon have shown how any risk of breakage from this cause could best be met.

Had the wire been laid only as far as the Cape, the public would not have read in the newspapers that at a public dinner in London on April 23, 1888, the late Earl of Derby, formerly Foreign Secretary, and at a later date Secretary of State for the Colonies, said :

‘ Then came the cable to South Africa, which, if brought about a few years earlier, would have been the means of saving a great deal in lives and money.’

Again, a system of telegraphs within the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, which would have been of great service in the early development and consolidation of that important dependency, was a need to which it occurred to me, but without success, to draw the attention of the Colonial Office. Two of my

younger brother officers who had worked with me at the General Post-Office have been in past years engaged—one, indeed, is so at this moment—in carrying out inland telegraphs, not merely within, but far beyond, the limits contemplated by me thirty-five years ago.

There was yet a shot in the locker. On September 14, 1858, the *Times* contained a letter from me unfolding what that journal was pleased to term 'A Gigantic Scheme.' The letter, which gave the figures as well as an outline of the plan, contemplated the erection of a line of telegraph across the North American continent from Montreal and Toronto to British Columbia and Vancouver's Island, which should prove the forerunner of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the means, in part, of opening up the vast unoccupied territory on the Canadian side of the Rocky Mountains.

My idea was to commence the erection of the telegraph at Fort William at the western end of Lake Superior, and about 500 miles from Owen Sound at the eastern end. From Fort William to what is now Winnipeg (formerly Fort Garry), with the exception of short occasional portages, the water communication was continuous, and seemed to admit of the transport, by canoes or barges of very shallow draught, of the necessary stores.

From Winnipeg, my plan was to carry the wire across the prairies, and through the Punch-bowl Pass of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific coast and Van-



couver's Island. One of my suggested routes, which has since been adopted by the Canadian Pacific Railway, followed a south-westerly direction, taking the Assiniboine River in its course. It struck the lower or South Saskatchewan River at or near Chesterfield House.

The stores for the West were to be shipped, *vid* Hudson's Bay, to York Factory in the north, conveyed in barges during the summer-time up the Nelson River to Lake Winnipeg, and from Lake Winnipeg, along the North Saskatchewan as far as Edmonton. In the choice of a route, the fact influenced me that the district of the Saskatchewan had been reported by a Select Committee of the House of Commons to be among those areas most likely to be desired for early settlement.

What were trackless prairies tenanted only by the buffalo, and known only to the hunter and the Indian at the date of my letter, are now for the most part dotted with villages, even towns, traversed by a main trunk railway 3,000 miles long, and capable of yielding wheat enough to feed a hemisphere.

Here was a land of promise which needed only communication of some sort with the outer world to open it up.

The distances are enormous. From Montreal to Fort William is 998 miles; and this is only the beginning. From Fort William to Winnipeg is 426 miles; across the prairies to Donald, on the confines of the Selkirk and Rocky Mountain ranges, is 1,024

miles. Across the Great Divide to the town of Vancouver on the Pacific coast is a distance of 459 miles more. This is the magnificent territory which it was my aim to connect with Montreal by the telegraph wire, and which Englishmen at last are beginning to overrun. Here is the cradle of a noble empire. Would that mine had been the hand to assist in founding it!

As Sir John Pender, K.C.M.G., expressed himself at a public dinner thirty years later—viz., on April 23, 1888—so it seemed to me in September, 1858, that ‘emigration would be quickened and sweetened by the knowledge that the cable and this extension would keep those who went out in touch with the old homes and their surroundings.’

However, to my narrative. Although not in order of date, as it did not originate with me until twenty-three years later, there may be mentioned another scheme which was of deep interest to me personally, and which only came to fruition after a further interval of fourteen years. My proposals had for their object a system of coast communications; in other words, the establishment of telegraphic communication, to be overlooked by the Post-Office, but worked by the coastguard, around the sea-board of the British Isles.

When the most recent war between Russia and Turkey broke out, and when, in the spring of 1878, the political relations of this country with Russia became matter of public comment, it seemed to me,

as Surveyor-General for telegraph business, important to prepare a scheme for girdling the British Isles with a coast telegraph, which should be equally available for defensive purposes during war, and for summoning help at any time in case of shipwreck. I had seen the necessity of something of the sort when, standing one stormy day near the Highcliff Mansions Hotel at Bournemouth, on the high ground which overlooks the great bay, two small vessels met my eye as they came out of Poole Harbour in the teeth of the gale. One, unhappily, was lost in the offing; the other eventually came ashore under the cliff at my feet. After unavoidable delay, the lifeboat and rocket apparatus came up from Poole, and the crew were rescued. The vessel grounded on an ebbing tide; had she done so on the flood, all hands must have perished before the means of rescue arrived.

This incident gave rise in my mind to the belief that connecting telegraphically all the coastguard stations with the post-offices would not only be a defensive measure, but would increase the usefulness of the coastguard in the direction of saving life and property. My idea was to dovetail a local telegraph system, following the coastguard path, into the Post-Office system, as well as to provide for direct communication between the signal-stations themselves. Thus would be served the double purpose of sounding the alarm in war-time and summoning help in case of shipwreck. I submitted my plan in April, 1878, but difficulties stood in the way.

However, not discouraged by want of success, and confident that some such plan must sooner or later be carried out, the proposal was renewed in 1881, and again in 1888, when, soon after a change of Government, it seemed proper to seek from the Postmaster-General (the late Mr. H. C. Raikes) permission to address the Prime Minister, which was given in the following terms :

‘I have carefully considered Mr. Baines’ very valuable suggestions, and shall be very glad to sanction his addressing Lord Salisbury as he proposes.

‘H. C. R.’

My letter went forward, and was referred to the Admiralty. By good luck the Board of Trade had a committee sitting on the subject of coast communications, to which the plan was communicated. Meanwhile Sir John Burns, Bart., of Glasgow, had thrown his powerful and friendly influence into the scale. Memorials went up to Parliament at his suggestion from shipping bodies, and letters from his pen appeared in the journals of the day. Sir John, in writing to the *Times* on December 31, 1888, urged that ‘at a time when coast defences are being seriously considered by the Government and the public, it may be well to supplement the larger measures for national protection by carrying around the British Isles a line of telegraph following the coastguard path, and dovetailed at suitable points with the postal telegraph system. This suggestion owes its origin to Mr. F.

E. Baines, one of the Assistant-Secretaries to the Post-Office, whose proposal is to girdle Great Britain and Ireland with a line of telegraph so arranged that it may be utilized as occasion requires from station to station, and cut and worked by the coastguard patrol itself at any point and at any moment. It might seem at first sight an expensive and difficult matter. It is really simple and inexpensive. Such a telegraph would only cost £30, or at most £40, a mile.' So from London, right round the south of England, taking the coastguard path for 1,000 miles, the cost was not likely greatly to exceed £30,000.

My colleague, Mr. Maberley, of the surveying branch (a nephew, it is understood, of the old Colonel), also promulgated a scheme, based on his intimate knowledge of the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. An active and capable member of the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Robert Bayly, having visited Denmark, and seen such a system actually in operation, put the chamber at Plymouth in motion, and, securing the co-operation of Sir E. Birkbeck, M.P., and other members of Parliament, carried the press (including Mr. *Punch*) and many chambers of commerce with him, and by that means, in 1892, succeeded in inducing the Government to favour the plan, and obtain a grant of public money.. A large mileage of wire has now been erected on the coast.

'It is not everybody,' wrote a high official at the

Treasury in a private letter to me on this subject on June 18, 1892, 'that lives to see his ideal realized.' Already in January, 1893, the work, according to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, had begun to bear fruit.

An act of true gallantry remains in my recollection. A line had been carried from the shore at Bournemouth to the mariners in distress on the vessel which came ashore, and one of two men on board was being drawn by means of it to land, when the slack became fast on board the wreck. Without hesitation the man remaining drew his jack-knife and cut the line in two, thus ensuring his comrade's safety and leaving himself in peril. Happily, the lifeboat at length hove in sight and took him off.

It was in Mr. Fawcett's time that the telephone came under public notice. Most people saw from the first that this wonderful instrument, despite imperfections, had a great future before it. Private companies were formed to work the telephone patents at a commercial profit; but the Post-Office fought shy of the newcomer. It had yet to win a reputation and become indispensable.

Soon the business of the telephone companies began to threaten the pocket of the telegraph service proper, and the department took up arms in defence of its rights. A court of law decided that the telephone was within the legal monopoly of the Postmaster-General, as defined by the Act of 1869; so there was an end to the independent action of the

companies. Here, then, was the department's opportunity.

Under the fostering care of Mr. A. W. Heaviside, the telegraph engineer in Newcastle, and the late Mr. Nind, postmaster, the public on Tyneside were beginning to take an interest in local telegraph exchanges. The telephone seemed exactly fitted for such work; its use could be pushed far and wide.

At that time the mail-office, and not the telegraph branch, concerned me; yet the expediency of the Post-Office striking out a line of its own, and building up a great system of telephones for the public, impressed me so strongly as to induce me to put before Mr. Fawcett a scheme to that end—to which, my indistinct recollection is, he was at first inclined to lean.

But the reluctance—whether at the Post-Office or the Treasury Chambers—to spend large capital sums on telephonic extension, and thus increase the outlay involved in the purchase of the telegraphs; to interfere with what promised to be active and effective private enterprise, and to take a leap into a dusky future, was too great to be overcome. The occasion passed by, and the private companies were allowed to proceed under Post-Office licenses, and the result is a matter of history.

Probably a civil servant has no right to be grieved at a policy which happens to be opposed to his own views; yet, looking back, there seems to be no doubt that a golden opportunity was lost of benefiting at

one stroke the public and the postal revenue. Loss of the latter, however galling to the postal servant, was of no real importance to the State if the public at large gained in another way at least as much as was lost; but in this case there were to be lamented both loss of public revenue and a restricted development of telephonic resources. That is so still. The field yet open for a profitable use of the telephone is almost unlimited, and, in my opinion, the Post-Office alone has the potentiality of pushing such use to the uttermost.

My wish had been for the department to commence active telephony in London by laying down telephones for postal and private employment; and, doing the same in the large towns as funds became available, to bring the apparatus, at a moderate rental, within reach of the general public. If every house rated at not less than say £50 a year were connected with a proper local exchange, the doctor and chemist, the baker, the butcher and fishmonger, the grocer, the police, nay, every professional or trading person in the Metropolis, as well as the cab-stand and the theatre, would be within hail of the parlour, the hall, the snuggerly, or the kitchen. Such telephones would have become fruitful feeders of the postal telegraph system in rural districts, because the same wire which brought the professional man or others within call would connect the telegraph-office in the town with the house in the country.

But it was not to be, although the Post-Office had



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the law on its side, and machinery available for engrafting the use of the telephone on national habits. How far recent legislation will correct the timidity of the past and redress what strike me as errors; how far rural as well as urban parts will be cheaply furnished with this powerful auxiliary to domestic comfort and commercial progress, time will show.

## CHAPTER XII.

## FATHERS IN TELEGRAPHY.

WHILE circumstances favourable to the assumption by the State of the control of the telegraphs are slowly shaping themselves, let us pause to bestow a thought on those pioneers of electro-telegraphy to whom this country—perhaps the world—owes more than it has yet seen fit to acknowledge.

As the name of the late Professor Morse, who died in 1872, is imperishably associated with the birth and growth of the electric telegraph in the United States of America, so in this country the names of Sir W. F. Cooke and Sir Charles Wheatstone, in like connection, ought never to be forgotten. They were not, however, the only inventors of electric telegraphs. Ronalds, Highton, Brett, Little, and others, were amongst the pioneers. But they were the first to patent, about 1836, an electrical telegraph which should be feasible, simple, and commercially profitable.

The single-needle form of telegraph which Cooke and Wheatstone devised remains to this day in

extensive use, and almost in its original shape. The earlier forms, exhibiting two, three, and even five, needles on the dial-plate, have long since become obsolete. The 'double-needle' was in its day, *i.e.*, from 1846 to 1856, or even later, a very good apparatus. It laid the foundation of telegraphy in England. But after 1856 it was almost entirely superseded by a form of the Morse printing telegraph, which again in later days has given place to the 'sounder.' In years to come the telephone may relegate even these effective devices to the limbo of the museum.

The very earliest forms of needle instrument could be worked at no greater pace (with two needles) than eight words a minute, and that, too, only over a distance of 40 or 50 miles. When the day came for discarding the double-needle telegraph, it had been, thanks to lighter needles and better insulation of line-wires, worked up to 40 or more words a minute, even to a distance of 200 miles. But the 'transmitter' and 'receiver' of Wheatstone, which were the production of the later years of the Professor's life, and which, discarding the needle altogether, imprinted in black ink on the white or blue paper strip at great speed the dots and dashes of the Morse system, altogether eclipsed hand-worked machines.

These valuable contrivances, the main feature of which was taken from the Jacquard loom, were a great advance in telegraphy. They doubled or trebled the transmitting capacity of a wire. In the last

twenty years, so many improvements have been effected by the staff of the Post-Office that despatches are now conveyed at the rate of 400 or 500 words a minute, over a distance (*e.g.*, from London to Dublin *via* Wexford) of more than 400 miles.

A common rate of working through the Wheatstone 'transmitter' is 150 words a minute between London and Edinburgh, one wire only being used, instead of the two wires which were required by the double-needle apparatus. Under favourable circumstances, the rate of working can be doubled. By the 'duplex' contrivance of Gintt, of Vienna, as improved by Stearns, of Boston, Massachusetts, the wire can be worked simultaneously in both directions, so that the figures must again be doubled to show its present carrying power. There are now multiplex systems, by which means the capacity of transmitting several messages in the same direction, or in opposite directions, at the same time, on the same wire, are multiplied.

Looking back fifty years, we see two wires working at the rate of 8 words a minute, or an average of 4 words per wire per minute, over relatively short distances. Now there is a potentiality of 400 words, nay, even 600 or 700 words, per wire per minute, over very long distances. As the invention of duplex working has been supplemented by the contrivances for multiplex working just referred to (one wire sufficing to connect several separate offices in one part of the country with one or more offices in another part) it

is almost impossible to put a limit to the carrying capacity of a single wire.

The late Mr. Stearns, who visited this country in 1873, was a thoughtful and agreeable man. One of our guests at the conversazione held three years after the transfer of the telegraphs, at the opening of the new Post-Office, was observed to be studying attentively a model of the new electrical contrivance, styled 'Duplex.'

We were rather proud of our work, believing that if ever a triumph of science had been made clear by a model, our demonstration stood in the front rank. The guest, however, appeared to be very much puzzled.

'What, sir,' inquired he of one of the officials, 'does that remarkable and interesting apparatus represent? I cannot make it out.'

'No wonder,' was the reply; 'that is a real novelty. It is a model of a new duplex telegraph arrangement invented by an American named Stearns.'

'Ah, indeed!' said he, with an amused air and a slightly Western accent; 'many thanks. My name is Stearns.' *Tableau.*

Sir William Fothergill Cooke (he was knighted, and Wheatstone, too, for the brilliant services which they both rendered in the cause of telegraphy) was above the middle height, and of gentle manners. He was not a rich man; it was said that he sustained pecuniary losses in connection with the *Great Eastern*

steamship, and he died when many years of honourable repose seemed to be before him.

Professor Wheatstone was full of restless energy, and overflowed with information. He had great mechanical aptitude, and was a genius. While Cooke possessed extensive electrical knowledge, Wheatstone had a special faculty of adapting it. He explained, in my hearing, with great animation, before a Committee of the House of Commons, in 1868, his cryptogram, or contrivance for readily producing a secret code. The reporters had no easy task in keeping up with his rapid and copious utterance. Wheatstone, Edwin Chadwick, Arnott, Lyon Playfair, Henry Cole, and Rowland and Frederic Hill, were all members of a private scientific society originated by Sir John Shaw Lefevre, K.C.B.

Sir Charles Wheatstone, who was born in 1802, died in the winter of 1875 in Paris, whither he had gone on business connected with French telegraphy.

More than a passing word is due to the early experiments of Sir Francis Ronalds in the direction of electrical telegraphy. He was at work as early as 1816, two years—or five, as Ronalds puts it—before Oersted's great discovery of the effect of galvanic currents on the magnetic needle. He published the results of his investigations in pamphlet form in 1823, and brought out a new edition in 1871, the year after the Post-Office had taken over the telegraphs. The long interval had in no way damped his energies.

Ronalds' plan was highly ingenious—in fact, most meritorious, and the production of a true pioneer; but it was in no degree likely to be commercially profitable, nor did he succeed in carrying it beyond the experimental stage.

He relied on static electricity, which is of a far more erratic, and far less manageable, quality than the product of the galvanic trough. By means of it pith balls, depending by filaments of silk from a peg, were at pleasure to be made (as they can easily be made) to fly apart, and thus produce an inverted V—so,  $\Lambda$ . The conducting wires, insulated in a glass tube, were to be buried 6 feet deep in a wooden trough, or iron pipe, in the middle of the high-road, and there were to be 'proving' stations, or what would now be called testing boxes, 5 miles apart.

There is a choice anecdote to be related in this connection. The line was to be permanently charged; so the pith-balls, in the normal state, would hang apart. But when the 'universal electrophorus' failed to electrify they would fall together. Recourse was then to be had to the proving stations, the fault searched for, and the defective length made sound. So far good! If rogues opened his trenches they would swiftly be detected, according to our inventor. If 'mischievous devils' from the cellars of houses assailed his wires, 'condemn the houses,' says Sir Francis stoutly.

And as for his 'proving stations,' thus writes my author :

'Any sorry little twopenny post *cove* might take a canter on his Rozinantuolo, and, on his arrival at a prover, perform the operation on it in less time than I have employed to describe the manner of its performance.'

'A sorry little twopenny post *cove*,' indeed! Really, Sir Francis, even after the lapse of seventy years, you must excuse me, but such language——

It was he who, being desirous of submitting his invention to the Admiralty in Lord Melville's time, met with a rebuff, not, indeed, from his lordship, who was all politeness, but from another.

'Lord Melville was obliging enough,' writes Sir Francis, 'in reply to my application to him, to request Mr. Hay *to see me on the subject of my discovery*; but before the nature of it had been yet known except to the late Lord Henniker, Dr. Rees, Mr. Brande, and a few friends, I received an intimation from Mr. Barrow to the effect "that telegraphs of any kind were then wholly unnecessary, and that no other than the one then in use would be adopted." I felt very little disappointment, and not a shadow of resentment on the occasion, because everyone knows that telegraphs have long been great bores at the Admiralty. Should they again become necessary, however, perhaps electricians may be indulged by his lordship and Mr. Barrow with an opportunity of proving what they are capable of in this way. I claim no indulgence for mere chimeras and chimera-frames, and I hope to escape the fate of being ranked in that unenviable class.'

Mr. Hay was probably Lord Melville's private secretary and a relation of my late friend, Mr. E. H. Hay, of the Admiralty; while Mr. Barrow was beyond doubt Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Barrow, who at the



suggestion of Canning in 1809 helped John Murray with the *Quarterly Review*.\*

It is only fair to own that even if the Admiralty had taken up Ronalds' plan, failure must have come of it, if only on account of the difficulties of insulation. Like the atmospheric principle as applied to railways, it was rather pretty in theory, but not to be depended on for a day in actual operation.

I have had by me for forty-four years 'Electric Telegraph Manipulation,' by Charles V. Walker, formerly Superintendent of Telegraphs to the South-Eastern Railway Company. It is an interesting relic of the past. Mr. Walker was a man of good scientific knowledge and experience, painstaking to a fault, and as modest and unassuming as he was kindly and upright. Nineteen years after first reading Mr. Walker's book it became my duty to prepare the instructions under which he surveyed for the Post-Office the property of the principal telegraph companies then about to be purchased.

To him, in my opinion, should be ascribed the credit of being amongst the first to bring scientific training to bear on the solution of the grave problems which the electric telegraph in its early days undoubtedly presented. His range, however, was limited. The longest circuit which he controlled—viz., from London to Dover—did not cover much more than

\* Memoir of John Murray, by Smiles. John Murray, London, 1891.

80 miles, and he had, therefore, to battle with few of the trying experiences of early telegraphists working under the Electric Telegraph Company. Still, it was a scientific mind which came in contact with workaday experience, and which began to teach the lessons of telegraphy.

At that time, because of electrical leakage, a message which now, in any state of the barometer, is sent direct, and without repetition, might have to be repeated, in rainy weather, eight or ten times between London and Glasgow, so little understood was the art of insulation. In the finest weather, 200 miles was the maximum length of circuit workable direct; and even for as much to be attained, all circumstances had need to be highly favourable.

Now, in our superior wisdom, we can afford to smile at the artless views of the Superintendent of Telegraphs in 1850 regarding the especial importance of Tonbridge, a station about 30 miles from London, in relation to telegraphy in the counties of Kent and Sussex :

‘ By reference to the plan,’ writes Mr. Walker, ‘ the commanding position of this station may be seen. It is midway between the capital and the coast, and in a central position in regard to the rest of the district. Here the conduct and management of the telegraph department is carried on. We have here our staff for maintaining the integrity of the line work, for cleaning and repairing the apparatus, and for keeping

all stations supplied with battery power ; and here we keep our stores. We befriend and assist all stations, and are their prime resource in times of distress and difficulty, helping on their messages when their own powers are crippled, and under all circumstances securing the successful working of the line.'

The charges for telegrams were then very much higher than in 1856. The cost of telegraphing twenty words from London to Manchester, Leeds, Hull, or Liverpool was 8s. or 9s. ; to Newcastle, 10s. ; to Glasgow, 14s. In almost every case another shilling was charged for portorage. The tariff of the South-Eastern Railway Company (which had an independent system of its own, under Mr. Walker's superintendence) was higher still. The charge of the former company to Rugby was 4s. 6d. ; of the latter to Dover (about the same distance), 11s.

But it did not occur to Mr. Walker that there was anything irrational in these exalted prices, or any sound reason for reducing them. He was quite of the contrary opinion, and not at all 'disposed to think that any such reduction as could prudently be made in these rates would produce an adequate increase of telegraph business.'

Ah, my master ! all the telegrams of the United Kingdom under your cherished rates were fewer than 250,000 in a year ; under the 6d. rate, which I did my best to advocate just six years after reading your book, there are now more than 70,000,000 public

telegrams in a year, besides uncounted millions passing through the telephone.

‘It would not be easy,’ continued Mr. Walker, ‘to reduce our rates so low as to rival the Post-Office, and obtain a large increase of business, nor do I think such a state of things is to be coveted. For our character would then be at stake; everybody would have to wait till somebody else’s message was sent, and the telegraph, instead of being for the most part ready at a moment’s notice, or with no great delay to all comers, would be always found occupied, and messages would be retained so long before their turn arrived to be sent, that the true essence of the telegraph would be to all intents and purposes lost.’

He reckoned without the Post-office. But these being Mr. Walker’s views, no wonder he is somewhat enthusiastic over what he deems to be the moderate cost of telegrams under the following circumstances :

‘To one who sees a telegraph in operation for the first time, the effect borders on the marvellous. Setting out of the question the fact that the needles are caused to move by an individual perhaps 100 miles off; the rare occurrence of the clerk pointing to +, implying he did *not understand*; and, finally, the quiet manner with which the clerk tells you very coolly, as the result of his operations, that “the very pretty girl with bright blue eyes and long curls *has sailed for Boulogne in the Princess Clementine, now*

leaving Folkestone Harbour ; and that she *is* accompanied by the tall, handsome man with the dark moustache and military cloak"—as he tells you this, and says : " Message and answer, forty words, two rates at 10s. 6d., £1 1s., portorage 1s.—£1 2s." if you happen to be papa of the pair of blue eyes you are bewildered, and wish you were an electric current, and could be sent after them.'

Mr. Walker was one of the gentlest and most amiable of men, and this, no doubt, is the way in which he would himself, in the paternal relationship, have regarded the goings on of 'blue eyes.' But most men in the position of 'papa of the pair of blue eyes' would not be contented with bewilderment on seeing the bill, but would possibly express themselves on the subject in terms of unaccustomed strength.

The cost of this interesting inquiry and reply would now, under the uniform 6d. rate, be 1s. 8d., instead of £1 2s.

Like Sir Charles Todd, the Postmaster-General of South Adelaide, Walker in Kent was an astronomer as well as an electrician and a telegraphist. He was one of the first to originate the submarine telegraph.

If his fruitful work is now forgotten, and he himself has gone down unrewarded to the grave, let his own words of 1850 speak again for him :

'The first step has been taken, the first stage has been passed. Signals from London have been transmitted to the coast at Folkestone, and onward by two

miles of covered wire submerged beneath the waters to the deck of a vessel afloat, and conversation has so been held. This was on January 10, 1849; and as the day will assuredly come, but not just now, when this embryo invasion of Neptune's domain shall become a practical reality, it may be well to have a faithful record of the circumstances connected with this experiment.'

Before Walker cast his wire into the waters of the English Channel, Sömmering, according to Wünschendorff's '*Traité de Télégraphie sous-marine*,' had succeeded at St. Petersburg, in 1807-8, in igniting gunpowder at a distance by electricity sent through a wire. In 1815 he did so at Paris, using a wire laid in the Seine.

But nothing, so far as is known, came of this experiment for nearly a quarter of a century, when Dr. O'Shaughnessy, an officer of the medical branch of the East India Company, and eminent amongst the telegraphists of India, sent a galvanic current through a wire covered with pitch and tarred hemp which he had laid across a bend of the river Hooghly.

In 1842 Professor Morse submerged a wire in New York Harbour, and sent a galvanic current through it; and in 1844 Wheatstone exchanged signals between a boat and a lighthouse in the waters off Cardiff, across which Mr. Preece, a year or two ago, signalled messages electrically without sea-wires.

In 1845 Ezra Cornell carried through a bold enterprise. He laid a cable twelve miles long in the river

Hudson. Indiarubber was his insulating material. Yet again, in 1846 Mr. West let down a wire coated with indiarubber in Portsmouth Harbour, and was able to telegraph to land; while in 1848 Armstrong, on the Hudson, and Dr. Werner Siemens, in Kiel Harbour, experimented with wires insulated with gutta-percha, a material then coming into use.

The establishment of telegraphic communication between England and France cannot, however, be directly traced to these important experiments. Wheatstone had had the matter in view for many years, certainly as far back as 1837. But it was reserved for Walker to bring matters to an issue. Being professionally engaged in telegraphy in Kent, he naturally looked forward to the day when Dover and Calais should be telegraphically united.

Let him further tell the stirring story of his venturesome essay in his own modest language:

‘I selected upwards of two miles of No. 16 copper wire, provided with its coat of gutta-percha. I personally tested the whole, piece by piece, under water, and also the several joints. It was then wound on a wooden drum, mounted on a frame, and so conveyed to Folkestone. I erected a pole in the sands just above high-water mark, by which I led a wire from the telegraph-office to the margin of the sea. On the evening of the 9th I, for the last time, tested the continuity of the wire by placing the drum on the sands and connecting the covered wire with the wire

that led from London; and then, with the ripple at our feet, and by the glare of lamps, amid a motley and wondering group of fishermen, seamen, revenue officers, and others, we proved the circuit was good by holding converse with the clerks at London.

‘Our plan for the morrow was to take the drum out in a small boat, somewhat in a direct line from the shore, uncoiling and submerging the wire as we went on, and there to have remained at anchor till the time of the arrival of the train from London, when the steamer was to sail out with our friends to the position shown on the right, and, having the telegraph apparatus on deck, was to take us on board with the end of the wire. But the aspect of nature changed during the night. The wind arose, and the sea became so disturbed that, instead of the ship going out to the boat, the latter went alone, paying out the wire in its progress, and returning with the end to the shore. It terminated at the instrument on the deck of the steamer moored alongside the pier. The conditions of the experiment were, therefore, all complied with, although the *effect was not so striking* as if the ship should have gone out to receive the end of the wire.

‘It had previously been arranged that the telegraph business for this day should be conducted on one wire (No. 2), leaving No. 1 at liberty for these experiments. The Folkestone end of this wire, as I have said, was joined to the submerged wire, the other end of which was also now connected with a single-needle instru-



ment on deck, and the circuit was completed by an earth-plate dropped overboard.

'All being ready, I took the handle of the instrument and made the letter L, the call for London; the acknowledgment of the call was instantaneous, and at forty-nine minutes past noon the first telegraph despatch passed beneath the British Channel in direct course to London; it was, 'Mr. Walker to Chairman,—I am on board the *Princess Clementine*; I am successful.' Immediately upon this a correspondence was kept up with London.

This was the birth of ocean telegraphy. Walker had taken his wire out to sea and thrown it overboard. Then through 2 miles of wire in deep water and about 80 miles of land line he telegraphed an actual message to his chairman in London. The next year saw an exchange of messages by telegraph between the French and English coasts.

The Royal Astronomical Society were not slow to recognise Walker's claims as a man of science. They elected him a Fellow of their learned body January 8, 1858, and when he died, their monthly notices for February, 1883, registered the sorrowful event, but I am aware of no other honour accorded to his memory.

A word of tribute must at least be paid to the great services rendered by Mr. Edwin Clark, of Britannia Tubular Bridge fame, in improving the earlier processes of telegraphy and in reducing the

cost of construction. He invented an insulator of great merit, and, in short, brought a trained and vigorous mind to bear on the problems of early telegraphy, to the great benefit of the struggling Electric Telegraph Company.

If not in the strictest sense of the term a pioneer, Sir James Anderson, like the public-spirited American, Mr. Cyrus Field, must nevertheless be classed amongst the fathers in telegraphy, his services in the department of submarine telegraphs having been great and varied.

He was a seaman for many years, commanding vessels of the British and North American Company, better known as the Cunard Line, up to 1865, when he was appointed to take charge of Brunel's *Great Eastern*, the ship that struck a blow at the fortunes of Cooke.

As a cable-laying ship the *Great Eastern* did wonders. But she was nearly wrecked in the process of launching; on her first voyage a steam jacket burst, off Brighton, a casualty attended with much loss of life; on another voyage her rudder was lost, and she lay helpless during a gale in the trough of the sea. In the end, after lying idle for years in Milford Haven, where she seemed to me as sound as when she was launched, this beautiful, magnificent vessel was broken up for the sake of the old iron of her hull.

In a conversation on the subject with Sir James

Anderson, he told me that he was of opinion that the cause of the failure of the *Great Eastern* as a mercantile venture lay not so much in the ship herself, as in the fact that she stood alone. To be commercially successful, he said, a large steamer must belong to a line—that is, be one of a set of similar vessels. Her burthen was 15,000 tons. The great vessels now afloat approach that tonnage, though they are still behind the *Great Eastern*. The magnificent *Campania*, of the Cunard Line, sent to sea in May, 1893, is within a shade of 13,000 tons.

As a landsman, no feat of seamanship strikes me as more remarkable and effective than one in which Captain Anderson and Captain Moriarty, of the Royal Navy, were jointly concerned. The former was in command of the *Great Eastern*; the latter assisted him in navigation. In 1865, when an early Atlantic telegraph was being laid from that vessel, the cable, at a distance of 1,050 miles from Ireland—that is, in mid-ocean—broke. Captain Moriarty fixed the exact latitude and longitude of the mishap. Next year the *Great Eastern* successfully laid a new cable (July 27, 1866), and that good work accomplished, harked back to fish up the old one. It lay where the water was more than two miles deep.

Without hesitation these brilliant seamen placed the *Great Eastern* over the cable of 1865, in longitude  $36^{\circ} 7'$  west, and a grapnel was let down. Almost at the first haul they caught it, and brought it on board ship. The electricians cut it, applied a speaking

instrument to the sound length, and lo! after the silence of a year, the wire awoke to life—‘the long-speechless cable began to talk’\*—and the Atlantic Telegraph Company’s office at Valentia, in Kerry, on the western coast of Ireland, spoke through the recovered wire to the *Great Eastern* in mid-ocean, 1,050 miles distant. A ray of light waving to and fro in a darkened cabin was the reward they had toiled for and secured.

After thus taking a principal part in successfully laying one Atlantic cable and recovering another, Captain Anderson and the late Mr. Charles Bright, the Atlantic Telegraph Company’s engineer, received the honour of knighthood in recognition of their share in these great works. Sir James then abandoned the sea as a profession, and gave himself up—not wholly, indeed, for he was identified with many a telegraphic enterprise—but mainly to the interests of the Direct Eastern Telegraph Company. He must have found in the chairman of that company, Sir John Pender, M.P., a congenial chief. Working hand-in-hand, chairman and managing director matured a vast system of cables between a little bay in Cornwall, Porthcurno by name, and the remotest settlements of the Eastern hemisphere.

Sir James was a writer on his favourite subject, submarine telegraphy; he was a member of learned societies, a thorough seaman, and a tall, broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced, capable man. The storms

\* ‘The Electric Telegraph,’ Lardner and Bright, 1867.

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of the Atlantic did but knit a vigorous frame together. Few men have led a more useful—none, it is safe to assume, a more active—life. When he died, in May, 1893, he had not yet attained the Scriptural term of ‘threescore years and ten.’

The late Sir Charles Bright laid many other cables, and his name, like that of the late Sir C. W. Siemens (born 1823, died 1883), is closely identified with several of the early telegraphic enterprises of magnitude.

END OF VOL. I.



NOTE AS TO NEW STEAMERS PROJECTED FOR  
THE IRISH MAIL SERVICE.

*(Holyhead and Kingstown.)*

THE following dimensions give some idea of the size of the new steamers which would be required to perform the mail-packet service between Holyhead and Kingstown in the time contemplated by the conditions of tender issued by the Postmaster-General a few months ago, viz., 3 hours 7 minutes :

Length of treble-screw steamers, 470 feet, as compared with that of the four steamers built under the contract of 1859 (see p. 80, vol. i.), viz., 300 feet. The breadth of the new steamers would be 49 feet, as compared with 35 feet. The gross registered tonnage would be 4,353 tons, as compared with 1,700 tons builders' measurement. As for means of propulsion, the indicated horse-power of the engines, which in the steamers of 1859 was required to be only 600, would, in the enormous craft now projected by the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, rise to the almost incredible figure of 22,000.

A notable fact in steam navigation appears to be the large increase of tonnage and horse-power needed for a comparatively slight increase in speed. To gain an hour on a voyage across the Irish Channel, it will be seen how vastly greater in both respects would be the projected steamers than those now employed ; while to gain even half an hour, it would require steamers 430 feet long, of upwards of 3,000 tons gross registered tonnage, and engined to the extent of 10,000 indicated horse-power.

Of course, the employment of steamers so large as the energetic and popular company have in view would mean a proportionate increase in the payment for the conveyance of the mails. Under a ten years' contract, it is understood that the company would carry on the

service according to the current time-table, and with the present vessels, for £84,000 a year; and that under a contract binding for twenty years they would be prepared to accelerate the service with the new steamers referred to by half an hour for £135,000 a year, and by one hour for £275,000 a year. It remains to be seen how far the public advantages to be secured will outweigh the demand on the public purse. At present (December, 1894) it is understood that the Dublin company's tender of acceleration has been declined by the Government; but acceptance of a scheme of quickened transit—to some extent, at any rate—can only be a question of time and a flourishing exchequer.

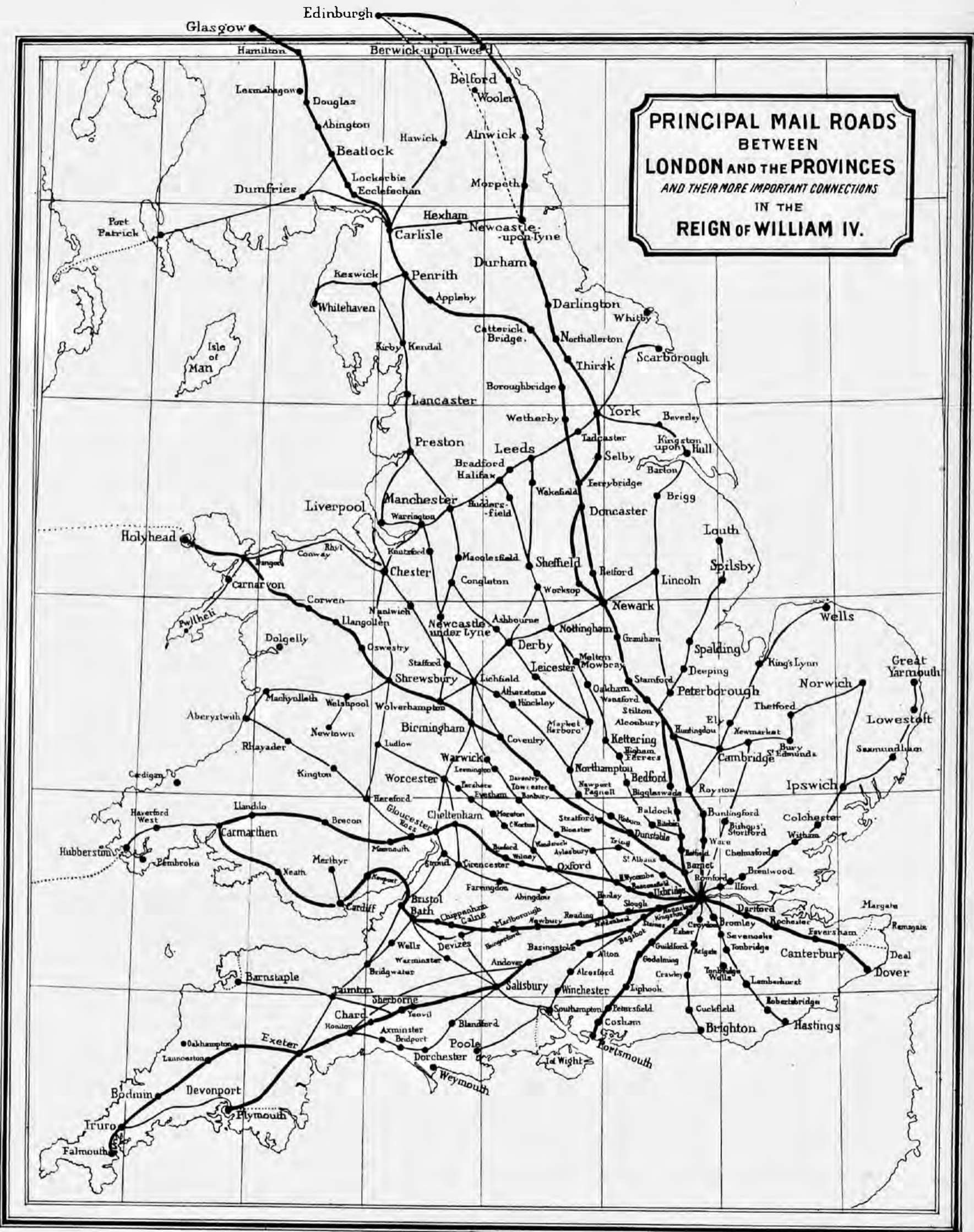
The trial in the Solent on December 12, 1894, of Mr. McCalmont's new twin-screw steam yacht *Giralda* seems, however, to point to the fact that high speed and spacious accommodation can be secured by ocean-going vessels of comparatively small tonnage. The *Giralda* is not so long even as the *Ulster*, and other vessels of 1859, although she is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wider, her dimensions being 275 feet by 35 feet  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, with a depth of 19 feet, and she is of somewhat smaller tonnage. But her engine-power is immense. The two sets of engines are said to develop as much as 8,000 horse-power. At the measured mile in the Clyde the *Giralda* realized a speed, within a small fraction, of 21 knots an hour, and nearly as much during the prolonged trial in the Solent. Still, even a speed of 21 knots is 2 knots an hour short of that attained by the *Ireland* on the memorable run from Holyhead to Kingstown chronicled in the text.

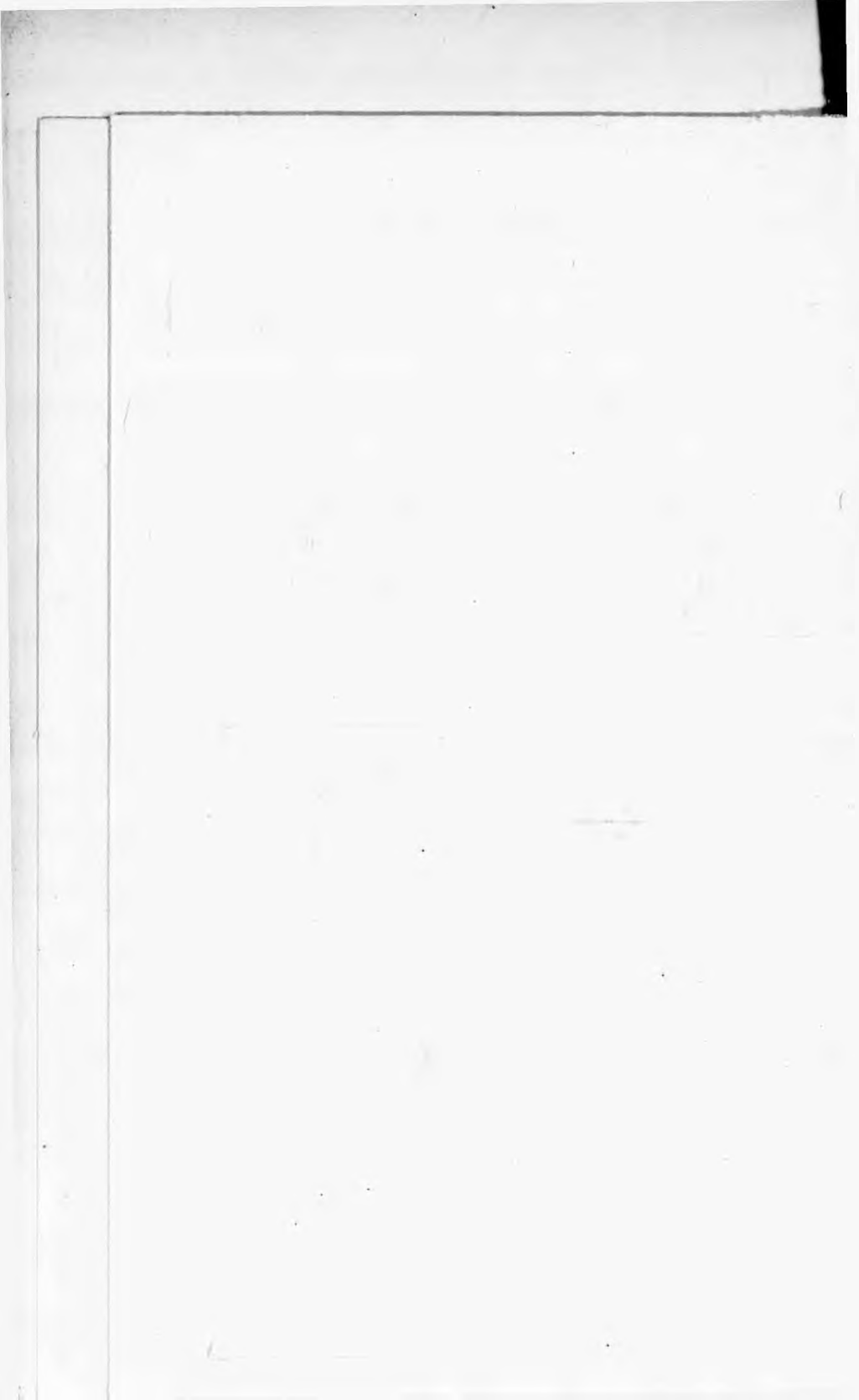






**PRINCIPAL MAIL ROADS  
BETWEEN  
LONDON AND THE PROVINCES  
AND THEIR MORE IMPORTANT CONNECTIONS  
IN THE  
REIGN OF WILLIAM IV.**









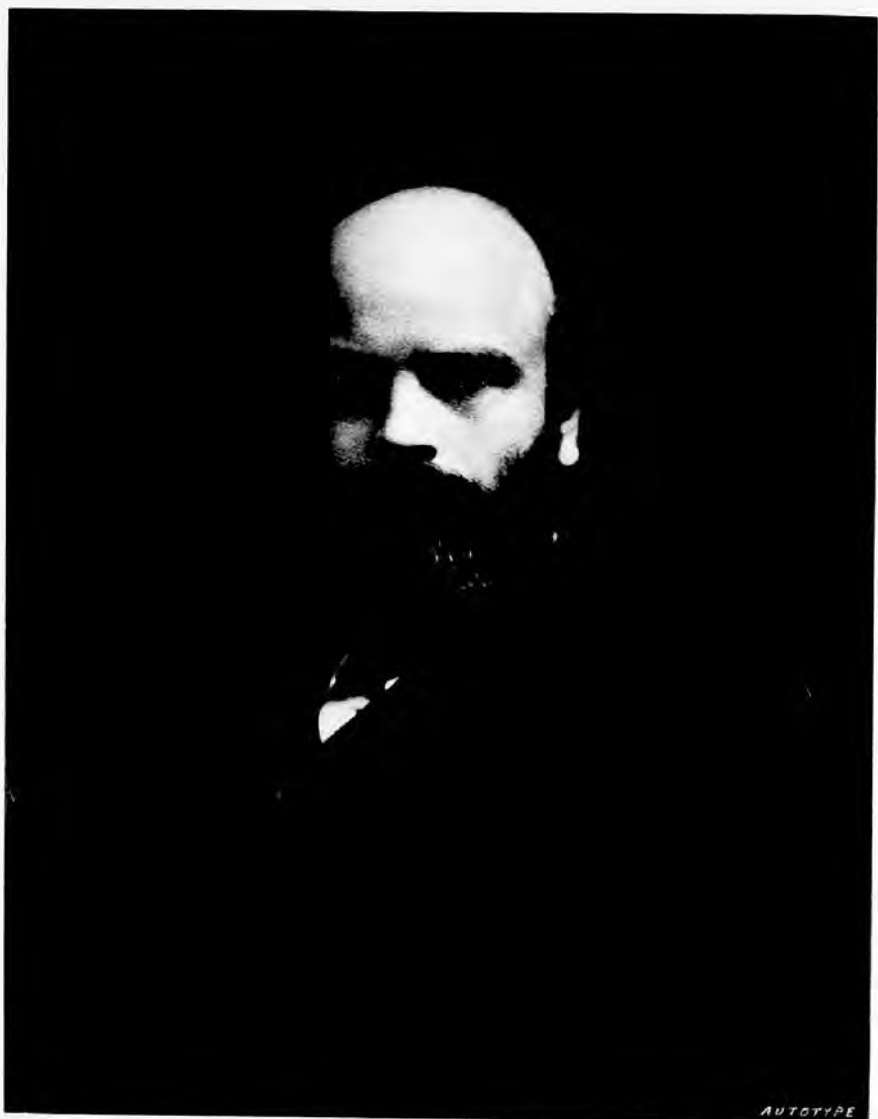
*Granford 1072*

FORTY YEARS AT THE POST-OFFICE









AUTOTYPE

*Yours sincerely,*  
*F. E. Baines,*

*From a photograph by Lombardi & Co.*

FORTY YEARS  
AT  
THE POST-OFFICE

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

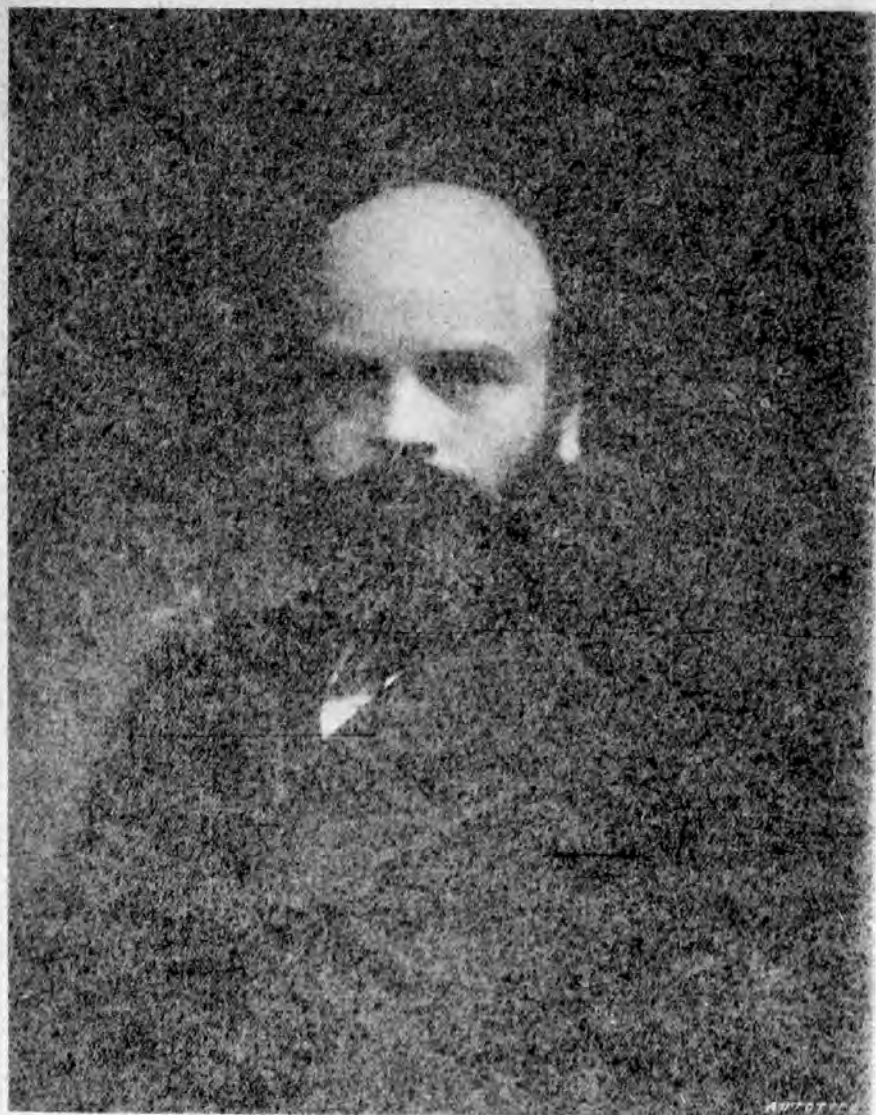
BY  
F. F. BAINES, C.B.

SOMETIME SURVIVOR GENERAL AND CHIEF CLERK OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
AND CHIEF CLERK OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE



IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOL. II

LONDON  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON  
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen  
895



*Yours sincerely,*  
*F. S. Baines,*

*From a photograph by Lombardi & Co.*

FORTY YEARS  
AT  
THE POST-OFFICE

*A PERSONAL NARRATIVE*

BY

F. E. BAINES, C.B.

SOMETIME SURVEYOR-GENERAL FOR TELEGRAPH BUSINESS, ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY AND INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF MAILS



IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON  
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Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen

1895

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# FORTY YEARS AT THE POST-OFFICE

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## *PART IV.*

CHAPTER XIII.—THE ACQUISITION OF THE TELEGRAPHS.

CHAPTER XIV.—THE DAY OF TS.

CHAPTER XV.—THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE.

CHAPTER XVI.—BEHIND THE SCENES.

CHAPTER XVII.—BENEATH THE WAVE.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE ACQUISITION OF THE TELEGRAPHS.

NINE years had passed since my proposals for a system of postal telegraphs with a legal monopoly had been launched ; still the Treasury made no sign. But, all the same, the time was fast approaching when the cherished scheme of 1856 should become a reality, and the day was certainly at hand when the Post-Office, at length taking up the question in earnest, should pave the way to that legislation which in 1870 gave to the country a postal telegraph system.

On September 15, 1865, Lord Stanley of Alderley (who, as his letter to me of March 8, 1857, will have shown, had long taken special interest in telegraphic questions, and was then Postmaster-General) directed Mr. Frank Ives Scudamore, one of the Assistant-Secretaries, to consider whether the assumption by the Post-Office of the control and conduct of the electric telegraphs throughout the United Kingdom would be attended with advantage to the State and the public.

In the following month the Edinburgh Chamber

of Commerce forwarded a memorial to the Government in favour of the telegraphs being managed by the State, the late Sir George Harrison, M.P., being its spokesman. Their grounds of complaint against the then existing system were high charges, frequent and vexatious delays, and inaccuracy. They stated that many important towns, and even whole districts, were unsupplied with telegraphic communication.

Mr. Scudamore's report showed how all these defects might be remedied, greater facilities afforded, and the telegraphs worked by the Post-Office to the public advantage. The results of his laborious inquiry are set forth in Parliamentary Blue-books of the period.

It would not appear that my scheme was by any means the first in order of date. Sir Rowland Hill, in his Autobiography, while referring to it as 'an elaborate memorandum comprising a complete plan,' adverts to a paper drawn up four years earlier—viz., in 1852—by Captain Galton; and Mr. Scudamore's report mentions a pamphlet published by Mr. Thomas Allan in 1854. He also wrote in July, 1866, that 'in 1856 Mr. Baines, an officer of this department, submitted to the Lords of the Treasury a plan "for the establishment, in connection with the Post-Office, of a comprehensive system of electric telegraphs throughout the kingdom";' and five years later that 'the proposals' (for the transfer) 'which were put forward by Mr. Baines in 1856, though not

the first in order of date, were the first which contained any practical suggestions as to the mode in which the transfer might be effected, any distinct practical statement of the advantages which might be expected to accrue from it, or any reliable data in support of the arguments advanced. At that time Mr. Baines had not long ceased to be an officer of the Electric Company, and had fully in his mind the disadvantages and difficulties which were inseparable from a tariff so variable as that which then prevailed. He proposed that the charge for transmission should be at the rate of sixpence for twenty words, irrespective of distance.' So, although my proposals were not first in order of date, it seems that they were reasonably definite, not only in Sir Rowland Hill's view, but in that of Mr. Seudamore.

It was in November, 1867, that the decision of the Government to proceed with a scheme of postal telegraphy was communicated to the Post-Office. As the Clerk-in-waiting of the night, it fell to me to open the letter of authority from Mr. George Ward Hunt, M.P., then Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Benjamin Disraeli was the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It was my good fortune to be called upon from the first to assist in preparing the preliminary reports, so the facts are familiar to me. As early as 1867 I framed maps of a scheme which was to include most towns of any size, and give a more liberal service to the Metropolis.

Lord Stanley of Alderley's action was followed up

by the Duke of Montrose and the Marquis of Hartington, his successors in the office of Postmaster-General; and at last—there being a strong feeling throughout the country in favour of postal control of telegraphic communication—it was decided that a Bill should be brought in to enable the Postmaster-General to acquire and work electric telegraphs.

The matter stood thus: Five powerful telegraph companies were in existence, the Electric and International, the British and Irish Magnetic, the United Kingdom, the Universal Private, and the London and Provincial Companies. There were others of less importance. Terms had to be made with all of them. The railway interest had to be considered, and the submarine companies to be thought of, though not bought.

A Bill drafted by Mr. W. H. Ashurst, the successor in the Solicitorship of Mr. Peacock, was presented to Parliament in 1868. The whole of the interested parties as one body petitioned against it. It went to a Select Committee. The late Mr. Rodwell, Q.C., led for the Post-Office; Mr. Denison, Q.C. (now Lord Grimthorpe), for the railway companies. Sir William Vernon Harcourt and other eminent counsel held briefs protecting various interests. Mr. Leeman, a very able solicitor, and Member for York, championed the railways. Mr. Ward Hunt, as chairman, held the balance true. It was a battle of Titans; there was hard hitting all round.

Mr. Scudamore continued to be employed as chief



agent in the matter. His ability and energy eventually overcame all prejudice and objections—even objections more powerful than prejudice, viz., those of vested interests.

Terms were at length adjusted with the railway companies. A draft agreement was settled with one company, and that served as a model for the rest. Daylight began to break. The telegraph companies, however, were coy. At length, when matters seemed to be at a deadlock, Mr. Scudamore and Mr. William Andrews, manager of the United Kingdom Telegraph Company, came to an informal understanding. The next step was to bring the principals round to their way of thinking.

A meeting was arranged at Highgate, at the house of Mr. Croll, chairman of the United Kingdom Company, four persons only being present. There was a long discussion, lasting far into the night. Draft after draft of proposed terms was prepared, only to be torn up, one obstacle being the difficulty of discovering an equitable method of protecting the just interests of the companies' officers.

Ultimately the goal was reached. The concurrence of the other companies and the Government had to be swiftly obtained, as the fight before the Committee of the House of Commons was still going on, and the session was drawing to its end. Twenty-four hours, however, wrought a great change: those who a day or two before sprang at each other's throats were now sympathetic allies; the opponents

of yesterday became close friends. So the opposition collapsed, and the Bill of 1868 became law.

On what had passed up to this time, part of a letter written by Mr. Scudamore throws sufficient light. It ran thus :

‘The telegraph branch has been under the charge of Mr. Baines, from whom one of the earliest propositions for the acquisition of the telegraphs by the State proceeded. He has worked with me from the time at which I first took up the scheme, and has from the first rendered most valuable aid. Indeed, it is not too much to say that without his help I could not have carried out the work up to the present time.’

This was generous language, which flowed quite naturally from Mr. Scudamore’s pen.

From the date of the passing of the Act of 1868, and especially from that of the Money Bill of 1869, a new era set in. The work, which had consisted chiefly of preparing for opposition to Bills in Parliament and of urging them into Acts, now turned on organization.

The scheme of the Post-Office, after buying up the plant of all the telegraph companies, was so to rearrange the wires as to give the best possible service to the towns through which they passed ; to run up new wires to towns and villages lying off the main trunks, and to weave the whole into one simple, effective, and durable fabric.

At the head of the telegraph companies were a

number of very able men. The late Hon. Robert Grimston as chairman, and my old colleague, the late Mr. Henry Weaver (he died in September, 1893) as secretary and manager, controlled the principal company. Mr. R. S. Culley, also a former colleague, was their engineer-in-chief, and Mr. W. H. Winter their assistant engineer. Both entered the Post-Office service. By other companies were employed the two Brights (the late Sir Charles, prominent at the laying of the first Atlantic cable, and his brother Edward, who was also an early fellow-worker with me), Mr. William Andrews, already mentioned, and Mr. Curtoys, likewise an associate in early telegraphy. We came amongst a friendly band; at least, we found it so as soon as cardinal differences were adjusted and everyone's interests secured.

The first step was to procure detailed plans of all the companies' wires. It was then decided to concentrate at the outset the whole of the London circuits at the central station of the Electric Telegraph Company in Telegraph Street, Moorgate Street, known to the initiated as LY.

The Electric Company worked on the 'Morse' principle and read by signs (*i.e.*, by dots and dashes on a paper riband); to some extent they used the 'Wheatstone' single-needle. The Magnetic Company favoured a beautiful bell instrument, invented by the Bright Brothers, and read by sound. The United Kingdom Company followed somewhat in the steps of the Electric Company, but as a notable feature of

their system they worked also the 'Hughes' type telegraph, which actually prints its messages. They started business on the basis of a uniform shilling rate, but ultimately coalesced with the other companies to the extent of adopting a scale of charge regulated by distance, and a common news supply. The London and Provincial Company relied mainly on the single needle.

Almost all the wires, except those in towns, were carried above ground. The Electric Company clung to the railways, the Magnetic went upon road and rail, the United Kingdom followed the road and the canals.

Besides the public wires of all these companies, there were the telegraphic arrangements of the railway companies to be dealt with. But the Act cleared the way in that respect. All wires used for railway work were to be made over *en bloc* to the railway companies for the purposes of their traffic.

It was arranged with the telegraph companies that their officers, on behalf of the Post-Office, should effect—of course, prior to the transfer—all concentrations, alterations, and new works. We apportioned the towns amongst the companies, allotting this town to the Electric Company, that to the Magnetic, another to the United Kingdom Company, and so on. Thus was responsibility defined and labour divided. Wherever a given company was paramount, the officials of the remaining companies rendered to the engineer of the former suit and service. None

clashed with any of the others. The work for the whole of Great Britain and Ireland was in this way parcelled out.

To each company were issued specifications, exactly defining in every case by a plan and instructions the work to be done. All this labour of preparation was accomplished at the Post-Office without a particle of help from the outside. Not a hitch occurred.

But before describing how we planned the postal telegraph system, to which the specifications gave effect, I would lose no time in stating that the centre of activity, the mainspring of new ideas and original methods, was the rising star of the Post-Office of those days—the resourceful and talented Frank Ives Scudamore. The magnitude and importance of his labours are known to all who were fellow-workers with him or lookers-on in the few memorable years which preceded and followed the acquisition of the telegraphs by the department.

Mr. Scudamore was a man of great administrative ability, and possessed the art of attaching to himself most men with whom he worked. When the Post-Office took me into its service in 1855, he was employed in the accounts department. There he recommended himself to the Secretary by his skill in carrying out simplifications of procedure. Afterwards he was made Receiver and Accountant-General, and at a later period an Assistant-Secretary. Finally, on the completion of the great work in which he was the foremost figure, of transferring the telegraphs

to the State, he became a C.B. and the Second Secretary.

The Post-Office has never seen a more indefatigable official, nor one who in a given space of time accomplished so much. To work all day, all the evening, all night; to go to bed for an hour or two and then arise, to labour with unabated energy throughout the ensuing day, was no uncommon thing with him. His energy knew no bounds. At the time of the transfer of the telegraphs Mr. Scudamore must have been about forty-seven years of age. A fluent writer of sound, if copious, English, and familiar with every detail of postal administration, he could compose, off-hand, minutes, reports and letters on the most complicated official questions with consummate ease. He knew by sight or name every principal official.

Backed by a strong will and unwavering confidence in his own powers, Mr. Scudamore, in the little world of the Post-Office, carried all before him. Whatever were his own ambitions and aims, it is certain he could always turn aside to do a kindness. To help the widow, console the sick, screen as far as he properly might the erring, and praise the well-doer, he was ever ready. Many kind things were written of me by his hand.

He could disarm angry men by the timely answer that softens wrath. An irate journalist, who came all the way from Belfast in 1870 to upbraid him, left his room with a smiling face, having been made well-nigh to forget the grievances he came about. 'Scudamore

was so genial,' said he, 'and as I felt so strongly that in the whirl of his engagements the one thing he never lost sight of was the interest of my paper, *how* could I possibly scold him?'

A short man, sturdily built, though not bulky, with a large mild eye and an immense head fringed with long grayish flowing hair, no beard or moustache, and spectacles ever in position, he was, once seen, not readily to be forgotten. It seemed at one time quite certain that he would rise very high in the Civil Service. Perhaps he relied too much on his own powers, and made use of others to lighten his burdens too little; possibly the grateful flattery of unstable public opinion influenced his judgment; perchance his absolute devotion to the affairs of office withdrew him from a sufficient consideration and regard for his own interests. Who shall say? Mr. Scudamore was a brilliant official whose light waned just when his luminous powers were about to shine at their fullest, and when he might have looked forward to flourish for years in prosperity and honour. He retired from the Post-Office in 1875, and took up an official position in the Turkish Postal Service at Constantinople, where, in 1884, he died.

The period of the transfer of the telegraphs was one of unexampled activity and, it may be added, exhausting application.

If Mr. Scudamore, as stated, was sometimes at work all night, the subordinates, inspired by their chief,

followed suit. It once happened that duty kept me continuously at the Central Telegraph Station from ten o'clock on one morning until five o'clock in the afternoon of the next day, and then carried me off by the Irish mail to recommence official work on the third day in College Green. Sleep, in those days, was becoming a forgotten refreshment. But in due course Nature enforced the lesson which all those have to learn who neglect her wise teaching and are heedless of her timely and kindly rebukes.

One gigantic piece of business had to be accomplished, viz., the valuation of the property about to be bought. Parliament prescribed the bases of purchase. A band of experts chosen from the office of the Receiver and Accountant-General was formed to work them out. Inspired and instructed by Mr. Scudamore and Mr. Chetwynd, they analyzed all the sources of income and expenditure as if they were accountants and auditors in one. Mr. C. V. Walker, Mr. Bartholomew, the talented and regretted Professor Fleeming Jenkin, F.R.S., and others, examined the plant, determined its state of repair, and the sufficiency, or otherwise, of expenditure in maintenance. The reports of the examiners, if at this distant date anyone cared to peruse them, would be found to be a monument of laborious and thorough investigation.

When the Bill of 1868 was passing through Parliament, it had seemed to me indispensable that the Postmaster-General should have a legal monopoly of



telegrams. But the clause to that end was not pressed. On introducing the Money Bill of 1869, however, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Robert Lowe, made monopoly a condition of proceeding with it. Thus the Acts of 1868 and 1869 gave effect to all the chief features of my scheme of 1856, except the sixpenny rate, which did not come into operation until several years later.

In order to construct a postal telegraph system, the first step was to throw together on one enormous map all the wires, to whomsoever belonging, which were available for public use. Then were weeded out (on paper) superfluous wires and apparatus. The wires thus liberated were marked to be utilized for post-office extensions; finally, we drew in, on the map, new wires for towns still left out in the cold.

In preparing our great map of the proposed postal telegraphs, the guiding principle was an extension of the telegraph to all head post-offices; the connection of such offices with their branches and the larger village post-offices; and, lastly, the concentration in one office in each town of the apparatus and clerks of competing telegraph companies. Thus the several systems in operation were remodelled, and combined on intelligible principles with the new wires to be erected by the Post-Office.

My aim was to keep head-post-office wires distinct from sub-post-office wires, and to provide for the large towns direct, and even duplicate, circuits. In a subsequent chapter telegraphic processes will be

more fully explained; so at this point it is only necessary to remark that, to admit of a message being telegraphed from one place to another—say from London to Barnet—an insulated wire must be stretched between the two points. Such a wire, if it began in the General Post-Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand and ended at the post-office at Barnet, without being connected with apparatus at other points on the way, would be called a direct or clear circuit. If it touched at the Finchley and Whetstone post-offices, it would be an omnibus circuit.

Three of the companies had wires, it may be instanced, from London to Birmingham. Most of them were clear, but some called at towns by the way. It is a serious hindrance to the effective working of busy circuits for a connection to be made with intermediate towns. Where the number of messages warranted the arrangement, the Post-Office planned a clear circuit; where they did not, three or more towns had to be grouped on the same wire in an omnibus circuit. The London and Birmingham wires, whatever the route, were all redrawn on a separate map. The probable wants of the Birmingham office under unified management and a reduced tariff were calculated. In the result it was found that there would be wires to spare, which were then planned to be cut up in a manner shown on the map, to provide local and other circuits.

For example, one company had a wire (1) which ran, it may be assumed, from London to Birmingham,

touching at Leamington; another a wire (2) from London to Wolverhampton, touching at Birmingham; and a third a wire (3) from London to Birmingham, touching at Coventry. By dividing No. 1 at the Leamington post-office, a direct or clear circuit from London to Leamington, and a clear local circuit from Leamington to Birmingham, were at once provided—two circuits out of one wire. At Leamington a second instrument for the new local circuit was the only requirement. This division enabled messages to pass from London to Leamington and from Birmingham to Leamington at the same moment. The clerk in London and his message had not to wait until Leamington finished receiving a message from Birmingham, or *vice versa*.

In the case of No. 2, excision of the instrument at Birmingham gave a clear circuit between London and Wolverhampton, while local communication between Wolverhampton and Birmingham was restored by the erection of a new length of wire between the two last-mentioned towns.

Lastly, Coventry, by a division of No. 3 wire at that town, got a clear London wire on the one side and a local Birmingham wire on the other. All this was done without depriving Birmingham of any needful wires to London.

The subjoined diagrams illustrate the text, and also furnish another and similar example of the recasting of the circuits.

## LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM.

BEFORE THE TRANSFER.				AFTER THE TRANSFER.			
	1	2	3		1	2	3
London	o	o	o	London	o	o	o
Coventry			o	Coventry			o
Leamington	o			Leamington	o	o	
Birmingham	o	o	o	Birmingham	o		o
Wolverhampton		o		Wolverhampton		o	o

In the next example, it will be observed that out of omnibus wires clear circuits were provided between Newcastle and Darlington, Newcastle and Leeds, Newcastle and York, Newcastle and Durham, and Darlington and Leeds, at the mere cost of a new wire between Newcastle and Durham :

## YORK, LEEDS, AND NEWCASTLE.

BEFORE THE TRANSFER.				AFTER THE TRANSFER.				
	3	4	5		3	4	5	6
Newcastle	o	o	o	Newcastle	o	o	o	o
Durham	o	o		Durham	o			o
Darlington	o		o	Darlington	o			
Leeds	o	o	o	Leeds	o	o	o	
York			o	York			o	

Clear circuits, as stated, were in the main aimed at ; but, as a matter of fact, the department had to begin with a less effective system, because it was impossible to make all the changes beforehand. The wires to

be rearranged were in actual use. As soon, however, as the Post-Office was firmly established in the saddle of telegraphy, it sent me to travel over the whole United Kingdom a second, and even a third, time (so rapidly did business expand) to make final adjustments and shape new facilities.

In 1875, on appointment as Surveyor-General for telegraph business, my function was to overrun the country yet again. A Select Committee of the House of Commons which sat in 1876 to inquire into telegraph administration reported that—

‘The Post-Office has recently attempted to remedy this defect (in organization) by appointing an officer of large telegraphic experience—Mr. Baines—as Surveyor-General of Telegraphs. . . . Organization which is essentially local in administrative detail would culminate in the Surveyor-General, whose position and duties should be much better defined than they are at present. He might be assisted by an efficient engineering officer as Inspector-General of Lines and of the mechanical arrangements in offices. . . . An electrician might also be appointed. . . . The principal reorganization which the committee recommend is that there should be no separate engineering department as a distinct branch of the telegraphic service, but that the engineering officers, etc. . . . should culminate in the Surveyor-General.’

The object in view was to amalgamate more perfectly the postal and telegraphic sides of the department. But in the result things went on very much as before. For about six years my endeavour as Surveyor-General was so to shape proposals as to combine economy with efficiency. It was needful personally to visit almost every head post-office in

the United Kingdom, and exhaustively examine the methods and the sufficiency or otherwise of the staff, and the means of communication. This, though an arduous, was an acceptable duty.

Closely associated with me under Mr. Scudamore's direction in the work of preparation for the acquisition of the telegraphs were several able men, most of whom have risen to distinction.

One of them—Mr. (afterwards Colonel) Du Plat Taylor—gave valuable help. He assisted in settling which of the then existing telegraph offices in the Metropolis should be maintained, and which abolished; where new ones ought to be opened; and, moreover, he virtually introduced what are now known as branch offices. In 1832 there were only four branches in London, and although in course of time some were added, it was not until 1870, on the introduction of postal telegraphy, that (as one result of Mr. Du Plat Taylor's efforts) the present full development was attained. He organized very thoroughly the Metropolitan corps of boy messengers, assisted in allocating the telegraph force, and actively occupied himself in planning and carrying out the structural changes necessary for adapting acquired premises to postal telegraph purposes. In this way the advent of the telegraph gave new life to the Post-Office proper.

It was a great loss to the service when Mr. Du Plat Taylor left it to fill an important and lucrative post in mercantile life. He was one of the best

officers of the Post-Office, a most valued friend and colleague, and not only an admirable civil servant, but a soldier born. He organized, and after twenty or thirty years of hard work still maintains in the highest efficiency, the regiment of Post-Office Volunteers. For services in this respect, probably, he was made a few years ago a Companion of the Bath.

As another foremost worker, the late Mr. C. H. B. Patey, C.B., speedily mastered the principles and details of telegraphy. Testimony to his merits has been borne in warm terms in various official papers and minutes. He advanced rapidly in the service. Apart from the general work of telegraphic administration, which he thoroughly grasped, his success in managing the transmission of news was remarkable.

The absorbing nature of telegraph duty withdrew Mr. Patey in a great degree from active participation in the management of the purely postal side of the department. But not altogether, for he could find time, even amongst his most pressing engagements, to identify himself with the inner life of the Post-Office, to share in its social or benevolent gatherings, and to stamp his mind on whatever official questions came before him. In fact, in the later years of his life, important branches of postal work were added to the main duty of conducting telegraph business, and in all of these he showed the insight and good judgment which made him eminent in the Post-Office. His early death in the spring of 1889 was justly lamented.

Mr. J. C. Lamb, C.M.G., who regulated questions affecting the supply and pay of the force of telegraphists and messengers, has since become an Assistant-Secretary and a Royal Commissioner, and has charge of the Telegraph Department. One night, the Bill of 1868 being before Parliament, he was called back when about to leave the office at four or five o'clock. Some urgent work had to be done, and he was chosen to do it. Mr. Lamb took up his pen at 5 p.m. and, still fresh as the typical daisy, only put it down at nine o'clock the next morning.

In the news arrangements section of the telegraph branch, Mr. S. R. French, now Postmaster-General at the Cape of Good Hope, and Mr. F. M. Hodgson, C.M.G., now Colonial Secretary on the Gold Coast, did valuable work. To omit a reference to Mr. Alan Chambrè, who was equally at home in preparing a village shop to receive the apparatus of telegraphy as in representing, single-handed, the interests of the United Kingdom at a European Conference, would be to present a very incomplete picture indeed of the busy workers of that eventful period.

So also must particular mention be made of Mr. R. W. Johnston, afterwards Postmaster of Manchester, who organized the special and racing staff, and in many important respects rendered indispensable assistance; of Mr. John Ardron, who had a variety of new and difficult functions to discharge, especially in mastering old agreements, disposing of telegraph companies' buildings and the like, and on whom large



responsibilities now devolve; and the late Mr. A. B. Cooke, who gave material help in the preparation of line plans and plans of extensions.

Yet again, Mr. H. J. Shepherd, now Postmaster of Belfast, and Mr. J. W. Hyde, Controller of the Post-Office in Edinburgh (author of an excellent work on the Post-Office), were indefatigable. Of this little band, upon whom the heat and burthen of the day fell at headquarters prior to the transfer of the telegraphs, only a few now remain together.

After festivity, the bill!

To the Electric and International Telegraph Company was paid a sum of two millions nine hundred and thirty-eight thousand eight hundred and twenty-six pounds and nine shillings. That was statutory compensation to a company whose property in 1856 stood in the market at no higher value than £566,080, plus some debentures. The Magnetic Company received £1,243,536; Reuter's Telegram Company, £726,000; the United Kingdom Company, £562,264 9s. 11d.; the Universal Private Company, £184,421 10s.; and the London Provincial Company, £60,000.

Thus, at one fell swoop went five millions and three quarters of pounds sterling of the six millions voted by Parliament, and that before the Post-Office had brought to account the cost of a single new insulator or an ounce of sulphate of copper.

Such, in its main facts, is the story of the acquisition of the telegraphs.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE DAY OF TS.

THE process of transferring the telegraphs, purchased from private owners, to the Postmaster-General is stamped on my recollection. The actual day of the transfer, when LY was relegated to the limbo of the past and the star of TS rose above the horizon, has, indeed, every cause to be memorable, as will be seen.

The purchase had been effected on January 29, 1870, but the transfer was postponed until February 5. There was no formality, no last attendance of the former proprietors, no breaking of white wands, no yielding up even of the keys of the offices. On the night of the 4th the managing directors of the companies walked out; on the morning of the 5th the officials of the Post-Office walked in.

Pressing work had kept Mr. Scudamore and myself very late at the General Post-Office on the night of the 4th—far, indeed, into the next morning. At 2.30 a.m. we paid a final visit to the Central Telegraph Station, still in the control of the staff of the Electric and International Telegraph Company,

and went to the Cannon Street Hotel for a little rest. Not anticipating for a moment what the day had in store, we leisurely breakfasted at nine o'clock, and reached the Central Station—yesterday LY under the Electric Company, and to-day TS under the Post-Office—at about ten.

In the office were concentrated the circuits of nearly all the telegraph companies. It was crammed with instruments and clerks—men and women.

On this fateful and famous 5th of February, 1870, every countenance bore an anxious look, which deepened as the day wore on to something akin to despair. A thick fog overhung the city; a drizzling rain put telegraphy at its worst. Caught by the novelty of a shilling rate, the public poured in their messages amain, some to serve a trifling purpose, many for pure fun. There occurred a deluge, a perfect tempest of telegrams. In the Metropolitan Gallery piles and piles of messages speedily accumulated. Because of the very numerous points of delivery established by the department in London, the circulation was entirely new, and, until thoroughly understood, rather complex.

For example, the delivery of Pall Mall, where two postal districts joined, and for which numerous telegrams were expected, was divided. Despatches for one end would be marked to go by pneumatic tube to WGS (West Strand Telegraph Office), and for the other end by wire to SBF (St. James's Street Branch Post-Office). Such distinctions had to be mastered by

the sorting clerks, who were necessarily new to the duty.

The slightest hitch in any arrangement, however momentary, threatened instant confusion. The very method of sorting the messages, which had been found efficacious under the old company, when fewer hands dealt with fewer forms, became impracticable, and brought about immediate congestion under the severe pressure of a threefold volume of business.

In the Provincial Galleries the principal circuits soon became blocked. There, again, the revised circulation, which it was impossible to rehearse beforehand, brought us into trouble. Messages which, according to the old circulation of the Electric Telegraph Company, went to one town for retransmission should go, by the Magnetic Company's rules, to another, and perhaps, under the United Kingdom's system, to a third. No one could from his own knowledge determine the question. A new circulation book settled the precise route for every telegram, but its pages were strange to all. The sorting clerks essayed to trace circulation by the book; but the success with which this could be done at the rate of a message a minute, when filled-up forms were tumbling in by scores, may be conjectured.

It seemed at first sight almost impossible for the system to recover itself. Everything was against the department; arrangements which were good under the smaller amount of business of the companies,

broke down under the heavier pressure of a cheapened tariff and an increased supply of news. The force fell short of requirements, working, as it did, under unexpected difficulties ; some members of it, indeed, were imperfectly trained and new to thorough discipline. Fog and wet affected the electrical currents ; the wires here and there were in bad order ; many circuits were new and untried ; many were old and overdone with work before the postal era. Perhaps more serious than all was the difficulty of dealing with the flood of news reports which poured in for transmission from the two or three newly established agencies of the press. The low charge of twopence per seventy words, fixed by the Act for the transmission of copies of a press telegram, naturally led to a multiplication of the initial message.

One such copy at twopence was equal in length to nearly three ordinary telegrams at a shilling apiece, and it was soon apparent how great was the task which the Post-Office had before it in providing for the quick transmission of news without delaying the messages of the general public.

As if twopenny telegrams on the top of the shilling tariff were not burden enough for the new department, Parliament saw fit to enact a franking privilege, although there were still in the House of Commons members who could recollect the postal franks of pre-penny-postage days and their attendant abuses. Certain railway companies, which had enjoyed the privilege of sending telegrams free under their agree-

ments with the telegraph companies, were to have the like privilege over the wires of the Post-Office. The Postmaster-General, in short, was required to transmit free to their respective destinations all messages of the railway companies in any way relating to their business.

As a matter of course, liberal use was made of this privilege. 'The railway papers, if wanted, are on my study table,' one official telegraphed home in due form under a frank, 'and,' he added, 'tell Thomas to water the geraniums.'

So, what with shilling telegrams pouring in as though the first duty of man were to telegraph to someone else, twopenny telegrams in shoals, and free railway messages besides, the burden of those February days was almost more than official endurance could support.

Due to the fact that the telegraph companies possessed but a small Metropolitan system, and that the Post-Office by the beginning of January had planned and completed a very large one, we had been able, so far as the subordinate offices in London were concerned, to rehearse to a considerable extent, for some weeks before the transfer, what would have to be done when the postal scheme came into actual operation, and to shift in many cases the companies' wires, instruments and officials into our own premises.

It had been possible, also, to provide clerks for new offices a week or two beforehand, so that they got

accustomed to the circuits before the moment came for positive action. The result was that, after the first day or two of shilling telegrams, all worked smoothly throughout the Metropolitan telegraph system, and has done so ever since. In this case to cure hitches was comparatively easy. An extra clerk or two could be sent here or there by cab in an hour; an extra wire could be run in a day or so. But as regards the provinces the matter was wholly different.

Costly and laborious efforts were needed in the way of repairs and reinsulation—processes which in themselves, by the line faults they temporarily brought about, added for a time to the embarrassments of the department. To run a new wire meant, in most cases, the distribution of stores along, perhaps, a hundred miles of railway or road, and the arming and insulation of 3,000 posts by gangs already overdone with other urgent works.

However, by dint of untiring application on the part of all concerned, chiefly the Engineer-in-chief, the Assistant-Engineer, and the divisional engineers—animated and encouraged, truth to say, by the unflagging energy of Mr. Scudamore—light began to break on this gloomy period. All concerned worked literally night and day.

What the officers of the telegraph companies thought of the postal officials who came among them is not known—new-comers who altered the circulation, changed the apparatus, and acted as though to

the manner born. What strange impressions were produced on the chief executive Metropolitan officer of modern telegraphy, Mr. H. C. Fischer, and on Messrs. Edward May and Thomas Barlow, his immediate lieutenants, can only be conjectured. And yet how kind, how cordial, was their attitude! how exquisite the tact displayed under peculiar and trying circumstances!

Whatever might be the help which the officials from the Post-Office could give in general management, this at least was clear: the burden of routine at the Central Office fell on the Controller and his assistants. How did they find time to consider and dispose of the mass of manuscript which of necessity poured in upon them? Where, indeed, was the house-room to work in? Every corner was crammed with apparatus. Reports, explanations, complaints, appointments, charges, salaries, wages, discipline, proposals—the sheets of foolscap which these matters represented at the Central Station alone would have covered Hyde Park.

Messrs. May and Barlow retired to a glazed enclosure in the instrument-room about the size of the table at which this page is written, and there, stockaded with memoranda, and entrenched behind diaries, manfully fought throughout the fray. And as for the ubiquitous Controller, where did he find resting-place for the sole of his foot, or quiet corner for the unceasing pen? How did he contrive—eclipsing the famous bird of Sir Boyle Roche—not



only to be in two places at once, but to fulfil a dozen different functions at the same moment?—now mourning over the delay to GW; now penning the despatch of sagacity; now casting the eye of authority over the Metropolitan Gallery, or rearranging the duties of the staff; and now at provincial circuits making bricks, not always with straw of the best quality.

One mirthful incident, at any rate, relieved the strain. If there was an edifice of which the Electric Company's officials were proud, it was the gigantic desk or pulpit in the chief instrument-gallery wherein the matron was installed, and from whence, like Lars Porsena in the ivory car, she surveyed the legion, mainly composed of young women, at work below.

As, at eleven o'clock one night, perplexed to find space for a new sorting-table, we cast eyes on this stately pile, its doom was swiftly fixed. Was Mr. Scudamore a man to be balked by a few planks? Had my youth been given up to carpentering in a potting-shed at home for nothing? Were not the doughty Cooke, with his pleasant ways, the sprightly Haines, and the ingenious and many-sided Chambrè, all available? In a twinkling, by battering-ram and strengthful wrench, down went the mighty desk; and in the morning, when the valued matron of the day came serenely to ascend her accustomed perch, that abiding-place was not, and smiling damsels, seated at a table, nimbly sorted telegrams on the site.

The telegraph branch had so far advanced in the

path of reform and order, that by the beginning of May, the weather improving, the wires being in better order, and the staff all over the country having shaken down into their places, difficulties began to diminish; and although there was, as subsequent experience showed, an immense deal to accomplish, yet for all concerned the troubled waters had become comparatively still and clear.

In the opinion of the chief, it was then feasible, as it had always been expedient, to send someone to Ireland to reorganize the telegraphs on principles already accepted, and to blend them into harmony with the English system. Eventually it was my lot to be sent.

‘Under these circumstances,’ wrote Mr. Scudamore on May 10, 1870, ‘I propose, with your lordship’s concurrence, to send Mr. Baines . . . and to instruct him and Mr. Sanger to prepare a report for your lordship’s consideration of the arrangements which it will be necessary to make in Ireland with a view to bring the system there into complete harmony with that which we have been able to establish in Great Britain.’ The Postmaster-General (Lord Hartington) sanctioned the proposal, and no time was lost in giving effect to it.

The first object was to clear of delay in the transmission of messages the wires from Dublin to Belfast and Cork, and to plan a new five-wire cable from Holyhead to Howth. The late Mr. Sanger and his staff threw such energy into the matter that very

soon messages went to and from Belfast and Cork almost instantaneously. Before long, they went swiftly to and from London.

The so-called commercial management was transferred to the surveyors and the postal department proper; the old telegraph system was recast, extensions were made to every town and considerable village, delays all over the island gradually disappeared, and the revenue rapidly increased. In short, after a period of pretty close application, the Irish telegraphs were brought into due order.

The Post-Office contrived to secure in Ireland what in Great Britain the Act of 1868 unhappily cancelled—the agreements which regulated the use of the railways for telegraphic purposes. The Post-Office maintains its own wires in Ireland entirely. In Great Britain it does so for the most part only on the roads and canals.

The work in Ireland done, next came to my hands a thorough revision of the whole of the system in Great Britain, in order to adapt it still more closely to the wants of the public; and the Post-Office telegraphs of the United Kingdom became, and it is believed are still, as perfect as any other system of telegraphs in the world.

To this end, Mr. W. H. Preece, C.B. (now the Engineer-in-chief), the late Mr. T. H. Sanger, in Ireland, and the late Mr. Edward Graves, in England, also at sundry times the late Messrs. Shaw, Walsh, and Tansley, and Captain (now General) Webber, R.E.,

in command of the Telegraph Company of the Royal Engineers, actively contributed. New wants were met, and the original scheme of postal wires, which of necessity left much for subsequent adjustment, was made harmonious in all its parts, and simple and sufficient.

To expedite matters in conducting paper-work, recourse for the first time in postal experience was had to the services of shorthand writers in writing from dictation letters, minutes, and instructions. Within the office were several skilful professors of the stenographic art. During six months, from the date of the transfer, no fewer than seventeen thousand cases were so 'treated,' as the phrase went. The notes transcribed covered sixteen thousand sheets of foolscap (written half-margin, it is true), and contained 981,140 words. Messrs. Hyde, Tapp, Denman, and others—how you wrote like lightning, with tireless pen, throughout the sleepless nights, and sometimes, alas! the peaceful sunny Sundays!

What was an ordinary week's work of the telegraph branch of the Secretary's office? Even during a week in November, 1870, when the stress of installation was over, an account showed that 5,578 cases had been dealt with, and close on a thousand foolscap letters written.

What else? In the twelvemonth from October, 1869 (*i.e.*, before), to October, 1870 (*i.e.*, after), the Transfer, there were bought and fixed in position 3,382 tons—equal to about fifteen thousand miles—of

iron-wire, nearly two thousand miles of gutta-percha-covered copper-wire, about one hundred thousand poles, and a million of other fittings. Moreover, 3,500 telegraph instruments were obtained, and 15,000 batteries to work them with. Joint stock companies were valued and paid out; leased buildings were taken over and occupied. The Post-Office engaged and trained about 2,400 new telegraphists and temporary assistants, and appointed more than 1,600 additional telegraph messengers. Of course, these labours were spread over the whole country, and not limited to the service of the Central Telegraph Station, though they were incidental to the day of TS.

There was not much idle time in the telegraph branch of the Secretary's office, in the Receiver and Accountant-General's office, under the capable and untiring Mr. Chetwynd, or in the Solicitor's office, under the adroit and sagacious Mr. Ashurst.

At the central station of the Electric Company—crammed as it was with apparatus and staff—we held on until the new Post-Office buildings in St. Martin's-le-Grand were ready. This was in January, 1874. A year or so earlier Colonel Du Plat Taylor, C.B., went with me down to the Office of Works, in Whitehall, with the plans of the new building, which had been laid out for postal purposes only; and in a twinkling, Mr. Williams guiding, the top floor was swept clear of obstructions, and there was formed on paper a magnificent central gallery with four wings. This flat two years later became the new TS.

It remains to this day as then planned, except that additional storeys have since been built over the wings, and a supplementary building for dining and cloak rooms has also been provided.

Shifting over the wires and apparatus from the old central station to the new one was an intricate and delicate work. It was swiftly effected without the slightest hitch, and without anyone but the actual operators in London being aware of the change. The chief actors, to whose careful foresight and resource the credit of this feat is due, were the Controller of TS, Mr. Fischer, and the Superintending Engineer for London, Mr. H. Eaton. If any part was mine, it was a lesser one.

The result was a triumph of ingenuity, and yet, as most great measures are, the work was arranged on a perfectly simple basis. First of all, the new galleries were fitted up (except as regards instruments on the table, a few spare sets only being *in situ*), an accurate plan was made of the tables, and the position of each set of apparatus was definitely settled. Let us as an instance take the case of the southern terminus of a wire, No. 45, from Liverpool to London (Telegraph Street), which had to be shifted to St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Late at night, on a local wire set up for the purpose, Mr. Eaton, at Telegraph Street, said to Mr. Fischer, at the Post-Office: 'At 11 p.m. we put through 45 Liverpool.' At 10.59 $\frac{3}{4}$  Telegraph Street said to Liverpool, on circuit No. 45: 'Wait'; and at

eleven o'clock all that the Post-Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand had to do was to call Liverpool on the new instrument fixed at the new end of No. 45, and say, 'G'—meaning 'Go on'—and Liverpool went on with the messages, all unconscious that he was telegraphing to a new point a mile from the old one.

In an agreed order each telegraph clerk on duty came over to the Post-Office with a liberated instrument under his arm, which was instantly joined to a wire waiting to be put through, and to battery connections already provided, and so, by two or three o'clock in the morning, the Post-Office—*i.e.*, the new TS—was fully equipped; the last instrument was out of the old TS, the last gas-jet turned off, and the thronged, humming, tapping, clattering, and, it must be added, grimy halls were left to silence, darkness, and the astonished mice. The new day of TS presented very different conditions from those of the old one.

Shortly before the transfer of the telegraphs occurred, the average payment made by the sender of a telegram to any part of the United Kingdom was estimated to be 1s. 11d. The actual produce of a telegram is now 7·7d.—say 7¾d. The public, in short, send 70 millions of inland telegrams at 7¾d., in place of 6 millions at 1s. 11d. Of course, there is another side to this picture. State telegraphy is not conducted at a net profit. But it gives to the public cheap, extensive, swift, and accurate service; and in

the transmission of news for the press has done wonders for the general benefit.

The millstone around the neck of the telegraph branch is the interest payable on eleven millions of capital outlay, equal at (say) 3 per cent. to a charge of £330,000 a year. Under the lighter burden of little more than £30,000 a year which the plan of 1856 would have had to bear, the revenue from the outset, plus the money value of the beneficial privileges which were lost at the transfer, would in all probability have sufficed to secure at any rate equilibrium between the two sides of the telegraph balance-sheet. However, regrets are in vain.

Still, it may be contended that the country has had a good return, in the great benefits conferred on all classes by a telegraph service of unequalled completeness and efficiency, for even the stupendous outlay of eleven millions sterling. What is most to be regretted is that the free and full development of which the telegraph and telephone are yet capable should be hindered, as it can hardly fail to be, by the financial Old Man of the Sea who sits on the shoulders of the yet youthful Sinbad of inland telegraphy.

After glowing millions, the light of humble thousands is less dazzling. Yet the latter in a sense are more interesting than the former. The millions of messages with cheap telegraphy and extended facilities were bound to come; but the need of the Metropolis for a local exchange of telegrams between residents under a sixpenny or even a shilling tariff was an unknown



quantity. We planned a complete and effective network of Metropolitan telegraphs. At first the purely local messages from one part of London to another were very few. Then the public found out that postal telegrams went quickly and were not very dear. Soon a daily total was realized of 500 messages; then the total rose to a thousand, and in fifteen years' time to an average of 6,500 a day. This alone brought in a revenue, at 1s. 2d. a message, of about £120,000 a year, and that, too, of the least expensive kind to collect. More than half was certainly net profit.

Under the sixpenny rate Metropolitan messages have increased in number even more rapidly than messages for and from the provinces. They rose at a bound from 6,500 to 10,000, and now during the Parliamentary session perhaps reach an average of twenty thousand daily. Twenty thousand telegrams at 7·7d. each represent a vastly larger gross receipt than 6,000 or 7,000 at 1s. 2d. So, while the public has gained in pocket and convenience, the Exchequer, at all events as regards the sixpenny local messages, has not suffered, the distances traversed being short and the cost of transmission low.

On the day before the royal wedding, in July, 1893, the total of local Metropolitan messages reached nearly 30,000, though on a previous occasion—a day of dense fog (December 24, 1891)—the amazing number of 36,272 local messages had been transmitted. This, it must be remembered, was merely the number of telegrams from one part of London

to another, all passing through TS. Very few persons could get about at all because of the almost impenetrable darkness, so that those who were expected to move had to telegraph that they were immovable.

The success of the Metropolitan system of telegraphy cannot but be a source of deep interest and unalloyed pleasure to those concerned in planning it. In January, 1870, many a night was spent in Whitechapel, at Islington, and in Euston Square, in Vere Street, and at Buckingham Gate, trying the circuits, adjusting, rehearsing and altering, so as to make all perfect against the day when the Post-Office should be called on to show what it could do in the way of Metropolitan telegraphy; and twenty thousand ears of corn growing where few or none grew before are no mean reward of official exertions.

As a matter of course, close attention to the swift transmission and delivery of local telegrams in London equally benefited the collection and delivery therein of provincial telegrams, so that two birds were hatched from the same egg.

Amongst the substantial advantages accruing from the acquisition of the telegraphs by the State is swifter transmission. Subjoined is a rough-and-ready table of comparisons. No doubt in 1866 the most striking examples of delay were taken; but, on the other hand, the figures of 1893 by no means show the normal swiftness of telegraphy, especially at that well-managed office—Southampton.

STATEMENT SHOWING TIME OCCUPIED IN TRANSMISSION OF A TELEGRAM BETWEEN VARIOUS OFFICES IN 1866 AND 1893 RESPECTIVELY.

From	To	Time occupied in transmission.	
		In 1866.	In 1893.
London ...	Bournemouth	2 hrs.	10 mins.
„ ...	Brighton .....	1 hr. 15 mins.	17 „
„ ...	Downham ...	2 hrs.	24 „
„ ...	Sevenoaks ...	2 hrs. 30 mins.	10 „
„ ...	Southampton	3 „ 45 „	23 „
„ ...	Staplehurst ...	3 „ 15 „	15 „
„ ...	Uxbridge .....	2 „ 15 „	12 „
Derby .....	Atherstone ...	1 „ 30 „	12 „
			(From Leicester)
Manchester	Bolton .....	2 „ 15 „	5 mins.
Liverpool...	Preston Brook	3 „ 15 „	25 „

Mr. Preece has ascertained that on the morning of January 20, 1894, the mean time of transit of messages arriving in Newcastle-on-Tyne from all parts of the United Kingdom was 7·8 minutes. A similar examination of messages at Glasgow a few days before had resulted in a mean of 8·7 minutes. From the very first the efforts of the Post-Office to attain a high standard of swift transmission have been unrelaxing.

With the transfer of the telegraphs to the Post-Office came to an end a quaint and profitable practice. For many years it had been the habit of the department, on the occasion of a General Election, to collect tidings of the progress and result of the polls, and after supplying particulars to the Government of the day, to vend the intelligence to the clubs, newspapers

and news-agents. There being a postmaster in every town, we had necessarily an agent at every polling-place. So our organization was complete.

A certain number of clerks (eight or ten) of the Secretary's office were from time to time selected. They were allowed to make their own arrangements, and on the usual condition of supplying the Postmaster-General and Chiefs of the Government with reports, and bearing all costs, they had the benefit of any resulting profits.

The work was spread over a fortnight or three weeks—there was a good deal of preparation, and as telegrams were always pouring in, we had, in turn, to sit up half or all the night. I was lucky enough to have a share in the reporting of the General Election of 1868-9, and netted a good round sum. That was the last occasion of the Post-Office acting as the collector and vendor of news.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE.

*'Wires down to the north. Give notice of delay to all telegraph offices; accept messages for Scotland and Ireland only at senders' risk.'*

The reader of this official bulletin, which may be issued from St. Martin's-le-Grand at any season of the year, but especially in the winter months, or during the prevalence of the equinoctial gales, can take it for granted that a great wind-storm, travelling from the south-west to the north-east at the rate of 60 or 80 miles an hour, has cast, in sudden gusts and long, sustained blasts, a score or two of elms or other great trees across the main lines of telegraph communication.

Such a storm has repeatedly smitten wires crossed by a line drawn from Weymouth, through Salisbury, Swindon and Oxford, to Northampton, Peterborough and the Wash, flinging trees upon the road lines and strewing the railways and highways with masses of tangled wire and heavily-armed timber. Worse still

happens when a snowstorm combines with a gale, and thaw and frost rapidly alternate.

Then does the engineering department, rising undismayed, bring into play the First Line of Defence, and address itself with vigour and method to the reparation of damages. The postal telegraph system is carried partly along the highroads, partly on the railways. Railway appliances help swiftly to clear the wreck from the latter, but work on the former is slower and more laborious.

For the maintenance of postal wires on their property, the railway companies in Great Britain are responsible, receiving due payment; on the roads, all the work is constructed and maintained by the officers of the department. At the end of March, 1893, the post-office telegraphs, public and private, covered a total distance of 33,750 miles. In easy figures, perhaps more than 18,000 miles are on roads, and less than 15,000 on railways. This is mileage of line. The wires, if run out straight, would go nine times round the world—they count up to 209,046 miles. Mr. Preece looks after 139,000 miles; the companies, the rest.

The engineering branch is distinct from the surveying branch. It deals with all technical questions, and has nothing to do with the internal management of telegraph offices. The unit of organization is the lineman, who has to look after a certain length of road. Over him is an engineer in charge of a section composed of several linesmen's lengths. Next in order is

the Superintending Engineer, who is responsible for a large district comprising several sections, and whose headquarters are to be found dotted about the country—at Manchester, Cardiff, Birmingham, Leeds, Edinburgh, Dublin, and so on. Finally, the Engineer-in-chief watches over all.

Any failure in the action of a wire during the day-time is, of course, known instantaneously at two telegraph offices at least. Each sends word directly, by such means as are available, to the engineering officer and the lineman locally responsible; the latter starting at once in search of the fault, and the former taking any special steps he may deem necessary. If a postal wire fails on a railway, the telegraph superintendent in the service of the railway company arranges to repair the fault; if it is a road wire that fails, then the postal servant sets to work.

So much for an ordinary interruption affecting one or two wires only. But special provision has to be made for the great storms which result in more or less serious damage. To provide for these, general instructions are held by the whole of the staff of a given district detailing the steps to be taken by each individual. Every lineman starts with such assistance as he can collect in a definite and known direction. The sectional engineers muster their construction gangs and send them over the routes most heavily hit. The Superintending Engineer is informed where help is most urgently wanted: he collects men from portions of his district which have escaped injury, and

despatches them to the scene of action. Then he acquaints the Engineer-in-chief with the main facts and appeals for assistance if necessary. Thus, by perfect organization, the whole resources of the department are automatically brought into play and communication is rapidly restored.

The main centres for the manufacture and storage of telegraph plant are in London—at Mount Pleasant and Holloway, the factory at Holloway, however, confining itself to work on telegraph instruments. Poles are stored chiefly in the provinces, near the parts where they are likely to be wanted, but minor store-houses scattered about the United Kingdom keep a small supply to meet emergencies.

An annual expenditure of a quarter of a million of pounds sterling has to be incurred in order to keep these establishments well stocked with needful reserves of various stores. Poles, of course, are a chief requirement, and £45,000 is soon spent in laying up a sufficient supply. Even to fit them for use—with arms and insulators to support the wires they carry—costs £15,000 more, while a store of wire enough for a year's consumption eats up £55,000.

A few miles of submarine cable have to be available at a moment's notice, and they involve an outlay of £33,000; while instrument stores absorb £56,000, and battery and other stores and tools account for £30,000 more. Hence, storekeeping for Post-Office telegraphs is rather an expensive necessity.



With these reserves to draw upon, a capable chief, good organization, and a willing staff, the engineers set right the most extensive interruptions in an incredibly short space of time.

Does not my mind's eye call up a memorable episode? Once, many years ago, the first line of defence had its mettle tested in the middle of a winter's night. A snowstorm, followed by frost and wind, stopped the postal road-line telegraph between two great midland towns—A and Z. The head-engineer of the district was tripping at A the light fantastic toe, on an occasion of festivity at a friend's house, when the tidings reached him.

Equipped as he was, though with fur-lined coat over his dress-clothes and jack-boots in lieu of elastic pumps, he sallied forth, collected from their own snug beds a score or so of his merrie men, then got a couple of huge well-horsed excursion break-vans, filled them up with tools and wire, and as midnight sounded from the steeple of St. Philip's started forth towards Z.

Midway, a mile of shattered posts and tangled wire, some in the roadway, some hurled into the ditches, and all encrusted with frozen snow, formed a scene which, in the murky light of a clouded moon, was less cheering than picturesque.

The captain, taking in the situation with a glance, bade his crew cut away all the wires; he jury-rigged or reset the broken poles, ran out his new wire, spliced on serviceable lengths of the tangled skein, and by

daybreak all fifteen wires were 'through.' Then came the choicest feature of this episode.

Strictly speaking, rehabilitation of the line lay with the sub-engineer at Z. But he, good man, was sound asleep with his children around him, and knew nothing of the breakdown. At 9 a.m. daily it was his duty to report to his chief at A how all the circuits were working. So at nine o'clock he duly telegraphed as follows: 'Interruptions between A and Z during night. Wires all right now.'

If construction and maintenance centralize in the Engineer-in-chief, he is not without a personal staff to share his labour, though not his responsibility. An Assistant Engineer-in-chief (Mr. J. Hookey) and a Principal Technical Officer (Mr. J. Gavey) stand by Mr. Preece, who is both Engineer and Electrician, to aid him in all his doings. A Submarine Superintendent and a Superintendent of Electric Lighting, assisted by twenty-six officers of several grades, render help in various degrees. Altogether, 995 officers and men form the established staff, and they are aided by a fluctuating force, which varies from 1,500 to 2,000 men, according to requirements. These, at a cost of £231,010, uphold the telegraph system. Not that even this large sum covers the whole cost of maintaining postal telegraphs; £76,000 has to be paid to railway companies for similar work, the bill for travelling is £27,000, while materials for current use figure for £124,000; in all, the vote required for maintenance is £515,940.

These figures afford some idea of the ramifications of the postal telegraph system, and the cost of keeping it up, also of the weighty responsibility which the Post-Office undertook and still bears with a light heart.

Even with all this costly and extensive machinery of control at his disposal, Mr. Preece, my impression is, finds personal supervision indispensable to the full efficiency of the first line of defence.

Such was my own experience, in other fields, as Surveyor-General for telegraph business. A day—an hour even—in the telegraph office itself was worth a ream of correspondence. The trained eye of the superior, brought to bear now and then in a general way, sees at a glance the exact degree of efficiency prevailing, and includes at a sweep many things which perhaps escape the notice of the resident over-looker.

It may not be the case that when a line of telegraph is blown down or a submarine cable snaps that the Engineer-in-chief has to take the field (or the sea, as the case may be) in person. But he will certainly not allow a new trunk line to be constructed nor an old one reinstated without inspecting some portions of the work and satisfying himself of its quality.

Of course, the higher efforts of the Engineer-in-chief lie in the vocation of Electrician.

When the Post-Office took over the telegraphs, it appeared to me that it ought to show an early appreciation of the importance of technical training by

forming a corps of carefully selected cadets, who should go through prescribed scientific and practical courses to fit them for their profession. But, although the plan was actually put in operation, adverse circumstances prevented an exhaustive trial, and it collapsed. So, for many years, knowledge had, more or less, to be gained by the new intrant by rule of thumb. Even now, a settled recognition in the department of chemistry, metallurgy, and the kindred sciences would be to the public advantage. Much is left to individual effort, the thirst for improvement, and the hope of promotion.

The accustomed phrase of 'leaps and bounds' may be applied to the progress of education in electrical science during the past twenty years. Outside influences are largely to be thanked for this result. The Society of Electrical Engineers, by its meetings, discussions, and printed papers, has given a great impulse to an educated study of electricity; and deep-sea cable enterprise, and especially the extension of electric lighting, have provided motives for technical training.

It speaks volumes for the *esprit de corps* of the Post-Office that, although most of the original inventions of modern date—for instance, the Duplex, the Sounder, the Multiplex, the Telephone, etc., have come from without, all, or nearly all, important improvements of telegraphic apparatus have come from within; no official person, however, having the potent incentive of assured professional gain.

That telegraphy has made enormous strides during the last forty years is due greatly to the discovery of the gum known as gutta-percha, valuable as an insulating material. Caoutchouc, or indiarubber, is, it is true, an excellent dielectric; but the supply is scanty, the gum is dear, and it cannot be applied to copper wire in a homogeneous mass, but must be laid on in spiral strips, which are not easy to weld into perfect cohesion and render water-tight. Yet, for all that, its popularity, which had waned, is reviving, and for wires laid underground, indiarubber is again in use. Dr. Montgomerie, a surgeon in the East India Company's service, sent specimens of gutta-percha to the Society of Arts in London in 1842, and received in return the society's gold medal.

Ever since the recognition of the value of the gum in Europe, the destruction of *Dichopsis gutta*—a tree which towers to 140 feet, and measures as much as 20 feet in girth high up the trunk—has gone forward with alarming rapidity. It is calculated that, between 1854 and 1875, the exports of Sarawak alone represent the destruction of three millions of trees. Add to this the consumption of nineteen subsequent years, not in Borneo alone, but in the island of Sumatra and in the southern portions of the Malayan Peninsula also, and some idea will be gained of the havoc wrought in the tropical forest by the European demand for gutta-percha. The Rajah of Sarawak, Sir Charles Brooke, no doubt will take care of British Borneo and its timber lands.

The process of gum-getting is simple enough—it is, to kill the goose which lays the golden eggs. In the moist hot climates to be found between 4° of north and 3° south latitude, and 100° to 120° of east longitude, *Dichopsis* is plentiful. It is a soft-wooded tree, fibrous and spongy, yielding juice of a grayish tinge. The natives cut it down, top and lop, partly debark, hammer with mallets, and compel it to yield up its juice. This they collect in bamboos, or perhaps, as it stiffens into a paste and hardens into a reddish-brown mass, wrap up in leaves, and either then, or after a profitable admixture of sago, flour, sawdust, clay, and stones, carry down to market. At least, it was so in the old days. The hapless telegraph companies of the early fifties no doubt acquired their stocks at this stage; at any rate, before the elaborate and expensive process of purifying the gum was thoroughly understood. Thus, the first experiences of the Electric Telegraph Company with gutta-percha on a large scale were rather disastrous. To avoid the effects of adverse weather on badly insulated and indifferently jointed overhead wires, they went to great expense in laying underground copper wires coated with gutta-percha, from London to Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds.

The experiment failed. At first the insulation of the wires was too good; they retained, as in the case of the Dover and Calais wire, charges of electricity after the manner of a Leyden jar, instead of parting with them instantly, as well-behaved wires ought to do. At length they became too bad to be worked at

all, as imperfect joints soon permitted leakage, and impurity of preparation led the gum gradually to perish altogether.

The Magnetic Company had no better fortune in an underground telegraph from London to Dover, which worked in connection with the Submarine Telegraph Company's wires to the Continent.

The Electric Telegraph Company looked for aid from civil engineers.

Messrs. Edwin and Latimer Clark came from the erection of the Britannia Tubular Bridge to the rescue, and revised the methods all round. They introduced improvements in erecting, and especially in insulating, open wires, did away with winding-posts, obtained a better quality of wire, soldered all joints, overhauled the telegraphic apparatus, and abolished underground work, except in towns. Mr. Cromwell F. Varley devised a new form of insulator, known perhaps to this day as a 'brown Varley,' and he hit on many better forms of commutator and relay. Dividends had to be earned for expectant shareholders, and these thoughtful revisions soon poured showers of gold, in the shape of enlarged profits, upon the gratified proprietors.

Gutta-percha for a time was under a cloud. Soon better methods of preparation were adopted. Pure gum came into the market at enhanced prices. Its reputation revived. Almost the first act of the Post-Office, in entering on telegraphy, was to lay down a cluster of gutta-percha-covered wires under the highroad

from Liverpool to Manchester. Aërial lines of telegraph, however, still held their own as easier to manage and cheaper to erect, if not to maintain. But whether gutta-percha or indiarubber be employed as an insulating material, the use of covered wires must before long become general; inasmuch as security of inland communication will never be attained until main trunk lines shall have been laid, like water-pipes, under ground, and the time is probably ripe for a renewal in this direction of further experiments on a large scale.

That done, the vicissitudes of weather will have but little effect on the postal telegraph system in the great centres of population and commerce, and its first line of defence will be impregnable.

Meanwhile, the locality of 'faults' on the wires has to be sought out by the process known as testing.

Once, the perplexing nature of a 'fault' on a Kentish circuit defied the most painstaking officials. Every now and then—in fact, almost every day, and even two or three times a day—the wire 'broke down'—that is to say, refused to transmit the electric current—while at other times the most delicate tests failed to show anything amiss. By degrees the fault was localized at a certain bridge over a stream crossed by a small branch railway. Still, the wire was sound enough when tested from either abutment.

Finally the inspector in charge, believing in malefic influence, hid himself behind a haystack and, biding his time, awaited the offender. No one appeared, but



soon a train whisked by. Half an hour later a mounted messenger galloped up from the telegraph office with the tidings of 'Fault on.'

Here was a mystery. Suddenly a ray of light illumined the darkness.

The bridge was of wood built upon piles, and was not very solid. Now and then a passing train, heavier or speedier than usual, gave it a jerk; each jerk detached a coupling-wire from the telegraph line, which after a time jerked back again of its own accord into position.

The testing of wires plays an important part in the maintenance of Post-Office telegraphs. Mr. Culley, when Engineer-in-chief, could hardly attach too much importance to the practice of applying regular and frequent tests, irrespective of the existence of known faults. It would trench too much on the technical field to describe the process closely. It is seen in perfection when applied to submarine cables, but even on aerial lines the rapidity with which the locality of an interruption is determined strikes the observer as remarkable.

All the wires throughout the country are divided into convenient sections. Each morning an electrical current of known strength is sent by A, wire by wire, and B reads off the amount of deflection on a galvanometer. The number of degrees of deflection which the galvanometer should indicate if the wire were perfect is known, and the difference between the theoretical standard of full efficiency and the actual

reading shows the condition of the wire. Positive faults are quickly localized by simple modifications of this system.

An experienced testing clerk can always make a shrewd guess at the distance of an actual breakage—provided that the broken wire does not touch the earth, or a conductor to the earth—by the strength or weakness of the vibration of the needle of the galvanometer, which thus gives a rough and ready indication of the lengths it is expedient to test first.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## BEHIND THE SCENES.

IN the telegraph system of the British Isles, and in those of other countries too, simplicity and complication are strangely blent. The electric telegraph even in its most elementary form, is a magical contrivance, the true fundamental mystery of which has yet to be made plain.

A wire stretched from London to Aberdeen is just as good for telegraphic (not telephone) purposes as a double wire; that is, one taken from London to Aberdeen, and doubled back again from Aberdeen to London for the sake of forming a telegraphic loop or circuit—nay, for general purposes it is perhaps even better. For the fact is established that only one-half of the circuit need be of wire, provided that the extremities are dipped in the earth. In short, one end of the wire may be soldered on to the water-pipe of the Aberdeen Post-Office, and so be 'put to earth'; the other, twisted into a mass of coke and buried in a damp spot in St. Martin's-le-Grand,

or even soldered on to the pneumatic tubes, will make the circuit complete.

The telegraph from certain points of view is simplicity itself. If the neophyte or the expert of long experience smartly tap twice in the Birmingham Post-Office on a little spring, or so-called 'key,' an operator at Glasgow, 300 miles off, shall forthwith write down on his message-form the pronoun 'I.'

Again, a message sent by Morse apparatus through one telegraphic wire may, by means of a telephone attached to another wire, be read off, the two wires being, perhaps, parallel only for a mile or two, and then branching in opposite directions. This is induction. What more perplexing?

The curious shall be handed a paper slip at TS, a narrow ribbon some yards in length, and requested to put the proper end between the two little rollers of a transmitter, and move a slight token of brass. Lo! a great statesman's speech begins to flow into a wire to the North at the rate of three hundred words a minute; and as the spectator watches the so-called tape run its swift course, nimble scribes 300, 400, or 500 miles distant—at Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and perhaps at Aberdeen—are simultaneously writing out at length the ripe utterances of a well-balanced mind.

How is it all done? Let us lift the curtain, go behind the scenes, and see for ourselves.

At the outset the reader may require to have the electric telegraph described to him. Mr. Edward B.

Bright, in his able work on the telegraph published by Walton in 1867, covered 269 pages, and there would have to be added at least another hundred pages to bring the book up to date. Nevertheless, some interesting details may perhaps be given in a few paragraphs.

A slip of copper and a slip of zinc, plunged to three-fourths of their length in a tumbler of acidulated water, are the elements of a minute but actual galvanic battery or cell. A loop of wire a foot long (or a mile), connecting the upper edges of the slips, would complete the electric circuit, and put the battery in action.

As soon as this metallic connection is made and the circuit formed, electrical action is 'set up'—*i.e.*, electricity flows through the fluid of the cell, always in the same direction, from one metal to the other, and through the connecting loop back to its starting-point. There is the fundamental principle, the actuating agency of all electric telegraphs.

The chief forms of electric telegraph are the Needle, the Morse, the Inkwriter, the Sounder, the Bell, the 'Hughes,' the 'Wheatstone' (in two forms), the Telephone. The Morse, the Inkwriter, the Sounder, and one form of the Wheatstone have so much in common that they may be classed together, in which case the list whittles down to six: the Needle, the Morse and its satellites, the Bell, Hughes, A B C (the other form of Wheatstone apparatus) and the Telephone.

We might stretch out the loop of our battery-cell so as to reach from London to Brighton. We shall not, however, want two wires, as the earth will do duty for one-half of the circuit, so one wire will suffice. The Brighton end shall be joined, for a special reason, to a hundred yards of very fine copper wire covered with silk, carried to the earth. In London one plate of the cell shall be connected with the line wire, the other with the earth. That completes our circuit.

We now take a bit of soft iron as long and as thick as one's thumb, and coil tightly around it the fine copper wire, so forming a bobbin. All this time the electricity from the two little plates of the battery-cell in London is whirling around the bobbin and its iron core. The core has now become magnetic, and will attract iron and attract or repel another magnet. Disconnected, the electricity ceases to flow through the wire, and the magnetism as instantly ceases; reconnected, it returns. If this be repeated once in a minute, a hundred times, a thousand times in a minute, as often will the core acquire magnetism or part with it. This is the basis of the Morse, the Sounder, the Inkwriter, the Bell, the Wheatstone transmitter and receiver, and the Hughes type-printing telegraphs.

Unwind the bobbin; cast away the core. Now borrow a mariner's compass in a square box. Around its four sides again wind from right to left the fine silk-covered copper wire through which the current

from our galvanic battery in London is still flowing. The needle which, when borrowed, pointed due north and south, now points at right angles—the north end to the east. Rewind the wire, this time from left to right; now the needle reverses its direction, the north end pointing to the west. Here is the needle telegraph invented by Cooke and Wheatstone.

All the rest of the mechanism in each form of instrument merely provides the means of applying, reversing, or cutting off the electricity with ease and precision, or of turning to account a magnetized core or the movement of a magnetized needle hung vertically.

Put the core back again in its bobbin or coil of tightly-wound, fine, silk-covered copper-wire, and in front of it fix a round disc of thin iron about the size of a crown piece. If currents of electricity be sent through the coil of wire a hundred times a second, the disc will emit a musical note; if a thousand times a second, it will whistle. If the currents be made to vary in frequency and strength, as do the sounds of the human voice, it will reproduce actual speech. This is the telephone.

The phonograph I have not referred to, because it has no connection with the telegraph or the telephone. It is a mechanical arrangement for recording sounds and reproducing them when wanted. But the phonograph must not be passed over, if for no other reason than that it is another instance of the almost limitless

ways in which electricity can be usefully applied to telegraphic purposes.

Technically described, it is an instrument which enables additional communication to be maintained on wires already occupied by 'Morse' or 'Needle' apparatus. The phonopore 'transmitter' causes very rapid oscillatory currents to pass to the line, and these are superimposed upon the semi-permanent currents of the ordinary telegraph. The receiving relay is a very sensitive one, and is arranged in a condenser circuit, so that the permanent currents used in the ordinary working do not affect it; but the rapidly moving currents of its own transmitter set up a movement which, by means of a local battery, brings in the phonopore sounder. In other words, while one instrument sending currents leisurely is in possession of the wire, this interloper, by means of a very rapid succession of currents, is able to use it also without interfering with the rightful owner.

But so far the instrument has proved unreliable and troublesome, whilst what is known as the 'Cardew' vibration method, as used in war-time (which will do exactly the same thing if a telephone is used to receive the signals), is a good steady arrangement. There is, however, this rather serious objection to both systems, that messages sent by their means could be heard all over the United Kingdom by induction.

Now as to symbols, whether visual or acoustic,



and the way of 'reading' from the various forms of electric telegraph.

The needle-telegraph, as will have been gathered, signals by momentary signs, and is read by the movement of a vertical needle turning freely on an axle, and deflected to the right hand or the left by the current passing through a coil of wire hung near it.

The 'Morse' is read by means of dots and dashes imprinted on a paper slip, and the Sounder by long or short sounds emitted by an iron armature striking on the iron core of an electro-magnetic bobbin.

The 'Hughes' type-printer, which in England is principally used in connection with the Continental telegraph system, depends on the accurate revolution of a wheel armed with type, the strip of paper on which the letters are to be impressed being jerked up against the appropriate letter at the proper moment by an ingenious electrical arrangement. When the Post-Office acquired the telegraphs in 1870, the Hughes went out of favour for inland circuits; but now that it has been brought to great perfection—it can grapple with a hundred messages an hour, and can be duplexed—there seems to be no reason why it should not largely displace the Sounder on busy wires. A beautiful yet simple contrivance so regulates the speed of revolution, which is usually about 120 per minute, as to ensure that both type-wheels—say the London and Berlin wheels—shall be so absolutely synchronous that there shall not be as much as a hair's-breadth of difference between the position

of a given letter at each end at a given moment. Otherwise the London 'A' might come out 'B,' or even 'Z,' at Berlin.

The 'Duplex,' the 'Quadruplex,' and 'Multiplex,' and the 'Wheatstone' automatic, present no distinctive feature as regards the way of 'reading' them, and, with the 'Relay' and the 'Bridge' (an apparatus for 'testing' telegraph wires), do not lend themselves to popular description beyond this:

The 'Duplex,' as improved by Stearns, doubles the capacity of a telegraph wire by enabling it to carry two messages at once, and this is effected chiefly by winding the covered copper wire around the bobbin of the electro-magnet in a particular way—half from right to left, half from left to right. The 'Quadruplex' allows of four messages being sent simultaneously on a single wire, two in either direction. The 'Multiplex' eclipses even the 'Duplex' and 'Quadruplex' in its marvels. Several messages—four, five, or six—may be sent at once in the same or opposite directions. In this case the secret of success lies in the unimaginable frequency and velocity of the electric pulses, vibrations, or currents. Rap on a table as quickly as may be with any hard substance. Let each blow represent the closing of a circuit—in other words, the transmission of an electric current to a distant point. In between each rap, however swiftly they may follow each other, there is time for many more currents to be made to flow. Here is table-rapping of a serviceable kind!

A succession of raps or taps, of course, implies an interval between each. Such interval is the inventor's opportunity. He so contrives that other manipulators may interpose a current, and another, and yet another. A swiftly-revolving rod is so arranged as to catch as much as is wanted of No. 1 telegraphist's electrical current while hurrying round to catch, a few inches off, what is required of No. 2's current, and so on almost *ad libitum*. Then—wonder on wonders!—it delivers to the line wire in due order this succession of currents, and they in turn make delivery to the several instruments at the other end—such end being, let it be supposed, a hundred miles off. Here is food for meditation! Each operator, it may be added, is quite oblivious of the rappings of his fellow-workers, and proceeds as though he had the wire entirely to himself.

The 'Relay' is a picker-up of new strong currents at an intermediate or terminal office. On a London and Aberdeen wire, the London current, which has lost something by leakage, moves a relay at Leeds or Newcastle, and such relay sends on a fresh current to Aberdeen, and the fresh current, having in turn lost something by leakage, moves a relay on the instrument-table at Aberdeen, which picks up from the local battery in the cellars and delivers to the instrument a suitably strong current, so that it may work thoroughly well.

While sitting alone in the dark little telegraph-room at St. Martin's-le-Grand in 1850, an elementary form

of relay occurred to me, which perhaps was the earliest thought of. An axle in two parts, each insulated from the other, was to be armed with curved points, which points should, according to deflections, dip into cups of mercury connected with a local battery.

I must leave for the next chapter some description of the beautiful 'Mirror' apparatus of Professor Sir William Thompson, now Lord Kelvin, and his still more exquisite adaptation known as the Syphon Recorder, which, when I saw it at work twenty years ago on the Eastern Telegraph Company's cable at Porthcurno, in Cornwall, struck me as the most remarkable apparatus yet produced.

Special instruments called 'repeaters,' which in reality are exalted forms of relay, are fixed at the principal offices, such as TS, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and Bristol. They act automatically, and transmit simultaneously to many places the same symbols. It is possible for a speech, delivered in even a small town in the North of Ireland or of Scotland, to be recorded at the same moment in every town, south or east, west or north, in the United Kingdom which publishes a daily newspaper. Does not this strike the reader as a story worthy of Scheherazade of the Arabian Nights? It has, moreover, an advantage over that wonderful compilation of narratives—it is true.

Now as to working circuits. An iron wire, 120

miles or so long, carried from London to Birmingham, and taken to the earth at each end, would, if cut in fifty places, and fitted at each division with a proper instrument, so as to connect every village and town on its way, admit of direct telegraphic communication being held between London and all the interpolated places.

But it is obvious that if each of the fifty villages had a message to send at the same moment, and if each message occupied the wire for an average of three minutes, the last message would sustain a delay of 150 minutes, or two hours and a half.

This would hardly be acceptable telegraphy, so a wire, to work at its best, must, when the number of messages is sufficient, be clear of intermediate apparatus; and as its capacity, though varying in proportion to the excellence of the instruments used, is limited, large offices require for the maintenance of rapid communication to other principal places not merely one clear wire, but several.

Every town of size within 100 miles of London, mostly all within 200 miles, and not a few at greater distances—Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dublin, Belfast, Cork, for example—are connected with the Central Telegraph Office (TS) by one or more clear wires, one end of each of which is soldered on to the pneumatic tubes at St. Martin's-le-Grand and the other put to earth at the distant town. Each office has its London wire, or wires, to itself. Some have two wires; others, such as Liverpool,

Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds, Birmingham, and Bristol, many more. But the smaller towns and villages use, as a rule, a wire which works into a town near at hand. In some cases the wire is shared by three or four village offices, which are formed into groups subordinate to a post town.

Just as with letters, so with telegrams, collection at convenient centres and distribution from others is the basis of organization.

The small towns and villages being connected usually with their respective head post-offices, and those with the Metropolis or some other large centre, circulation is simple. Thus, a telegram from Burgess Hill in Sussex to Sloane Street in London would be telegraphed first to the Brighton Post-Office, then re-telegraphed on a clear circuit to the General Post-Office, and, finally, again telegraphed on a clear circuit to the Knightsbridge Branch Post-Office for delivery. Or, again, a telegram from Ringwood to Sligo—Ringwood to Southampton, Southampton to London (TS), London to Dublin, Dublin to Sligo. It is, of course, more simple still as between the large towns. For example, the transmission of a telegram from Jersey to Belfast would involve only one repetition—thus: Jersey to London (TS), London to Belfast.

The telegraphs have cross-wires, just as the letter post has cross-posts. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast, and many other places, have wires from one

to the other quite distinct from the long through wires to TS.

The postal telegraph has at its command great resources for meeting special calls on its powers on public occasions of importance. If the Prime Minister were announced to speak at St. Albans, the leading newspapers all over the country would require almost verbatim reports. Now, St. Albans, in an ordinary way, probably finds one clear circuit to London enough for its needs. But on such an occasion it would require a dozen circuits—not only several to London, but others to Manchester, Leeds, York, Bristol, Edinburgh, and elsewhere.

The twelve circuits would be furnished by dividing six main trunk wires, all passing through St. Albans, some following the Great North Road, others the railway route. Then St. Albans would become possessed for the occasion of six circuits to the North (two of them, perhaps, to Manchester) and six to the South—all the latter, of course, going to London. The Manchester Post-Office might appropriate one of the two wires to its own use, and join the other to a local wire carried through, say, to Huddersfield. St. Albans would thus be able to 'speak' on one wire direct to Manchester and on the other to Huddersfield, using the other four northward wires for circuits to Liverpool, Dublin, Belfast, and York. Of the south lengths, the General Post-Office might take one for its own use, and join another to a Glasgow wire, a third to a Bristol wire, and so on. This would enable

St. Albans to 'speak' to London, and through it to Glasgow, Bristol, Edinburgh, Cork, etc.

In fact, assuming that there was an especial reason for establishing, not one circuit, but three or four circuits, from St. Albans to Bristol, it would be easy to do so. By temporary changes, at suitable points, telegrams could be made to flow direct from St. Albans to Bristol by London, by Birmingham, by Exeter, and even by the route of Southampton. All this would be the work of a moment. Thus, by means of the multiplicity of trunk-wires at its disposal, the Post-Office does what no single company could do, viz., places, on occasion, a country town—perhaps even a mere hamlet—at short notice and small cost, in direct telegraphic communication with the great centres of commerce and population.

The method of the Post-Office in preparing for the transmission of a large amount of news is worth following out. It may be assumed that notice is received at headquarters that on a given date the Chancellor of the Exchequer intends to address the electorate in Hampshire, and that a news agency requires a verbatim report of his speech to be transmitted from one point to others—let us say from Ringwood in the New Forest to London, Manchester, Bristol, and elsewhere. The telegraph will have to forward at least 20,000 words.

Now, Ringwood is not a large town, and a single-needle circuit to Southampton is enough for its ordinary wants. Twenty thousand words on a single-



needle circuit would occupy it for perhaps a thousand minutes, or about 16 hours; so clearly something better must be contrived.

When the appointed night arrives a choice band of selected telegraphists—chiefly from London, which is the home of automatic ‘Wheatstone’ working—arrive on the scene of action by five o’clock. They find that the Royal Engineers have transformed the little post-office at Ringwood into a great telegraphic centre. The single-needle wire has been put through to London and fitted with a ‘Wheatstone’ transmitter, working at the rate of 350 words a minute; a wire belonging to Dorchester or Weymouth has been divided, and one section used for a Bristol circuit, the other for a London one. With two London circuits there is a potentiality of telegraphing 700 words in a minute; so the telegraphists would soon catch up the speaker.

When the special staff arrive the circuits are tried through, the post of each man is allotted, and every preparation is completed. Soon after eight slip begins to pour in from the reporters; the punching clerks transform it into long punctured tapes, the transmitters begin to hum.

Now would come in with great effect the repeaters already referred to, so that by the act of a single manipulator at Ringwood a dozen different towns might be supplied simultaneously by means of repeaters fixed at suitable points with the same telegraphic despatch.

At the rate of 350 words a minute the whole speech would be worked off in an hour ; but abridged reports which take time have to be sent to other places than the great cities. Still, assuming that the orator began to speak at 8 p.m., his speech would be completely telegraphed by eleven o'clock to destinations in various parts of the United Kingdom, and the key clerks at the Ringwood office soon afterwards would signal ' All clear ' and ' Good-night ! ' to TS.

Swift provision of circuits for purposes such as these is rendered possible by the practice of bringing all wires into large post-offices, dividing them, joining the two ends of each wire to two brass terminals or screw-couplings a few inches apart, then joining the terminals together by an easily removable copper-wire. To disconnect the through wires and apply them to any purpose, all that is necessary is to unscrew the terminal and take off the copper-wire. Thus, at Rugby, the wire London to Birmingham becomes at pleasure, say, a Rugby and London length on one side, and a Rugby and Birmingham length on the other. To restore the continuity of the wire, the terminals are recoupled, and the wire is once more intact as a London and Birmingham circuit.

Telegrams usually circulate by the shortest route, but the shortest is not always the best. If Bristol has a telegram for Coventry, there is a choice of routes, *viâ* Birmingham and *viâ* London respectively. It is conceivable that a telegram from Bristol to Brighton would circulate more quickly *viâ* London,

which is the longer way, than *viâ* Southampton, which is the more direct. There would be a single repetition in each case, but the means of communication by London are the more ample of the two.

During extensive interruptions of the communication, the sailor's maxim of 'Any port in a storm' has to be acted on, and the telegrams transmitted by whatever route is open. There is a legend that the wires to the North being stopped, an urgent message from London for Newcastle was forwarded by way of Hamburg, first crossing the North Sea by a Government cable, and then recrossing it through the Great Northern Telegraph Company's wire. But this was before the Continental Gallery was established at the Post-Office.

What happened within my own knowledge was that we once sent messages during a breakdown from London to Carlisle through Sligo, thus: London to Dublin *viâ* Haverfordwest and Waterford, Dublin to Sligo, Sligo to Belfast, Belfast to Glasgow, and Glasgow to Carlisle.

In a 'Journalist's Note-Book'\* it has been recently related how the special correspondent, desirous of obtaining admittance to a newspaper office in Fleet Street, and being unable to gain attention, betook himself to the Central Telegraph Station, and telegraphed to the Irish end of the special telegraph-wire worked from the newspaper office to Ireland, and

\* Hutchinsons, 1894.

requested the Irish clerk to tell the Fleet Street clerk to come down and open the door.

History had repeated itself. In 1848, almost fifty years earlier, I was once alone at night in the branch telegraph office which then existed in Seymour Street, Euston Square, when the gas went out, and left me in total darkness. No matches were at hand, but I thought there might be some in the telegraph-office in Euston Square railway-station. No telegraphic communication existed between Seymour Street and Euston, but there was such between Seymour Street and Birmingham, and between Birmingham and Euston Square. So I telegraphed to Birmingham to ask Euston to send me over a match. In a few minutes came a whole box.

Let us imagine that we are at the Central Telegraph Station on the west side of St. Martin's-le-Grand. It is still mainly in the occupation of the Administrative Chiefs. The new building northwards, which stands on the site of the old Bull and Mouth coaching inn, yet awaits its tenants.

We begin at the beginning. In the basement are powerful steam-engines and boilers, vacuum chambers and cylinders of compressed air, all used in working the 36 miles of pneumatic tubes which, it may not be generally known, under-run London. In the basement, too, is the great battery-room, with its 27,000 galvanic cells and 437 accumulators. But a change seems to be already foreshadowed, when the ordinary cell will be relegated to the limbo of obsolete con-

trivances, and the dynamo or the accumulator shall provide for all wants. In fact, the wires to the Continent already work from accumulators.

On the ground-floor is the pneumatic-tube room, which stretches its long arms to Great Tower Street in the east, and to the House of Commons in the west. There is a mystery about this underground air-pumping which holds the visitor's attention. Here, for example, a written message may be received from Cornhill and sent on bodily to Charing Cross.

For the engines in the basement are constantly at work compressing air into one chamber and exhausting it from another, so driving or sucking felt carriers containing messages through the leaden pipes which, encased in iron ones, are laid from the Post-Office eastwards and westwards.

Through these pipes a stream of telegrams, the actual forms themselves, continually flows during business hours.

To blow a message—or, rather, the carrier—in which a dozen forms may be enclosed, from St. Martin's-le-Grand to Moorgate Street, the compressed-air tap is turned, and a mighty rush of wind hurls the carrier to its destination. To receive a carrier, the 'exhaust' tap is brought into use, and the air, perhaps of Mark Lane, tears along the partly pumped out pipe, pushing the carrier in front of it.

Pneumatic-tubes of small diameter connect various parts of the tube-room and TS galleries, and their use as house-pipes in the galleries themselves greatly

facilitates the conveyance of message-forms from one group of instruments to another. In a few of the large provincial towns also the pneumatic-tube as a transmitter of telegrams is made use of.

On the ground-floor, too, is the Wizard's Cave—the silence-room—which gives effect to that bold venture of the department, a telephone to Paris.

Let us enter the hydraulic-lift and ascend three floors. We are now in the instrument galleries, in the very heart of T.S. An animated spectacle presents itself—orderly, if the facts were known, to the smallest detail, yet confused and bewildering to the unaccustomed eye. The noisy hum of a thousand telegraphs in full operation salutes the ear. Busy clerks fill the vast saloons. Swift messengers flit to and fro; house-tubes at work from one part to another sustain a continual popping, as of the distant fire of some line of skirmishers.

Although the place astonishes, because of its size and activity, it is not in reality more wondrous than the snug enclosure at the end of the confectioner's shop where a Morse inker, a Wheatstone single-needle, or an A. B. C., effects the despatch of the telegrams. The same magic wands are in evidence at the Central Telegraph Office as behind the shop counter, but on a larger scale.

The vote required of Parliament for the Central Telegraph Office is one of £387,713. This sum provides for the employment of 3,683 persons. A part—819; roughly, a fourth of the whole force—are

women. They are exempt from night and Sunday duty.

The office is never closed, is never silent—not even on Sundays. In the Metropolitan galleries, groups upon groups of instruments may be dumb from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. five nights out of seven, and also from Saturday night to Monday morning, but in the Provincial galleries national life on all days and at all hours makes its pulsation felt. But whether by day or by night, an exact discipline regulates the galleries. The division of labour is simple.

The Controller, Mr. H. C. Fischer, holds all the threads in his hands. A Deputy-Controller, Mr. E. May, and four Assistant-Controllers, with suitable aid, form the Controller's personal staff. Then, overlooking the manipulative duty in the galleries and at the Stock Exchange and Commercial Sales Rooms Offices (which for special reasons are included in the responsibilities of TS), 119 superintendents and assistant - superintendents and 68 supervisors in various classifications bring their wits to bear. At the apparatus are stationed 1,897 telegraphists (young men), and 751 *telegraphistes* (young women), so that altogether, in the 24 hours, 2,835 manipulators, less those absent on holidays or sick-leave, are due in the TS galleries.

This does not exhaust the duty list, inasmuch as eight or nine hundred more people—tube attendants, messengers, commissionaires, constables and others—are required to render suit and service.

The chief telegraph office in London is essentially what would be termed in postal language a 'forward' office. It transmits, that is, receives from one point and sends on to another. All London pours its messages into TS—the large and neighbouring branch offices by pneumatic tube, the others by wire. Then TS telegraphs the messages to their destination or to another 'forward' office.

The Stock Exchange telegraph branch is a system apart. The wires run from exchange to exchange, and the messages flow from the sender's pen into, it might almost be said, the distant broker's ear. At any rate, they circulate with amazing rapidity. The Commercial Sales Room has a wire to Liverpool. With these exceptions, TS does all the telegraphing between London and the provinces.

No fewer than 1,118 circuits or distinct wires work out of the Central Telegraph Station. It daily forwards, receives and transmits never fewer than 90,000, and sometimes as many as 140,000, messages.

If one were required to state what is the most marked feature of the establishment, the transmission of news for the provincial press would probably be the answer. Under the Telegraph Act of 1868, the charge for the transmission and delivery of news is fixed at one shilling for every seventy-five words by day, or a hundred words by night, and two-pence extra for every 75 or 100 words transmitted to every additional address. Even rejecting the fact that the address of a news message is very short and



that the address of a private message may be very long, a shilling for a mean of 88 words, as compared with 3s. 8d., would be about a fourth, and twopence, as compared with 3s. 8d., a twenty-second part, of the charge which the public pay for an ordinary telegram of similar length.

Hence, the volume of news which is sometimes poured in upon the wires may be compared to a freshet in the Severn—a tidal wave which calls into requisition all the resources of TS to over-ride it. Most news messages are first punched on a paper slip, which then presents an infinity of little holes, thus :

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  oo  ooo      oo  o      ooo  ooo
  ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo
  oo  ooo      oo  o      ooo  ooo
  I   s        i   t        s   o

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Then the 'punched' slip is put into the 'Wheatstone' and transmitted; the same wire conveys the same currents of electricity to Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, and on the paper slip at all three cities the round holes punched in London produce the black dots and dashes of the Morse Code :

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  . . . . .      . . —      . . .      — — —
  I   s        i   t        s        o

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Then at TS they take out the 'punched' slip from the Liverpool circuit and send it by another transmitter simultaneously to all the principal Yorkshire towns (or *vice versa*). A thousand words run through in three minutes.

The Continental Gallery, or cable-room (TSF), in-

cluding the Paris telephone, is another remarkable feature of this great Central Institution. Up to the end of March, 1889, telegraphic communication with the Continent was in the hands of the Submarine Telegraph Company, under an agreement scheduled to the Telegraph Act, 1868, which company had established itself first in Cornhill and ultimately in Throgmorton Avenue.

On April 1 a second, though smaller, transfer of telegraphs took place, and the Post-Office, which, although owning a large mileage of cable in the North Sea, had not hitherto had a single instrument working to a foreign State in its charge, took possession of all the cables connecting this country with France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany, ten in number, put down two new ones, and, with 56 submarine wires at its disposal, addressed itself in good earnest to Continental telegraphy. Thereupon the Submarine Telegraph Company disappeared from the scene.

Two and a half years later, October 17, 1891, all the circuits were moved over to the General Post-Office, where 54 instruments (chiefly Hughes' type-printers) are daily working to foreign countries. Over these wires, which require the services of about 240 telegraphists and superintendents, pass (thanks to rapid transmission and a low tariff) an average of 15,000 messages a day; while the Paris telephone is kept fully at work all day long with the conversation of Private Wire Renters and calls from the public call-offices.

Although one Hughes or Morse telegraph is very like another of the same class, and the processes in TSF are closely akin to those of TS proper, yet the discriminating visitor will soon espy, in the former office, especial marvels of telegraphy. Among such may be classed direct circuits to the South and South-west of France, to Italy, and Austria.

Nothing marks the strides of science in this branch more than the increased length of permanent circuits. Time was when 200 miles included the extreme workable limit, although now and then, under very exceptional circumstances, signals were exhibited over greater lengths as an indication of the possibilities of the future. London to Liverpool, London to York, London to Leeds and Hull, were circuits not easily maintained in daily working order forty years ago. Now, connected with TSF are permanent circuits, approximately 1,200 miles long, reaching to Vienna and Rome, by the North Sea and Germany in the former case, and by the Straits of Dover, Paris, Lyons, and Turin in the latter case.

Two causes operate to limit the workable length of a circuit unaided by a relay: (1) Loss of insulation from unavoidable causes, such as rain, fog, and snow; and (2) the normal resistance of the wire. Even when aided by a relay, want of message-traffic to keep the wire profitably employed may suggest a shorter circuit, and the repetition of 'forward' telegrams at a great centre.

These remarks do not, of course, apply to very

long deep-sea cable circuits, such as those of the Atlantic and other cable companies. In such cases special forms of apparatus have to be employed ; and even then the speed of working possible on a land circuit is unattainable through a cable.

Between London and Vienna two wires can be kept profitably open, and between London and Rome one wire. It is remunerative to maintain direct wires from London to Boulogne, Havre (there is also a direct wire from Liverpool to Havre), Calais, Lille, Paris, Bordeaux, and Marseilles ; but it would not be commercially profitable to work direct to Rouen, Dijon, and such-like towns, because there would be waste of power, as the wires would not be fully occupied. It is better to send the messages for re-transmission to some other French office, perhaps to Paris.

So with the wires of the cables in the German Ocean. Great centres of financial activity, like Hamburg, Bremen, and Berlin, have their direct circuits from London. As to Vienna and Rome, it is not too much to affirm that telegrams are habitually transmitted in a few minutes, notwithstanding the great length of the circuits and the vicissitudes of weather and chances of interruption to which they are necessarily exposed.

Telegraphic communication with the Continent has certainly not suffered in efficiency by the transfer of the management in England to the hands of her Majesty's Government. It has received a new stimulus,

and has prospered in every way, not the less so because the passionate striving of the Post-Office for an ever-increasing celerity of inland transmission has not been without its influence on the foreign administrations associated with the working of TSF.

My private belief is that TS sets especial store by the chronofer. It certainly makes a noise in the world, firing off guns in different parts of Great Britain at one o'clock in announcement of Greenwich mean time. Once, in the Royal Albert Hall, it was intended to fire, not, indeed, a gun, but a torpedo, by electricity. An eminent lecturer said to the President: 'Your Royal Highness will see that the torpedo at the side of the hall will explode when I bring these two wires together.' So three thousand people held their breath. The wires touched; not a sound was heard, not even the resonant fall of the proverbial pin. Directly the lecture was over, the lecturer, wires in hand, said: 'Sir, the failure of the torpedo to explode is unaccountable. It ought to have gone off when I did so.' Bang went the torpedo! A cautious assistant had disconnected the wires before the lecture, had omitted to rejoin them when it began, and had hastily restored them before its end.

The back of the test-box especially deserves notice. There are to be seen in their naked simplicity the nerves—the gutta-percha-covered copper wires of the postal telegraph system. For choice, this page should

be written in the dusky recesses of the Test Chamber, one hand grasping the pen, and the other wires, through which are pouring, all unseen, chapters of stirring romance. That would be a dull brain indeed which would not be quickened by such surroundings! If these wires are twitched off from their couplings—what will Wall Street in New York do? If the Great Western group are snipped through with these pliers?—alas for Penzance!

Great bunches of dark-brown wires come up in chaotic confusion through the floors, from pipes in the street. Who can tell which is which—how separate the Ludgate Circus from the Anglo-American wire? Yet each goes to a numbered terminal, or screw coupling, which is as distinguishable from its neighbour as the Prime Minister from the Leader of the Opposition.

In the Metropolitan galleries there is every night (on week days) a curious change. As eight o'clock strikes, the circulation of Metropolitan telegrams, with some exceptions, alters. Fewer offices serve as delivering points, and many telegrams which by day are telegraphed for delivery to one office, are at night telegraphed, or 'tubed,' to another.

If every bullet has its billet, so every telegram has its appointed route. The office 'code-book' regulates the point; from it there is no appeal. Thirsk?—how should its messages circulate? 'YO,' says the code-book, and to the York circuit the distributor takes the form. Bangor?—'LV, CS,' is the oracular

utterance, meaning, for choice, send the message to Liverpool, or, as its next best route, to Chester.

Daily, too, at five o'clock p.m., there is a change welcomed on all hands, and of never-failing popularity. The largest tea-party probably in the world is given at TS. The cup that cheers without the baleful effects attributable to other cups is no unimportant restorative of powers jaded by the incessant 'hammer, hammer, hammer,' not of 'the hard high-road,' but of the tireless sounder and the ubiquitous Wheatstone puncher. 'Once more unto the breach, dear friends,' might be the Controller's Shakespearean cry on the strength of the revivifying influence of his Brobdingnagian teapot.

The Controller has a grip of every arrangement. He knows the weakest as well as the strongest point of his charge—why delay sometimes attends messages on such and such circuits; how it is that they invariably go merrily as a marriage-bell on others. On all he brings to bear an unrivalled experience, gained in the cities of Hamburg and Hanover, in the halls of LY, in the time of the Electric and International Telegraph Company, and for nearly a quarter of a century under the paternal rule of the Post-Office in TS.

The duty of clearing up errors is sometimes a difficult one. It is not always possible to settle which was in fault—the sending clerk in signalling wrongly, or the receiving clerk in misreading signals. At

times the blunders lie in the handwriting—now of the original writer of the telegram, now in that of the telegraphist. It happened to me once to telegraph home 'hot luncheon.' On arrival the cupboard was bare; the telegram expressly stated '*not* luncheon.' At an office of repetition, the receiving clerk had written the 'h' of 'hot' with a short loop, which made the letter look like 'n,' and it was thus sent on.

Worse still, however, when it happened that the Postmaster-General himself telegraphed to a livery stable-keeper to send a man with a *hack* to meet him on the arrival of the 4.30 train. He was met by a man with a *sack*. Here, in transmission, one of the dots, or short sounds, of 'h' had dropped out, and the receiver had read three dots ('s') instead of four dots ('h'); hence 'sack' instead of 'hack.'

Strange as it may appear, it is believed that, except in the case of beginners, fewer mistakes occur in reading from the sounder, when the ear alone is the guide, than from the ink-writer, by which, on a paper riband, dots and dashes are plainly imprinted.

Amongst the ingenious devices which flowed from the brain of Mr. Scudamore was one meant as an aid to the memory in acquiring a knowledge of the dot and dash system. 'Turnips Make Oxen Cheerful' impressed on the learner the fact that the initial letters T M O Ch were all represented by dashes or long sounds, and there was another line which dealt with E I S H, of which dots, or short sounds, are the equivalents.



Still, the Morse code is the one universal language. Every telegraphist, whatever his nationality or wherever he is stationed, appreciates ... — . (V.E.), which means 'end of message,' or in conversation by telegraph, 'I understand what you say;' but if the spacing, which is as important as the marking, is not all that it should be, it would be read : ... — . (S.N.).

To those who, like myself, recollect the slow and uncertain operations of apparatus requiring two wires, the marvels which science has accomplished with one wire in the direction of automatic transmission, of duplexing, quadruplexing, multiplexing, and of submarine cable working, surpass the wildest dreams of the liveliest imagination.

At the Jubilee celebration of 1890 in the Guildhall, the Multiplex was worked six ways to Birmingham, *i.e.*, all six ways in one direction, or three ways to Birmingham, three ways to the Guildhall, or two ways in one direction, four ways in the other; in any case, all at once and on a single wire. Similarly, the Quadruplex was worked four ways to Manchester; the Sounder in the ordinary way direct to Aberdeen, in the direction of John o' Groats, and to Penzance, 12 miles short of the Land's End.

The 'Wheatstone' automatic telegraph has carried news at the rate of 429 words a minute from London to Dublin. The Syphon Recorder and the Mirror have accomplished wonders on submarine cables, and as for the useful, homely, workaday apparatus, the Relay, my own eyes have seen messages received by

means of it on an ordinary ink-writer in Moorgate Street Buildings, in London, direct from Kurrachee, at the head of the Persian Gulf, about 4,000 miles distant.

Under the North Sea, across Germany, over the vast steppes of Russia, through the heart of Asia, through the dominions of the caliphs, into the Eastern Empire of Queen Victoria, the electric current, uninterrupted, sped its way. Through cables made on Thames side, through wire drawn at Birmingham or Manchester, through insulators moulded in the Potteries, through little relays, ticking for their lives, now in the solitude of a desert, now in the heart of an Oriental city, the stout Indo-European telegraph carried the pulsations.

Perhaps a pale-faced European telegraphist taps away at Kurrachee; a simultaneous click, click, clicking occurs at various points along the line for thousands of miles; finally, a spruce young English clerk up a dark staircase in a small dingy two-pair front room, with the London street cries surging from below, translates the clicks aloud. Years have passed since then, and memory is deceitful, but they may have been: 'The—weather—here—is—rather—hot. May—I—offer—you—a—pipe—and—sherbet?'

## CHAPTER XVII.

## BENEATH THE WAVE.

WHEN C. V. Walker had sent his message of success through two miles of salt water and eighty miles of aërial line from the Channel to the Thames, there were not wanting men of enterprise to carry the great experiment into practical effect.

Without a moment's delay steps were taken to procure permission to lay a cable between the coasts of England and France. Two brothers, Mr. J. Watkins Brett and Mr. Jacob Brett, played a principal part, and in the concession which was specially obtained a salient clause provided that telegraphic communication should be established by September, 1850. The concessionnaires set to work.

A copper wire 30 miles long was quickly coated with thick layers of gutta-percha, and in that form, with no more strength or protection than was afforded by the metallic strand within, and perhaps the thickness of a quarter of an inch of gutta-percha outside, was laid between Dover and Cape Gris Nez, and a message was telegraphed through it before the latest

stipulated date. The actual distance is 21 miles, but plenty of slack was prudently allowed.

Next day the slender rope broke, and was hopelessly lost. A few years ago a friend told me he had picked up 3 or 4 feet of it on the shingle at Folkestone.

This abortive attempt had one highly important, unlooked-for, and, it must be owned, somewhat untoward result. It made plain that a long covered wire was not so well adapted for swift ordinary telegraphy as one suspended on poles and freely exposed to the air. A current sent into the covered wire did not all go out at the other end. A part came back again, somewhat as though new cannon, on being discharged, insisted on the inconvenient procedure of blowing out at the breech as well as the muzzle.

When the telegraphist at each end of the wire on the day of its submergence saw what was happening on the dial-plate, he put it down to the effect on the distant telegraphist of festivity proper to the occasion. Two or even three years later the same phenomenon on a new double-needle underground circuit 250 miles long (which ultimately failed) startled and grieved me, as I was then ignorant of cause and effect. We were secured by underground wires against the effect of bad weather, it was true; but induction seemed to be even a more formidable foe than a hostile barometer.

A vivid account of the day's work—the lively hopes of success and the consequent chagrin at failure—is

given by Mr. Willoughby Smith in his 'Submarine Telegraphy.'

But the wire having been laid, the concession held good; and on the strength of it Mr. Jacob Brett and Sir James Carmichael formed the Submarine Telegraph Company (which has had a prosperous existence of just 40 years) to make, lay, and work new and strong cables across the English Channel.

'An Englishman in Paris,'\* in writing of the *coup d'état* of 1851, and connecting the date of that sanguinary phase of modern political history with the completion of the new cable, states (vol. ii., p. 49) that 'the concession [probably some new deed confirming the earlier one] was given on January 8, 1851, on which occasion the last words to Mr. Walker Breit were to hurry it (the laying of the cable) on as much as possible.' The Mr. 'Breit' referred to was probably Mr. J. Watkins Brett.

The newly-formed company lost no time in making a cable which, in one highly-important feature, at any rate—viz., its protecting wires—has been a pattern for those which have followed.

Then sprang into prominence men whose memory, as pioneers in their respective paths, the telegraphic world should keep green. Mr. Statham at the Gutta-Percha Company's works, and after him Mr. Chatterton, covered the conducting wires with the new gum and devised super-insulating compounds. Messrs.

\* Chapman and Hall, 1892.

Glass and Elliot out of the insulated wires formed a rope. Mr. R. S. Newall, of Gateshead, a great wire-worker, saw his opportunity, and spun a sheathing of many iron wires around the rope—a course which all cable-makers have copied. Crampton, the company's engineer, and the electrician, Wollaston, his colleague, undertook to lay the cable. The Government lent the needful ships.

On September 25, 1851, 24 miles of four-wire cable were run out to cover the 21 miles of channel between the opposing shores. When the *Blazer* had cast overboard her last coil, she was still a mile from land, and there was no alternative but to buoy the end and leave it. Another mile of cable had to be manufactured. It was soon completed and laid, and communication was established on October 17 ('An Englishman in Paris' says on November 13), 1851. On December 2 came the *coup d'état*. Strange to say, the submarine wire notwithstanding, news of what had happened in Paris early that morning did not spread in London until two or three o'clock in the afternoon.

The new cable worked admirably. Sixteen years afterwards it was pronounced to be in a state of perfect insulation. Even now much of this cable, almost half a century old, is still beneath the wave, and, though mended again and again and patched here and there, is in good working order as one of the Postmaster-General's lines.

Cable-laying followed fast and furious, at times

with entire success, at others with failure and great loss; but in the end, as knowledge grew, experience ripened, and appliances improved, submarine telegraphy entered on a period of assured prosperity. Every ocean-bed is traversed by the electric wire; 130,000 nautical miles of cable federate the British empire.

There is no doubt that the pride of the engineer's branch lies in submarine work. When this branch succeeds, as it has done, in designing and laying a cable across the English Channel, which, in connection with suitable land wires, enables the sound of the human voice in London to be heard, by means of the telephone, at the same moment in Paris, then it finds life enriched by the pleasures of successful scientific enterprise.

To lay and repair the submarine cables, both inter-insular and international, the Post-Office has acquired a little fleet of two paddle-wheel steamships—the *Monarch*, a new and beautiful vessel of 1,121 tons, and the *Alert*, an old ship, renamed, of 369 tons.

The *Monarch* was built in the Clyde, and when completed and ready to receive her cable-machinery, was ordered round to the Thames for that purpose. At sea, south of the Isle of Man, she encountered a great storm, and after enduring it for a time shaped her course to Milford Haven for shelter. Some of the lights which mark the approach to the Bristol Channel were actually sighted, when a portion of the machinery became red-hot, and, lest it should give

way and the vessel drift on to a lee shore or fall foul of the Shutter of Lundy, the captain, with courage and discretion, but to the consternation of the storm-tossed landsmen on board, altered the course, and in the teeth of the tempest made for the open Atlantic and that weary waste of waters which do continually lash the Scilly Islands and the Land's End. A friend and colleague who was on board gives me, by letter, so spirited an account of the voyage that it seems well to reproduce it here :

‘ The voyage of the *Monarch* from the Clyde to the Thames was one of alternate sunshine and rain, of calm and tempest.

‘ Nothing could exceed the beauty and the brightness of the scene as we left the Clyde, but before we reached Bute the weather became threatening, and it was deemed prudent to anchor in Rothesay Bay. There we lay a day and a night, whilst the rain descended in torrents and the wind gave us a fore-taste of what was in store for us.

‘ But the morning brightened, and we started onward on our way. There was an enjoyable breeze, and the sea still laboured under the effects of the storm ; but we proceeded gaily until we had left bold and solitary Ailsa Craig behind us. The wind then freshened considerably, and as night drew on we found ourselves face to face with a gale which continued to increase in violence until it became a perfect hurricane.



'The ship being on her first voyage, some anxiety was naturally felt. She was without her cable-machinery and boats, which would have helped to steady her, and she consequently rolled heavily. Her engines were new, and had only been put to the test of an ordinary trial trip. There was, however, no help for it but to put her head to the wind and face the storm.

'We cleared that dangerous spot, "The Smalls," and made for Milford Haven. The night was, however, of pitchy darkness and as "thick" as could possibly be imagined, and the greatest caution was needed. The rock-bound coast at the entrance to the haven was perilously near, when, to our dismay, one of the bearings of the engines, which had been standing the severe test so well, fired. The chief engineer, Mr. McNab, who had never left the engine-room and was resting on a bench, was at once aroused, and his skill and ingenuity overcame the difficulty. But it was a critical moment, and instead of continuing to try to enter the haven where we would be, it was at once decided to put distance between ourselves and those dangerous neighbours, the rocks, and to make straight for the open sea.

'It was a night of anxiety which all on board will ever remember, and it was with thankful hearts that we found ourselves in the morning round the Land's End, the sea moderating, and a glorious sunshine again making all things bright and beautiful. Our perils over, how we rejoiced in the change, and never

did voyage along our southern coast seem more enjoyable.'

The *Monarch* had another anxious time. When laying the London and Paris telephone cable she was caught in a blizzard (it was mid-winter) close off the lee shore; but, fortunately, while the anchor was slipping over the smooth chalk, it hooked, and was held fast by the La Panne cable.

Altogether, in charge of the Engineer-in-chief are 2,355 nautical miles of national cable. The longest cable is that which is laid between Lowestoft, on the east coast, and Nordeney in Germany. It is 268 miles in length.

But for a change which in the early fifties came over the form of telegraph in use, it is not easy to guess what would have been the fate of submarine telegraphy. Through the 30 miles of Channel cable of 1850 intelligible signals could with difficulty be exchanged. Induction, as stated, was the bane. The effect of the slow working of the Atlantic cable was at once seen in the tariff of charges. High as was the inland rate—20 words from London to a place 4 miles from Glasgow costing 20 shillings—under the Atlantic tariff for a 20-word message to New York there had to be paid as much as £20.

A remedy had to be found. Then stepped in Professor Thompson with his Mirror and Syphon Recorder.

Although with the ordinary apparatus used for

land telegraphy, such as the Morse or Sounder, a word a minute could scarcely be realized on the Atlantic cables, yet, says authority,\* 'with the Mirror instrument fifteen words are easily sent in the same time, and twenty-four have been obtained.'

That being so, it would be proper to give the Mirror its due in the shape of a full explanation; but when past-masters of the art, bent on using the simplest terms in their description, tell us that the signals 'need not be read by separate distinct currents, as in land lines, or when condensers are used, but by the increment or decrement of one continuous current, which is continuously flowing out of the cable from its great capacity, and whose potential is only varied by the reversals made at the sending end,' experience warns me against diverging a hair's breadth from this description lest pitfalls should way-lay both author and reader. 'There are, indeed, more things in telegraphy, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'

Still, the exigencies of the case embolden me to add on the same authority:

'The Mirror is really a single-needle instrument, whose index is a spot of light; but apart from its excessive delicacy, it has this advantage over the vertical needle, that in place of having a fixed *zero* or *neutral* line, to the right or left of which the needle vibrates to impart its signals, the zero line—when

\* 'Telegraphy,' Preece and Sivewright; Longmans, 1876.

condensers are not used—moves with the spot of light and wanders all over the scale, the signals being made by the pulsations or vibrations of the spot, and being read by their direction, and not by their position and amplitude.'

At the moment at which these liberal quotations are being made from their text-book, Mr. Preece, C.B., is in the North Sea overhauling her Majesty's cables, and his pupil and early colleague, Sir James Sivewright, K.C.M.G., formerly of the General Post-Office, is outspanning in the wilds of Southern Central Africa, carrying with him civilization towards the Zambesi in the shape of British influence, and the prospect of extended posts, railways and telegraphs.

The Syphon Recorder is well named. There is, in fact, an actual syphon filled with ink which, by electrification, throws out a tiny black jet, so marking a paper band with an irregular line—that is, a line more or less deeply serrated. Now, these teeth of a saw, some blunt and at a low level, and some sharp and towering above their fellows, correspond with the signs of the Morse alphabet.

Still relying on others, and warily avoiding the responsibility of personal explanation of these devices of the scientist, it may not be out of place for me to add that the present method of bringing electricity to act on whatever form of apparatus is used on Transatlantic cables is ascribed by Messrs. Preece and Sivewright to the late Mr. C. F. Varley, and the description just given, so far as the charging of the

cable is concerned, is the proper explanation of that remarkable process.

But for the benefit of those who do not follow electrical phenomena with ease, I may remark that about 20 years ago Mr. Varley explained to me fully and clearly his masterly arrangement for working the Atlantic Cable. In dispensing with the actual passage of an electric current through the cable—as described by Preece and Sivewright—he to a large extent overcame the obstacle of induction, and he wholly avoided the risk of enlarging an incipient flaw by the use of powerful streams of electricity, as happened in the case of the 1858 cable to America.

At this distance of time it is not possible to recall the precise language employed by the inventor; but an idea may be gained from an illustration which he used. Imagine two dinner-plates, clean and dry, covered with tinfoil or paraffin, and fixed on edge an appreciable distance—say an eighth of an inch—apart. They may be likened to a pair of cymbals, waiting to be clashed together, and so enable the New World to hear the music of the Old. To one plate shall be attached the Atlantic Cable, to the other a signalling instrument and the earth. This apparatus, it may be supposed, is at Hearts' Content. At Valentia, where there are similar plates, depression of a key (connected with a battery and the earth) affects the wire—not sending a current through it, but, as it were, electrifying it moderately—increasing or altering the galvanic influence.

Then comes another of electricity's wonderful phenomena. As in Ronald's telegraph two pith-balls, suspended by filaments of silk, will fly apart if electrified similarly, or fly together if electrified by opposite polarities, so the charging or discharging by the key and battery at Valentia electrifies, now positively, now negatively, the cable dinner-plate at Hearts' Content, and that in like manner affects the land-line dinner-plate an eighth of an inch from it. Then all is plain sailing, for the second dinner-plate transmits to the signalling telegraph—the Mirror or the Syphon Recorder—suitable impulses which are rendered into signals and words.

To some extent this is a digression, for neither the American cables nor those to the East are the property of the Postmaster-General; yet he is so intimately associated with much of the traffic flowing over them, that they may be regarded at least as cousins-german to the British postal system.

With the cables in charge of the Post-Office there is less trouble, the distances, and therefore the electrical resistance, being less. For it is an axiom in telegraphy that the speed at which submarine cables may be worked varies inversely as the square of their length; so that if one 2,000 miles long will carry only a word per minute with ordinary apparatus, another 268 miles long will carry 55 words a minute with the same apparatus.

Now, the change of apparatus effected when cables came into vogue was from needle to 'Inker,' and

induction, which caused the galvanometer or needle to indulge in the wildest gyrations, was less erratic under the sobering influences of a relay and the ink-writer. Thus, while the rate of 55 words a minute is not a third of the speed obtained on land-lines by the 'Multiplex,' nor a fifth of that of the Wheatstone 'Transmitter,' yet it is as high as the most expert telegraphist can work, and even higher.

So with the aid of judiciously-planted relays, which serve to raise the whole rate of working of circuits (land wire and submarine wire included) to the rate at which the cable could alone be worked, the Central Telegraph Station (TSF) telegraphs merrily and constantly by ink-writer or 'Hughes' to the cities of the Continent, some, as has been shown, so distant as Rome and Vienna, and always, as a matter of course, to Berlin and Hamburg, to Brussels and Paris and Havre.

As these lines are written, there lies on the table before me a hand's-breadth of the latest and most perfect form of light submarine cable—viz., that recently laid down to Lundy Island. It is exactly an inch and a half in diameter, and has for conductor a twisted copper wire of seven strands, sheathed in gutta-percha, and sheathed again in brass tape, because of a destructive boring mollusc (*Teredos navalis*) peculiar to Western waters, which pierces through less effective mailing. The brass is covered with thick yarn, and a special compound known as Chatterton's; it is armour-plated with ten iron wires,

each a quarter of an inch in diameter, which are twisted spirally around, and take a complete turn once in every thirteen and a half feet. These give strength and flexibility. A bituminous compound, on the outside, preserves the iron wires from rust.

Lundy Island is now lifted out of an abyss of desolation, and may be made an accustomed anchorage and place of call for the homeward-bound shipping in the Bristol Channel, and an outpost which, in time of war, may, thanks to this electrical extension, prove an invaluable security for the Western seaboard.



*PART V.*

CHAPTER XVIII.—BLOCKS BY THE WAY.

CHAPTER XIX.—THE PARCEL POST.

CHAPTER XX.—THE ROAD REGAINED.

CHAPTER XXI.—THE OUTER WORLD.

CHAPTER XXII.—THE TRAIN AND THE BOAT.

CHAPTER XXIII.—BY CORAL STRANDS.

CHAPTER XXIV.—OVER THE DEEP BLUE SEA.

CHAPTER XXV.—JUBILATION.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## BLOCKS BY THE WAY.

ALL compilers of postal experiences replenish the ink-bottle when they come to that topic so fruitful of anecdote—the storms which hindered, and even stopped up, the coach-roads of yore. Still, almost annually, heavy falls of snow block the lines of communication, whether by road or rail, and interfere with the regularity of postal communication, and still are to be found instances of especial devotion to duty in the trying circumstances thereby occasioned.

Within the memory of officials of the Post-Office, at least four great snowstorms out of many have, in an unusual degree, blocked postal routes, and caused serious delay to the mails—viz., that (which is especially memorable) of 1814, and those of 1836, 1867, and 1881.

Bridging over his long service to the State—latterly as Assistant-Secretary in the Post-Office, and formerly as Inspector of Prisons—Mr. Frederic Hill, now in his ninety-second year, yet recollects at the time of the great frost of 1813-14, the longest and most

severe he can remember, hearing of many mail-coaches being stopped by the roads becoming impassable from the accumulation of snow. I know that the guards of the mails did their duty in that winter as valiant servants of the Crown; no peril nor exposure stayed their efforts. Thomas Hasker, my predecessor of the period, took care not to hide the merits of his men from official view. John, Earl of Sandwich and Thomas, Earl of Chichester, joint Postmasters-General, recognised and rewarded the exertions, not of one mail-guard only, but of 197. Their lordships made it clear that they could appreciate good service, and they adopted in the tens the course which the blind Postmaster-General followed in the eighties—they encouraged the staff by timely words of praise and approval. To thank in season is one of the most necessary and yet difficult duties of an administrator.

There was cause for thanks and reward. Mr. Hill, residing in the outskirts of Birmingham, was in the thick of the snow, and the severity of that extraordinary winter, when an ox was roasted on the ice of the Thames, evidently impressed itself on his memory by the irregularity of the mail-arrivals at the Warwickshire city. Throughout the month of January things were at their worst.

The London coaches *viâ* Oxford failed to come through. Two mail-guards for a time were missing; it was believed they had perished in the snow. Eventually they arrived, safe but worn out. The

stout-hearted Coleman beat his way down to Birmingham, bringing the bags for Ireland; and as he drove into the yard of the Post-Office, triumphant in a chaise-and-six, surely they raised a ringing cheer. Guard William Smith, finding the Sheffield road impassable for wheels, rode on horseback with the bags sixty miles to Birmingham. His life was several times in danger. The Bristol coach came in with six horses; it had encountered many risks. The roads to London were bad and full of holes, and towards Wolverhampton streams of coal-carts helped to cut them up, so that the mails could not keep time. As for the Government courier going post to Dublin, he was even at Birmingham five hours late.

In North Wales the mountain roads, west of Corwen and Conway, were full of snow. Dublin was without its English mails. No coach could get to Bangor Ferry. A Corwen guard contrived to push through, and, as it were, raise the siege.

On February 5, at eleven in the morning, still came the snow, but at four o'clock in the afternoon set in the welcome long-looked-for thaw.

The storm of 1836 no doubt stands out in remarkable prominence, because of its suddenness and intensity. It began on Sunday, Christmas Day, and by the following night it had blocked the roads within thirty miles of London with deep drifts. It continued for ten days, the fall of snow gradually extending and thickening, until at length mail-coach communication was practically stopped. Guards and coachmen alike

declared nothing approaching it had occurred within their experience.

Sketches which tell the story of the storm better than any letter-press may be found in the collection formed by the late Mr. Gould, of the Office of Works and the Post-Office, and in that of Mr. J. E. Gardiner, F.S.A., of St. John's Wood.

On Monday, the 26th, both the Holyhead and the Chester mail-coaches floundered in the snow at Hockley Hill, or rather in the valley, near Dunstable, the leaders being overwhelmed in a snow-drift, and one of the coachmen being flung from his box. The Chester coach was abandoned. Its mails were put on the Holyhead coach, and all available power being yoked to the latter, it was at length drawn out. Not far distant were other vehicles in similar plight. St. Albans is reported to have been full of conveyances at a standstill.

The Edinburgh mail left London with six horses. The Birmingham up night mail coach, which took the Western route (119 miles to London), stuck fast in a long drift south of Aylesbury. The guard went on with the bags slung across the leaders, but the hapless passengers fared as they best might until the coach could be dug out, and dragged back by cart-horses into Aylesbury.

These are types of what was happening all over the greater part of England and Wales.

Here is the experience of Mr. Nobbs, the last of the mail-guards, who still flourishes at Uxbridge:

‘ The winter of 1836 was a severe one. There were terrible snow-storms towards Christmas time, and many parts of the country were completely blocked. After leaving Bristol one night at seven o’clock, all went well until we were nearing Salisbury—that is to say, about midnight. Snow had been falling gently for some time before, but after leaving Salisbury it came down so thick, and lay so deep, that we were brought to a standstill, and found it impossible to proceed any further. Consequently we had to leave the coach and go on horseback to the next changing place, where I took a fresh horse and started for Southampton. There I procured a chaise and pair and continued my journey to Portsmouth, arriving there about 6 p.m. the next day. I was then ordered to go back to Bristol. On reaching Southampton on my return journey the snow had got much deeper, and at Salisbury I found that the London mails had arrived, but could not proceed any further. Not to be “done,” I took a horse out of the stable, slung the mail-bags over his back, and pushed on for Bristol, where I arrived next day, after much wandering through fields, up and down lanes, and across country—all one dreary expanse of snow. By this time I was about ready for a rest; but there was no rest for me in Bristol, for I was ordered by the mail-inspector to take the mails on to Birmingham, as there was no other mail-guard available. At last I arrived at Birmingham, having been on duty for two nights and days continuously without taking my clothes off.’

The distance by mail-coach road from Bristol to Portsmouth and back is 198 miles, and from Bristol to Birmingham it is 88, so that this indomitable mail-guard achieved 286 miles through the snow without a halt. But what are we to think of the mail-inspector of 1836, who, on the arrival of a tired-out young man after a toilsome journey of 200 miles, started him off afresh on a ride of nearly 90 miles more?

And yet another winter adventure was experienced by Mr. Nobbs, when guard of the Cheltenham and Aberystwith mail-coach :

‘ We had left Gloucester, and all went on pretty well until we came to Radnor Forest, where we got caught in such a snowstorm that it was impossible to take the coach any further, so we left it. I took the mail-bags, and with the assistance of two shepherds made my way over the mountains. It took us five hours to get over to the other side to an inn at Llandewy. There we met the up mail-guard, Couldry, who took my guides back again. It was not many hours before the abandoned coach was completely covered with snow, and there it remained buried for a week. Well, the up guard, Couldry, fell down in the snow from exhaustion, and had to be carried by the two shepherds to the Forest Inn on the other side of the mountain. There he remained some days to recover himself. I had to proceed with my bags, so I got a chaise and pair from Penybont and another at Rhayader, but was unable to take that very far owing to the snow. There was nothing for it but to press



on again on foot, which I did for many miles, until I came to Llangerrig. There I found it was hopeless to think of going over Plinlimmon, and was informed that nothing had crossed all day, so I made up my mind to go round by way of Llanidloes, and a night I had of it! I was almost tired out, and benumbed with cold, which brought on a drowsiness I found it very hard to resist. If I had yielded to the feeling for an instant, I should not have been telling these tales now. When I got about eight miles from Aberystwith, I found myself becoming thoroughly exhausted, so I hired a car for the remainder of the journey, and fell fast asleep as soon as I got into it. On arriving at Aberystwith I was still sound asleep, and had to be carried to bed and a doctor sent for, who rubbed me for hours before he could get my blood into circulation again. I had then been exposed to that terrible weather for fifty hours. Next day I felt a good deal better, and started back for Gloucester, but had great difficulty in getting over the mountain. Again I had the honour of receiving a letter from the Postmaster-General, complimenting me on my zeal and energy in getting the mail over the mountain. Even when there was no snow, the wind on the top of Plinlimmon was often almost more than we could contend with. Once, indeed, it was so strong that it blew the coach completely over against a rock; but we soon got that right again, and always afterwards took the precaution of opening both the doors and tying them back, so that the wind might pass through

the coach. Altogether, I had good reason to remember Plinlimmon; and, after all I have undergone in that country in the way of floods and snowstorms, it is little wonder if I am troubled with rheumatism now.'

In the winter of 1870-71 the snow was so deep in parts of Kent that I recollect, when revising the coast circuits and following the road from Dover to Deal, that the top of the cutting which had been made through the snowdrift was level with the roof of the fly which my colleagues occupied with me.

The winter of 1874-75 was also one of unusual rigour, and the mail-services suffered in proportion.

More memorable still was the snowstorm of January, 1881. The day had been cold and the sky of a dull leaden hue, but there was nothing to indicate the approach of a severe storm, when suddenly, almost without warning of any kind, dense snow-clouds seemed to descend bodily on London, and in an incredibly short space of time laid on the Metropolis so thick a carpet, that for a week afterwards it was as a beleaguered and entrenched city, so high were the snow mounds formed in restoring the thoroughfares and partially clearing the streets. All the country was snowed up, more or less. The view from the heights of Malvern (where I was attending a surveyors' meeting), over the great basin in which Worcester and Tewkesbury lie, with Gloucester on the edge of it, was the most beautiful—at least, the most striking—that has ever met my eye. One

great hollow, of the purest white, as far as the eye could reach, replaced the customary landscape.

What to do with the mails passed conjecture. To get them from the Post-Office to the railway-stations was almost an impossibility; it was quite an impossibility to despatch them when they were there.

The night mail trains for the North of England and Ireland, which should have been sent off from Euston Station on the 18th, did not leave until 10.30 a.m. on the 19th, because a deep snow-drift lay in the cutting between Harrow and Pinner. On the Great Western line the mails appointed to leave on the night of the 18th did not go until the night of the 19th. In fact, for at least 24 hours no traffic was possible on the Great Western main line.

On the Great Eastern line a block occurred between Cambridge and Liverpool Street, and the Great Eastern postal tender, with the mails from Norwich, Ely, etc., turned off near Shepreth and ran on the Great Northern line to King's Cross Station.

On the 20th the lines in general were fairly cleared of snow, but there were numerous failures on the part of mail-vans and carts to reach the stations in time for the mail-trains, not only in the country, but in London.

Again, on the nights of December 30 and 31, 1890, failures of junction were general throughout England owing to the very severe weather. On March 9, 1891, there was a great fall of snow, more particularly

in the South and West of England, which completely blocked up many of the lines for 24 hours.

On the night of March 10 the mail-train from the west of England was unable to run, owing to the line between Plymouth and Newton Abbott being closed with snow. The South-Western line between Plymouth and Exeter was also impassable, so that the mails could not be diverted to that route. The block continued on the 11th, and even on the 12th many cross-roads were impassable. The effects of this snowstorm were felt chiefly on the Great Western and South-Western lines.

There was another heavy fall of snow in the south-west of England on February 19, 1892, the line between Penzance and Truro being stopped for several hours. On the 20th there was a block on the North Devon line, and many of the roads in that district were not clear until the 22nd.

But of all the storms which have marked this century, it is probable that for extent and severity, and certainly for duration, none surpass the great snowstorm in Scotland, which in effect lasted throughout the whole of the month of January in the year 1867. It would compare with those of the memorable winter of 1814.

It began in the south. There was little snow, though the frost was severe, in Caithness; but about New Year's Day, between Newcastle-on-Tyne and Edinburgh, it fell heavily.

The down night mail on the west coast began to

feel its effects, and as early in the month as the 3rd reached Perth an hour or two after time, and so lost the connection with trains to the north. The mail-coach from Thurso missed the up mail-train at Bonar Bridge, and the general outlook began to be threatening. Snow-ploughs were brought into play on the 6th on the Highland line at Inverness, and a regular campaign against snow-drifts seemed impending, when suddenly, about the 7th, there was a general thaw, the roads and the railways got fairly clear, and the hopes of the department rose. But as suddenly the weather changed again for the worse, and snow fell with greater vigour than ever and with unchecked persistency.

Now set in a period of general obstruction, chiefly, however, in a region north of Perth, which only closed with the month.

Amongst a great number of officers, some in humble positions, whose zeal and devotion were abundantly displayed in efforts to restore postal communication over railways barely working, or not working at all, and over roads blocked and impassable, four persons were especially conspicuous—Mr. J. Warren, Surveyor of the Northern District of Scotland, who has retired from the service; one of his Assistant-Surveyors, Mr. G. Anson Yeld, now Surveyor of the South Midland District of England; Mr. T. Mawson, Inspector of Mails for Scotland, who has lately relinquished the postmastership of Sheffield; and his principal assistant, Mr. George

Fraser, an Inspecting Mail-Guard, at one time Postmaster of Kingston-on-Thames, and now residing near Aberdeen.

Mr. Warren, as Surveyor, had the oversight of all the postal arrangements in the North of Scotland: Mr. Mawson, as Inspector, the responsibility of looking after the mail routes for the whole of that country.

Mr. Warren, from his headquarters at Aberdeen, took special charge, at this season of difficulty, of the north-east; Mr. Mawson of the centre, the far north, and the north-west. He went up to Forres. Both worked night and day.

Then the time came—about the 14th or 15th—when, some of the railways being impassable, a special effort had to be made to force the mails through by other means. There was no difficulty in procuring volunteers. Every officer saw his duty clearly, and was only too eager to do it.

Mr. Yeld undertook to carry forward the Banff and other mails by road to Inverurie and Huntley. He started from Aberdeen at noon on the 15th in a dog-cart, and got over the 16 miles to Inverurie by five o'clock. Then the snow thickened. Taking to a sledge, Mr. Yeld and his companion made for Inch. At Pitcable the drifts were 7 feet deep. He must have stuck fast but for the cottagers, who helped to push on her Majesty's mails. At last, after six hours' work, over 10 miles of road, the town lights of Inch came into view. The mails were brought within 200 yards of the post-office, when the horses plunged

into a final snow-drift, broke the shaft of the sledge, and upset the vehicle, its occupants, and the bags into the drift. At Inch, north of the town, vast banks of snow blocked up the road, and men and horses, alike exhausted, being unable to proceed, lay in the town that night. Next morning, finding the road still impassable for wheels, Mr. Yeld started on foot, taking with him men to carry the bags; and so, walking alternately on the road, on the railway, and on the top of hedges, covered the 14 miles which lay before him, and, notwithstanding the fatigue and exposure of his toilsome journey, delivered the mails at five o'clock at night, on the 16th, at Huntley.

While Mr. Yeld was struggling in Aberdeenshire with snow-drifts and tramping over open lengths knee-deep in snow, Mr. George Fraser had embarked on an adventurous journey northwards with the mails for Wick and Thurso. He started from Inverness on the afternoon of the 14th by train, reaching Bonar Bridge, on the estuary of Dornoch Bay, where the Highland Railway at that time ended, about seven o'clock at night. Late as it was, Mr. Fraser went on at once with a dogcart and pair of horses, and snow-ploughs having opened the road, made Dornoch without great difficulty, and drove on towards Golspie, the snow being up to the knee on the level places and in others lying in banks from 4 to 6 feet high. The frost was intense. Still he pushed on, until within 4 miles of Golspie, when human persistence could do no more. For there the road is fenced

in between stone walls, forming a gigantic trench, which the snow had filled up to the depth of 6 or 8 feet.

Attempts to cut through the snow only served to deplete still further what slender stock of strength remained; the horses could work no longer; to go back was not to be thought of; to go forward was impossible. So Mr. Fraser had the horses unyoked, he abandoned the dogcart to its fate, put the bags on the horses' backs, and, boldly deserting the highway, struck across the fields to Golspie. There he arrived at half-past three o'clock in the morning, the 26 miles from Bonar Bridge to this point having taken exactly twelve hours to traverse. So much for pluck and endurance!

At Golspie the mail-guard, with the bags of a previous despatch from Inverness, had arrived overnight (14th). While Mr. Fraser rested to gather strength for fresh efforts, the former started at day-break on the 15th with the combined mails on seven saddle-horses, the frost being still intense, the roads to Thurso in a fearful condition, and in parts wholly impassable. The wind, happily, was moderating, and with it the most formidable feature of the storm—the drifting of the snow; but by the morning of the 16th the guard could get no further north than Helmsdale, only 17 miles beyond Golspie; and for a time the way to Thurso was stopped altogether.

But the storm of January, 1867, was not yet over. While Messrs. Yeld and Fraser were making heroic



efforts to carry belated mails through the blocks in Aberdeenshire and Caithness, Messrs. Warren and Mawson suddenly encountered formidable difficulties in the south. First, there was a block at Stonehaven and Laurencekirk; but the extensive resources of the Caledonian Railway were brought to bear upon it, and the mails were got through after some delay. The Great North of Scotland line from Aberdeen to Huntley was already stopped; it was more or less blocked for 20 miles. The Highland line was blocked from Forres eastwards to Keith. The first train that could get through was drawn by five engines; it brought three days' mails. The main line to Perth was kept open by the free use of steam-ploughs.

West of Forres—at Dava, a short 15 miles off, where the line goes through some deep cuttings and over a wild moor—nothing could pass; the cuttings were filled with snow to a depth of from 10 to 30 feet. When the mail-train was stopped, the passengers got shelter in a small farmhouse near at hand; but the steadfast guard in charge of the mails would not leave his van until relief was sent from Inverness. He suffered dreadfully from the cold, and, living only a short time after the block, paid for his bravery with his life.

So long as the gale which had sprung up continued, nothing could be done to open the line; but as soon as the weather moderated, the Highland Railway Company sent a large staff of men, who had to be supplied with provisions on the spot whilst the work

lasted. The block on the line to Aberdeen, notwithstanding its extent, was quickly removed, and all the mails for Inverness from the south and the north had to be sent that way for 9 or 10 days.

The Chester and Holyhead Railway has seen two serious interruptions of the mail-service. On August 20, 1868, the Irish down day mail train had just passed Abergele Station, when some railway trucks loaded with petroleum broke away from a siding, and, running down the incline with great velocity, came into collision with the engine of the approaching train. The ignition of the inflammable oil in the trucks caused by contact with the engine fire wrought terrible disaster. In a moment six or eight carriages were entirely enveloped in flame and the densest smoke. Their destruction was rapid and complete. Only two or three carriages in the whole train escaped. The lamentable loss of life which resulted would have been greater still but for the exertions of Messrs. O. and W. Uniacke Townsend, of Dublin. One gentleman uncoupled the hindmost carriages, the other unlocked doors.

Mr. H. C. Silk, in charge of the mail-carriage, was seriously injured by the collision, but he valorously kept at his post until relieved. He was, however, permanently disabled, and was superannuated in December, 1869.

In the midst of tragedy the instinct of duty asserted itself; and the postmaster, mindful of the interests

of the public, came with all despatch to the scene of the disaster. He had provided himself with wax and string, and when Mr. Silk, sorely hurt, had been carefully housed in the Cambrian Hotel, he and his assistant collected the loose letters, and dispersed bags, and made up the mails as they best could, tied and sealed them, and put them in course of circulation.

The second block took place on Sunday, August 17, 1879. Excessive rain and high tides on the coast of North Wales occasioned floods, which swept over the Chester and Holyhead Railway, doing much damage to it in several places. The immediate effect was to delay the arrival of the London day mail, due in Dublin about 7 o'clock at night, until after 7 o'clock the next morning, and the London night mail, due in Dublin in the early morning, until after mid-day.

The line having been washed away, on the Chester side of Rhyl, an attempt was made to send the mails by the route through Denbigh; but a few miles from Chester the line was found to be blocked there also, the permanent way having been in part destroyed and the engine of the down day mail overturned. Then came tidings of further mishap at Aber, and later still of the falling in of the viaduct across the river at Llandulas, a little west of Abergele.

To replace rails and sleepers and repack the permanent way on the scene of the minor mishaps was an easy task to an organized service, but to restore a viaduct seventy yards long, which originally perhaps had taken a year to build, was another matter.

Now was seen what a great corporation, with capable officials and the resources of 1,800 miles of railway, could accomplish. In a trice Mr. F. Harrison, the company's manager, but then holding another post, Mr. G. P. Neele, then, as now, superintendent of the line, and Mr. Harry Footner, of Crewe, were on the spot. The district engineer, Mr. Smith, and the district superintendent, Mr. Wood, with others, quickly arrived also. The department sent down two experienced representatives, Mr. J. P. Lambert, now Surveyor of the South Wales district, and the late Mr. F. Nevill.

So high was the flood and so swollen the river, that for two days nothing could be done in the way of reparation, and the officials concerned with the traffic management spent the time, in concert with the department, in organizing and giving effect to arrangements for the transport of the mails, passengers, and luggage over some miles of road on each side of the gap. Then the high officials of the company showed their mettle. Construction gangs were set to work, and in the incredibly short space of five days a new low-level line was constructed, which descended by a steep gradient from the high-level of the main line, and, crossing the river by a temporary trestle-bridge, regained the high level by a corresponding slope. By 2 p.m., on Sunday, the 24th, a thoroughly solid and substantial railway, fit for the heaviest traffic, though with inclines of 1 foot in 23 feet, had been completed and opened for use. Mr. Lambert and Mr. Nevill

crossed by the first trains, up and down, respectively. What was fit for the mails, they thought, was fit for Post-Office servants.

But wonders did not cease. Llandulas Viaduct had not been many days in ruins before Crewe works, led on by Mr. Francis W. Webb, put out their strength. The late Sir George Findlay has described how in seven days they manufactured, rolled, and worked the steel required for 42 girders, each 32 feet long, for a new viaduct, together with the plates and angle-irons for each girder. In a month the old viaduct was replaced by a new one—of steel throughout—224 feet long, divided into seven spans, and standing 50 feet above the waterway.\*

After the interruptions of the mail-service with the continent of Europe and other parts during the war (which, temporarily ending with the abdication of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte on April 14, 1814, broke out again on his escape from Elba, and lasted until July, 1815), the first disturbance which occurred was occasioned by the Crimean War, when twenty-eight of the finest, most powerful and best-equipped contract packets were withdrawn and used as transports. Some important services had to be suspended, and others were reduced in frequency.

Next came the Franco-German War of 1870. Then we had a great deal of trouble. The Indian mails

\* 'An English Railway,' G. Findlay. Whittaker and Co. George Bell and Sons, London, 1890.

were our first concern. When the hostile forces approached Paris, these mails had to branch off at Amiens and go round by Tours; but soon the communications even with Amiens being threatened, there was nothing for it but to abandon the route of Marseilles altogether, and send them through Belgium and Germany, and by the Brenner Pass to Brindisi, 1,734 miles off. This is the origin of the use of a port on the Adriatic for the Indian, Australian and China mails; and although by altering the route, so as to use the Mont Cenis tunnel, the distance from London traversed by the mails has been reduced to 1,450 miles, Brindisi is still, and is likely to continue to be, the chief mail-port for the Far East.

On November 16, 1870, the Postmaster-General issued a notice with the startling heading, 'Open Letters for Paris. Transmission of, by Carrier Pigeon.' The use of carrier pigeons for the conveyance of express letters is, of course, as old as the hills, but their systematized employment possibly came before the public for the first time in the pigeon post during the latter part of the Franco-German War.

The notice went on to state that the Director-General of the French Post-Office had informed the department that a special despatch, by means of carrier pigeons, of correspondence addressed to Paris (which the German army had completely engirdled) had been established at Tours, the French seat of government, and that such despatch might be made

use of for brief letters or notes originating in the United Kingdom, and forwarded to Tours by post.

The letters were to be open, to contain not more than 20 words—to be plainly written in the French language—registered at a cost of 6d., and prepaid at the rate of 5d. a word. Thus a pigeon-post letter of 20 words cost 8s. 10d. As many as 1,234 letters were so forwarded to Tours between November 17, 1870, and January 28, 1871. How many got to their destination in Paris is not known. They were photographed at Tours on diminutive pieces of paper suitable for a pigeon's wing, and possibly were reproduced to full size on arrival in Paris.

'An Englishman in Paris,' describing scenes which took place in the French capital during the siege, says: 'The ascent of a balloon with its car, containing one or two, sometimes three, wicker cages of carrier pigeons, becomes a favourite spectacle with the Parisians, who would willingly see the departure of a dozen per day, for each departure means not only the conveyance of a budget of news from the besieged city to the provinces—it means the return of the winged messengers with perhaps hopeful tidings that the provinces are marching to the rescue.'

There is a pigeon post letter in the South Kensington Museum.

Calais, as the mail port, had to be given up when Amiens was about to fall into the hands of the Germans, and special trains and special steamers maintained communication by way of Newhaven and

Southampton and Dieppe, St. Malo and Cherbourg. It was an anxious time for the English Post-Office. There were yet to come the days of the Commune, when Paris was in flames!

Finally, I reach what at one time bade fair to be the most serious block of mail-communication which could well be conceived.

In 1892 the Great Western Railway Company converted the whole of the line from Exeter to Penzance, a distance of  $133\frac{3}{4}$  miles, from a broad gauge of 7 feet to the universal narrow gauge of 4 feet  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Two or three years previously the company had warned me, as Inspector-General of Mails, that the change was impending. We, at the Post-Office, looked forward with concern to at least a fortnight's dislocation of postal arrangements and public inconvenience.

Nothing of the kind happened. The railway company, by their general manager, engineer, superintendent of the line, and district officials, made arrangements so perfect that it is scarcely a figure of speech to say that the change was effected without anyone being the wiser. In two days—May 21 and 22—the work was accomplished.

Without going into the interesting details, it may be said that the whole process was a triumphant success and a feather—a whole plume, in fact—in the cap of the railway company's officials.

The arrangements concerted between the company and the Post-Office were simple and effective. In view of the stoppage of the Great Western main line



from Exeter to Penzance, the best points as temporary centres of collection and distribution had to be determined. These were speedily fixed upon as Exeter, Plymouth, Fowey and Falmouth. The London and South-Western Railway Company carried for the nonce the mails between Exeter and Plymouth; a special mail steamer plying to and from that port supplied Fowey and Falmouth, and mail-coaches, carts and four-horse breaks did the rest.

The post arrived late, as a matter of course, and was despatched early. But one of the disturbed days was a half-holiday (Saturday), and the next day being Sunday, commerce suffered but little and social life not at all. Mr. Edward Yeld, as acting Inspector-General of Mails, went down to the West to see the change through, and came back to the East with nothing to report but the successful accomplishment of the work.

This was the very last phase of that 'Battle of the Gauges' which fifty years ago rent the railway world in twain. Isambard Kingdom Brunel fought for the 7-foot gauge, and Robert Stephenson for the cheap and convenient 4 feet 8½ inches. Vast sums were spent in Parliament and elsewhere, and the so-called 'narrow gauge' won the day. When I last passed through Swindon there stood, inglorious in a siding, the famous broad-gauge mile-a-minute engines, Iron Duke and Lord of the Isles. Now what are they, in all probability? Scrap iron and a memory!

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE PARCEL POST.

Looking back through the vista of years between the death of Sir Francis Freeling, in 1836, and the accession of Mr. Spencer Walpole to the secretarial chair, the four remarkable events which stand out conspicuously in postal history are the adoption of penny postage, under the Earl of Lichfield (an innovation, however, not altogether to his lordship's taste), the establishment of Post-Office Savings Banks in the reign of Lord Stanley of Alderley, the transfer of the telegraphs (initiated by the last-named nobleman, carried forward by the Duke of Montrose, and completed by the Marquis of Hartington), and Professor Fawcett's parcel post.

This new post, which came into operation on August 1, 1883, was the fruition of a long series of efforts to establish a service for the conveyance of light parcels by the Post-Office. A parcel post had been recommended by Sir Rowland Hill as far back as 1842.

On my appointment, in February, 1882, as In-

spector-General of Mails, almost the first direction given to me was to attend a conference with Professor Fawcett and Sir Arthur Blackwood. Mr. Fawcett spoke at length on the difficulties of the situation. Negotiations had long been pending, but had come to a deadlock. Between the views of the Government on the one side and the expectations of the railway companies on the other, there was an almost impassable gulf. Something of the kind had hindered Rowland Hill in his efforts to bring about a parcel post forty years before. The Government—rightly, as all must admit—opposed the idea of a partnership; the companies expected to share in the postage of all parcels, however carried. The proposed scheme seemed likely to be wrecked on the stocks. My views were in favour of going on with the project, but on altered lines. The original proposal was to have two limits of weight—two pounds and four pounds. The minimum seemed to me too high, the maximum too low. Negotiations were resumed on the basis of an enlarged scale, and a payment for only such parcels as the railways actually conveyed for the Post-Office. An agreement was ultimately arrived at, embodied in an Act of Parliament, and the parcel post became a reality.

The responsibility of framing a workable scheme having been laid on me by the Postmaster-General, my best plan, as soon as the Act for establishing the parcel post received the Royal Assent, seemed to be to start for a quiet spot familiar to me in Cornwall,

near the Lizard Point, as a place 'far from the madding crowd.' There a part of my official holiday was spent in drafting a circular letter of instructions to the chief officers of the department, explaining the provisions of the Act, and enunciating points for ultimate discussion and settlement. Then, in the early autumn, two colleagues went with me to the Continent to see how other European Post-Offices conducted their parcel post business.

It may appear at first sight a simple matter for a great carrying concern, having its agencies and machinery already engaged in carrying small packets, to engraft on its business the duty of transporting, at other rates of postage, larger packets. It was not so, however; not a step in the new direction could be said to be free from complication and difficulty.

Let an illustration make this clear. Postal parcels, for good reasons, are required to be brought to a post-office. The apertures of the letter-boxes are, for the most part, too small to admit of parcels being posted in them; and there is less risk under this rule of such articles being sent—a paper bag of ripe damsons, or a bottle of vegetable oil, for example—as would be harmful to letters. But in the event of a parcel, properly packed and prepaid, being posted after all in a letter-box, how then? Should it go on? If so, of what value the rule? Should it be stopped? What would be a sufficient excuse in the eyes of the public for so doing?

Again, prepayment is an essential condition of

cheap postage. In the case of a parcel left on the counter wholly unpaid, the course, perhaps, would be clear; but how with a parcel chargeable at the shilling rate, and left on the counter paid only, by pure inadvertence, to the extent of elevenpence?

These points, and a multitude of others, had to be foreseen, and provided for in advance by exhaustively-considered and intelligibly-framed rules and regulations.

In spite of all our care, unforeseen irregularities arose. The transmission of coin was prohibited. What, then, was to be done when new-minted sovereigns rolled out from a case of mince-pies?

The main difficulty, therefore, in establishing the parcel post, lay in the multiplicity of details which had to be anticipated and adjusted. As an instance, the best form of receptacle was a puzzle. In sacks the fragile parcels would be smashed; boxes would be too heavy, ordinary oval hampers wasteful of space.

Square baskets seemed best of all. How, again, to combine lightness with strength, ease of manipulation with security of contents—above all, economy with the best quality? Fifty thousand baskets at a couple of pounds apiece is not an insignificant item of outlay. Should the baskets be locked? The locks might be picked. Sealed? In what way? Once an ingenious colleague discovered, as he thought, an infallible method of securing a mail-bag. He took it in triumph to the Secretary. An expert was called in, who applauded the ingenuity of the contrivance, and

asked leave to keep the bag till next day. So into it, by way of enclosure, the Secretary put a blue navy book. The bag was then secured by the new method, sealed, and handed to the expert.

Next day, at a time named, the three met again. 'I give it up,' said the examiner. A just pride shone on the face of the inventor: the seal was intact. The Secretary cut the string to recover his blue navy book; he gave the bag a shake—out fell a red army list!

Where should carts be employed for delivery? Where should the work be done on foot? Where were new and more spacious offices wanted? at what towns would the old ones suffice? What about rules and regulations—for the public, the post-master, the postman, the clerk? How, too, as to forms and methods of account? What funds should Parliament be asked to provide?

Thus was cut out for the Post-Office a year of work as active as, save and except that of the telegraph transfer, it had probably ever known. However, though we could not follow the sagacious advice which a highly-placed civil servant once gave me many years ago, 'Leave those letters alone, and they will answer themselves,' all problems, by dint of hard work, at last were settled.

It was not only in the Post-Office that energy was shown. The Office of Works had a surveyor, of admirable parts and ceaseless energy, who has been already mentioned. He had given a splendid proof

of his powers at the time of the transfer of the telegraphs. The reins of financial administration, owing to a happy turn in the phrases of the Telegraph Acts of Parliament, had then fallen somewhat on the backs of the postal steeds—in other words, the Post-Office had, or believed that it had, a tolerably free hand in making the requisite preparations.

Hence it said to Mr. Williams, 'Alter this office.' By next day the plan had been made, the builder instructed, the work begun. 'Alter that one.' The capable architect saw at a glance what was wanted: a new floor here, girders across there, a gallery flung out, a waste space taken in. 'There is no difficulty about it,' was his favourite phrase.

Mr. Williams built the new General Post-Office, which stands opposite the old one, and built it so well that storey has been added upon storey without materially defacing the original design.

When the parcel post was imminent, and there was no place at St. Martin's-le-Grand for assortment, the head of the buildings branch sent for Mr. Williams. He came, and a few words sufficed. Next day a hundred men set to work, dug out a vast pit in the Post-Office yard, and made a large, dry, spacious, and fairly-lighted office. When the parcel post began its work, Mr. Fawcett went down, walked about the place, handled the parcels, gave smiling encouragement and good words to all around. At every point the Office of Works rendered prompt and effective help.

From the first, the several managers of the railways co-operated in the most friendly way to make the new institution a success. The result, it is thought, has been highly beneficial both to the companies and the public.

All preparations having been made—parcel carts built, contracts arranged, and buildings and staff in readiness—the day for commencing the post was publicly announced.

‘Never before,’ said the *Daily Telegraph*, ‘did any commercial house leap all at once into so gigantic a concern, with 15,000 agencies, and thirty-five million possible customers in these three kingdoms; never before, it is thought, was a Government department put to so severe a test as that which, twelve days hence, will await the one over which Professor Fawcett presides.’

Although the term ‘Postmaster-General’ is usually understood to mean, not only an individual, but also the collective energies of the Post-Office, it is the fact that Mr. Fawcett took an active personal part in shaping the rules which governed the enterprise. He went very carefully through the book for the guidance of postmasters, which the late Mr. St. John Beaufort had drafted, and, weighing every rule, bade me make here and there an alteration. He was especially anxious that the rural postmen should not be overloaded, and I recollect that he recast more than once the phrases by which this end was to be assured.

In order to adjust expenses to income, it was



needful to estimate the postage which each parcel on the average would produce. The data to go upon were few. My calculation pointed to sixpence; a weightier authority declared for sevenpence. Suddenly the railway companies lowered their tariff of parcel charges, with the result that the light and cheap parcels passing through the post bore a larger proportion to the heavier and dearer parcels than had been expected, and so brought down the average postage. The actual yield of an average parcel has rarely exceeded  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d.

That for the moment was a check to jubilation. A halfpenny—not to say three-halfpence—per parcel made a vast difference in profits. On the present average total of more than fifty millions of parcels the one would add £100,000 to the revenue, the other more than a quarter of a million pounds sterling. However, not discouraged, we buckled to, reducing expenses with one hand, and sparing no pains to make the post as effective and popular as possible with the other.

An indirect effect of the parcel post, by increasing the pressure on crowded offices, was fortuitously to bring about more liberal accommodation in London, for official ends, than the most sanguine could have anticipated.

For a hundred and one purposes, the cry on all sides for many years had been for room which could not be found. The introduction of the parcel post intensified the demand. There was, for example, a

limit to the addition of storeys above or excavated chambers below the General Post-Office.

In 1877 the fee simple of Cold Bath Fields Prison accrued to the State, and in 1885 changes of prison administration left the buildings without occupants and without a purpose. There were many claims for the appropriation of the site. The needs of the parcel post, the business of which in London had been greatly hampered for want of space, seemed to me more pressing than any others. Sir Arthur Blackwood had no rest from my urgent appeals for its acquisition by the Post-Office. He and the Post-master-General listened and approved. The Treasury yielded to their representations, and the department got the prison. In 1888 the parcel post was transferred to the tread-wheel house, the money-order office to the prison chapel, the telegraph works in part to the Governor's house and other buildings, and the offices of the Controller of Postal Stores to the bakery and the cells.

Cold Bath Fields gave way to the more agreeable and not inaccurate title of Mount Pleasant, and new and stately buildings for the parcel post and the telegraphs now replace in part the old ones.

In August, 1837, a packet of MS. was for the moment lost in transit to or from its author. A glance into the letter-books of that year of the publishers of this work discloses the fact that the packet was *in error* sent by post, with the astounding result that someone had to pay £10 postage, and that

the MS. was well-nigh lost. The firm dipped their pen into the ink-pot with a vigour which I cannot but admire, although in doing so they hardly designed for the Post-Office a garland of roses :

‘ August 7th, 1837.

‘ DEAR SIRS,

‘ The temporary loss of Mr. Cooper’s MS., to which you allude in your letter of the 1st instant, was occasioned by the reprehensible carelessness of those to whose custody it was entrusted.

‘ By some blundering person the parcel, which should have been forwarded, as similar ones always are, by mail or other coach, *was actually put into the Post-Office*, and a charge incurred of £10 within a fraction.

‘ The Post-Office is no more the proper channel through which a packet of this kind should be sent, than it should be for the carriage of a bale of cotton.

‘ Yours, etc.’

This contrasts in a remarkable way with the experience of to-day, when several hundred MSS. a month come to the same firm, or go away by Letter, Book, or Parcel Post, and instead of being charged £10 each, bulky packets travel for only a few pence. Moreover, despite the very insufficient addresses often given by the owners of the MSS., the firm find, by a comparatively recent calculation, that only 1 in 4,150 postal packets goes astray.

Very similar has been the experience of Messrs. John Bell and Co., the well-known chemists, of 225, Oxford Street. They—as I gather from a letter which they were good enough to address to me—and chemists generally have found benefit in the parcel post, not alone in its cheapness and regularity, but in the fact that, unlike the letter and other posts, it admits glass bottles, if properly packed, for transmission. What with care on the part of the firms in packing, and care on the part of the Post-Office in handling, there has been, on the whole, a remarkable immunity from damage and loss in this mode of transit.

Perhaps the warmest testimony to the successful administration of the parcel post is to be found in *Kemp's Mercantile Gazette* of January, 1893. Excitement was rife at that date in trading circles, because of the incidence of new rates of charge sanctioned by Parliament for the conveyance of goods by railway. *Kemp's Gazette* took up the question of the carriage of parcels evidently with no preconceived idea of flattering the Post-Office, but with the object of finding the remedy for a grievance in reference to the conveyance of small packages and parcels weighing more than the parcel post limit.

‘The only effective remedy,’ said the *Gazette*, ‘will be found in a great extension of the parcel post. The success of this branch of the public service has proved that in the Post-Office we have an administrative organization which is simply unequalled anywhere, and which is capable of almost indefinite expansion,

and of general application. By means of its existing machinery the Post-Office could, by the mere addition of more labour, carry well-nigh any number of parcels. No other carriers can possibly have such a complete set of machinery always in working order, and maintained at such a state of efficiency through its use for letters.'

Excellent clients are found in the great seedsmen. Messrs. Carter, of Holborn, and Messrs. Sutton and Sons, of Reading, probably lead the van—load the van would perhaps be as appropriate a simile—in the number of seed parcels and descriptive catalogues posted. To receive 70,000 of such parcels is one amongst the wondrous experiences of Mount Pleasant at Christmas time.

On August 1, 1893, the parcel post completed its first decade. The public press dwelt on the subject, enlarging for the most part on the substantial advantages which had accrued to the public from Mr. Fawcett's successful legislation, and praising the smooth action of the post. In the year ended March, 1894, fifty-four millions of postal parcels were delivered in the United Kingdom.

In ten complete years about 350 millions of parcels have been carried. It is computed that they weighed nearly half a million of tons. The gross revenue has risen from £245,900 to £1,151,000, and the part of it retained by the Post-Office from £228,000 to £612,000 per annum.

There has been extended to parcels the same plan

of sorting in trains in motion that has long been applied to letters. But the exchanging apparatus cannot be brought into play. The weight to be flung out and taken in would smash every known contrivance to pieces.

Of course, Christmas is the time when parcel work most strikes the beholder with a sense of its magnitude. No writer has yet done justice to the appearance of Crewe Junction with its accumulation of parcel post receptacles, say, between ten at night and two in the morning for a few days before Christmas. Mountains of parcel baskets blockade the platforms of that tremendous station ; but the immense traffic in passengers and their luggage is, of course, the main feature.

Mount Pleasant is also worth seeing at the height of its Christmas pressure. Great masses of parcel mails melt away and appear again, the supply being apparently inexhaustible. The spacious floor is covered by parcel-fittings and parcels in various stages of assortment, alpine ranges of inward baskets await sortation, a cordillera of receptacles is ready for despatch. The electric-light adds to the picturesqueness of the scene. 'It is a magnificent sight,' writes an official, justly enthusiastic, 'from the point of view of those who have rarely known what it is to get sufficient space for the heavy parcel work.'

The Customs branch established at Mount Pleasant knows no peace. Diamonds thrust up hollow walking-sticks, proof spirit passing as an innocent perfume,

tobacco here, there, and everywhere ; dutiable goods declared, not declared, disguised and misdescribed ; merchandise trade-marks imitated, trickery, fraud, and blunders of all kinds have to be dealt with. A long-suffering race are the officials of her Majesty's Customs. The Post-Office owes them not a little for cordial co-operation, and much cheerful endurance of unavoidable inconveniences. From the first the present Secretary of Customs, Mr. R. T. Prowse, brought his wide experience to bear on difficult points, and his lieutenant, Mr. Rolt, gave us efficient aid.

Some attempt has been made in a previous chapter to record the success of the chief labourers in the telegraph transfer ; it is renewed as regards those who were foremost in establishing the new organization.

The parcel post was launched under the personal guidance of Mr. Fawcett, with the warm sympathy of Sir A. Blackwood, and by the united efforts of nearly all the heads of departments. The Solicitor of the Post-Office, Mr. (now Sir) Robert Hunter, took an active and prominent part, and it would be impossible to overlook the services of the successive Controllers of the London postal branch, Messrs. Jeffery, Tombs, and Badcock. The Surveyors, led by their Chairman, the late Mr. W. J. Godby, and the talented Postmaster of Manchester, the late Mr. J. St. L. Beaufort, and backed up by Messrs. H. L. Cresswell and Reginald Guinness, made difficulties fly as chaff blown by the wind.

Financial details were of high importance. The Receiver and Accountant-General regulated innumerable payments, and was accessible for guidance and advice. Parcels might be lost: Mr. W. H. Muloch and Mr. G. R. Smith were on the alert. Scotland had to be thought of: Mr. A. M. Cunyng-hame was at hand. Ireland could not be forgotten, for Mr. R. O. Anderson, Mr. W. W. Barnard, and the late Mr. John Allen were to the fore.

Every man in the home mails branch rallied to the work, shrinking from no labour, not even from the toilsome caulking necessary to fit the ship to float. As in the case of the transfer of the telegraphs, so with the inception of the parcel post, wherever there was work to be done none spared effort.



## CHAPTER XX.

## THE ROAD REGAINED.

THE Parcel Post Act of 1882 secured to the railway companies 55 per cent. of the inland postage on all parcels tendered to them by the Post-Office for conveyance. A lump sum is paid over by the latter, which the former apportion on a fixed principle.

It would be to no purpose—the settlement arrived at and sanctioned by Parliament being the result of negotiations in which many attendant conditions had to be borne in mind—to examine the question whether the allocation of 55 per cent. of the postage to the companies and 45 per cent. to the Post-Office—6½d. out of the shilling to the one, and 5½d. to the other—equitably represents the relative cost of the services which the parties to the bargain respectively perform. Else it might be argued that the main expense of carrying a postal parcel to destination lies in collection and delivery, and that a larger rather than a smaller payment is due in respect of those services than for mere haulage by railway.

Be that as it may, the bargain having been struck

and ratified, the Post-Office set to work to make it beneficial to the State.

The postage of parcels wholly borne by road is retained by the Postmaster-General unabated, and he was bound to consider, in the interests of the revenue, where he could with advantage to the public extend his road services, and by means of them collect and convey parcels.

However great may be the care exercised in transferring parcel receptacles from one point to another, the risk of damage from rough handling necessarily increases with the number of transfers which have to be made. If a parcel mail can be put into a van at the office-door of despatch, and not rehandled until it reaches the office of destination, two transfers take the place of four at least (possibly of five or six), and the risk is reduced to a minimum. Greater security from possible injury is therefore one advantage of conveyance by road.

There is gain in other ways. The mails are under one control throughout. There is the possibility of sending supplementary local mails, both of letters and parcels, by a road conveyance; there may be a later posting of parcels, and there is, under given circumstances, a saving of public money.

It follows that when the parcel mails can be sent by road in sufficient time for early delivery, and at no greater cost than by railway, there are *prima facie* advantages in so conveying them. Hence parcel mail-coaches came into vogue. When a well-

appointed parcel-coach, lamps flashing and horn sounding, passes on its course, the spectator catches a glimpse of the bustle of the road in the far-away past.

The trial trip of the first experimental coach was highly interesting. Heavily laden, perfectly horsed, and admirably driven, it excited admiration all along the road, from its starting-point in the Post-Office yard in the forenoon to its arrival in Brighton at night. The blunderbuss on the roof, the last of the mail-guards on his perch, the mail-bags, the prancing bays, the strident horn, were alike accepted by every spectator as entirely congenial.

The permanent service began on June 1, 1887, with the night mail coach to Brighton, and its establishment, because of the novelty, and perhaps because British taste instinctively approves of four horses running at speed on a well-metalled highway, excited widespread interest.

Equally exciting was the start two or three years later of the Liverpool and Manchester three-horse-abreast parcel mail-van; at a later date still of the London and Oxford four-horse mail-coach, and, latest of all, of the mail-coach for Hatfield and Bedford.

Descriptions of a trip with the Brighton coach repeatedly appeared in the public press, and as recently as August 29, 1892, an effective account was given by the *Daily News*, of which some extracts are subjoined:

' Between nine and ten o'clock at night the parcels

post depôt at London Bridge recalls many scenes of old coaching days. The enormous business transacted through the chief depôt in Denman Street has increased more than 86 per cent. within the last six years, and a good proportion of the parcels transferred through that office every day—amounting to so many thousands that the number would seem fabulous if put into figures—is sent by coach along the old mail-roads to Brighton, Tunbridge Wells, Ipswich, Oxford, Chatham and Watford.

‘When the hour for coaches to start draws near, a whole army of mail guards and porters may be seen loading the vehicles rapidly, but their work is so admirably organized that there is neither noise nor confusion.

‘Timed to start at a quarter to ten, the Brighton coach has all its “top hamper” for the through journey strapped down under tarpaulin long before then, and only small packages for Croydon remain to be put in at the last minute. All the yard is ablaze with light from its five powerful lamps.

‘As the neighbouring church clocks begin to chime the three-quarters, Braithwaite, the guard, with a loaded revolver at his belt and a sword-bayonet concealed beneath the ample skirt of an overcoat, takes his place beside the coachman. “All ready, sir?” asks Fred Earles. “All right; good-night!” replies the depôt superintendent, and to the accompaniment of that cheery sound of “Good-night” from every bystander, we dash at speed into the crowded

thoroughfares, where Earles threads his way through a maze of traffic with workmanlike dexterity.

'Over Streatham Common and down Norbury Hill we speed, and in exactly an hour from the time of leaving London Bridge we are clattering through the streets of Croydon. Darkness limits our view of the beautiful country beyond to a pale gleam that marks the road across Earlswood Common, and soon the panting team draws up by The Chequers, at Horley, having kept time to a minute. Here we find another coach waiting under the wide-spreading elm-tree. It has brought the Brighton parcels, and the coachman who has driven us so far will take charge of it back to London.

'At Slough Green, while horses are being changed, we have time for a refreshing cup of tea, which the ostler has ready in a cosy kitchen. Almost reluctantly one quits the welcome warmth to spend two hours more on the box seat. In the winding, picturesque old streets of Cuckfield mail-carts are waiting for us. Their drivers speak with muffled voices as if fearful to disturb the silence of a sleeping town.

'At Friar's Oak, where the coach stops for its last change of horses, other mail-carts are waiting under the trees. As we quit this the flush of dawn is beginning to show above dark ridges eastwards, and the keen sea-breeze cuts more shrewdly.

'At a quarter to five we enter the station yard at Brighton, and the pleasant night drive by mail-coach is at an end.'

The late Mr. Raikes attached much importance to the guards of the parcel mail-coaches being efficiently armed, and each guard is not only properly instructed in the use of firearms, but is so equipped as to be a formidable adversary in case of attack, even when cartridges may fail. Happily, the High Constables of the country so effectively patrol the roads by means of the mounted police that no seriously meant assault with intent to rob the parcel mail—though there have been one or two mock attacks—has come to my knowledge. But Mr. Raikes may have had in his mind the fact that in the early part of the century robberies of the mails were rife, and that once so daring and extensive was the theft that the reward offered was as much as £1,000. Nor was he less convinced that mail-carts, vans and coaches should be well lighted for night work. When Postmaster-General, he gave special attention to this point, and insisted on ample lighting forming part of the conditions of riding work contracts. The Brighton and other parcel coaches carry with them along the road abundant light. In fact, when the up and down coaches stand together at Horley, the little inn is almost as brilliantly illuminated as at noon-day.

The night parcel coach surpasses the old time coach not only in the number, but also in the power, of its lamps. Five light the outside front—two being 9½-inch cone and three 7-inch cone lamps; two more lamps light the inside, and are fixed with reflectors so that they may be seen from without. The guard

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carries a hand-lamp. Thus, eight lamps in all produce a flood of light which makes clear the road ahead, and leaves, comet-like, a shining track in rear.

A parcel coach, capable of carrying a ton of parcels, weighs a ton itself, and so is about 3 hundredweight heavier than a model coach of the thirties.

The experiment of sending parcels along the road having been successful in the case of the Brighton coach, it was carried further, and at the present moment mails are despatched according to the following list:

PARCEL MAIL-COACHES NOW START OUT OF LONDON AS FOLLOWS:

Name of Coach.	Starting-point and Times of Departure.	Destination and Times of Arrival.	Aver. Max. Weight Carried.	Number of Horses.	Distances.
London and Brighton ( <i>vid</i> Redhill)	London Bridge 9.45 p.m.	Brighton 4.45 a.m.	Cwt. 35	4	Miles. 52
	Brighton 9.20 p.m.	Mount Pleasant 4.50 a.m.			
London and Oxford ( <i>vid</i> Reading)	Paddington 10.30 p.m.	Oxford 8.5 a.m.	25	4 London to Reading 2 Reading to Oxford	67
	Oxford 6.10 p.m.	Paddington 3.45 a.m.			
London and Colchester	Mount Pleasant 9.45 p.m.	Colchester 5.0 a.m.	25	4	53½
	Colchester 9.30 p.m.	Mount Pleasant 4.30 a.m.			
London and Chatham	Mount Pleasant 11.5 p.m.	Chatham 4.25 a.m.	18	3	33¾
	Chatham 11.35 p.m.	Mount Pleasant 4.53 a.m.			
London and Tunbridge Wells	London Bridge 12.0 midnight	Tunbridge Wells 4.45 a.m.	17	3	35¾
	Tunbridge Wells 9.50 p.m.	London Bridge 2.35 a.m.			
London and Windsor ( <i>vid</i> Slough — continued by mail-cart)	Paddington 12.0 midnight	Slough 3.15 a.m.	25	3	20½
	Slough 12.0 midnight	Paddington 3.15 a.m.			
London and Watford (cart to St. Albans)	Watford 9.25 p.m.	Euston 11.40 p.m.	18	3	16
	Euston 12.0 midnight	Watford 2.8 a.m.			
London and Bedford ( <i>vid</i> Barnet)	Mount Pleasant 9.45 p.m.	Bedford 4.40 a.m.	25	3 London to Hitchin 2 Hitchin to Bedford	52
	Bedford 9.35 p.m.	Mount Pleasant 4.30 a.m.			
London and Broxbourne (pair-horse van)	Mount Pleasant 11.35 p.m.	Broxbourne	7	2	17
	Broxbourne Station 1.55 a.m. (Connects with Broxbourne Station and Hertford mail-cart.)	Station 1.45 a.m. Mount Pleasant 4.15 a.m.			

All parcel coaches are timed to run at an average speed of 8 miles an hour.



To this list may be added the Liverpool and Manchester night mail parcel coach, which runs between the two cities ( $36\frac{1}{2}$  miles) in  $5\frac{1}{4}$  hours. The horses are changed at Holling Green and Prescott.

The mail-coaches of the eighties were no more exempt from the perils of the road (highwaymen excepted) and the hindrances of storm and flood than their predecessors of the thirties.

The Brighton coach, soon after the commencement of the service, was, during the prevalence of a dense fog, driven into a swamp by the side of the road, and horses had to be hired to extricate it. Again, on the night of December 22, 1891, during another thick fog, the coach was driven into a pond at Thornton Heath. Its four horses jumped over a wall—3 feet high and 15 feet from the edge of the pond—which divides the deep water from the shallow. The experienced coachman was driving at a rapid pace, and mistook a lamp which is on the wall in the centre of the pond for one by the roadside. The coach was not upset, but both the coachman (whose shoulder was dislocated) and the guard had to get down into the water to release the horses. The guard borrowed a fresh team to pull the coach out of the pond, and afterwards drove it himself on to London. By the time he reached the depôt the clothes of this good servant of the Crown were frozen hard. Yet he took no harm. Like Horatius, his body 'was borne up bravely by the stout heart within.' The Postmaster-

General awarded the men a gratuity of £5 apiece for their devotion to duty.

On the night of March 9, 1891, both the up and down Brighton coaches got into deep snowdrifts at Hand Cross, and had to be dug out. The down Oxford coach was also snowed up for many hours near Dorchester (Oxon) on the same night. Again, on the night of January 4, 1894, the Tunbridge Wells coaches, both up and down, stuck fast in a snowdrift at Pol Hill, near Halstead, Kent, and twelve hours passed before they could be got out. The guards borrowed shovels, but could make little headway beyond opening a space around the horses and the vehicles. Subsequently the local authorities sent a gang of men to clear the road, and the vehicles were able to resume their journeys early in the afternoon. The coachmen and guards had been out in the snow all night.

There have been other catastrophes. The Oxford coach, between Taplow and Maidenhead, got off the crown of the road into the gutter in September, 1890, fog making driving difficult; the top load was heavy, and the coach was overturned. Assistance being obtained, it was unloaded, raised, and loaded up again, and the journey was resumed after a delay of three hours. In the following February the coach fell over into a ditch and was damaged. It arrived at Oxford at 9.35 p.m., 13½ hours late. Here again, happily, the officials escaped injury. For a third time the Oxford coach was overturned

near Slough, on August 8, 1891, owing to a market-waggon being on the wrong side of the road. The waggoner (who was probably asleep) when hailed pulled his vehicle right across the road, and the mail coachman was obliged to run the coach on to a sloping green on the near side, as the lesser of two formidable risks. This episode especially recalls the perils of the highway in the old coaching days.

On October 11, 1890, the Chelmsford coach, which has since been extended to Colchester, ran into a ditch at Margaretting, 4 miles from Chelmsford, owing to fog, and fell against the hedge, which alone prevented it from going right over. The driver rode into Chelmsford on one of the mail-horses and brought the Ipswich coach to the spot. The load was transferred, and arrived at Colchester only four hours late. The driver and guard were uninjured. The down Chatham coach met with a mishap near Eltham on February 6, 1891. The road, which is extremely narrow, is skirted by a very dangerous ditch. The off-side wheels went into the ditch, and the coach had to be unloaded before it could be got out. This was done, after  $2\frac{1}{4}$  hours' delay. The ditch, I am glad to be able to say, for the comfort of future travellers by this road, has since been covered in.

A spring of the down Oxford coach broke on one occasion, and as the load carried was much heavier than that on the up journey, the guards, with ready wit, exchanged the mails at the meeting-place, so that the vehicle with the damaged spring returned

to London with the light load, and the sound one went on to Oxford.

This reminds me of an early experience of mine in Ireland, when driving from Roches Point to catch the railway train, many miles away. The speed of the horse was failing; another car with a fresh, high-stepping gray was seen approaching, two ladies being the passengers. At a signal both cars stopped and turned round. The ladies were requested to dismount and loads were exchanged. With shameless effrontery my companion and I nimbly sprang on to the vacated car, drove swiftly to the railway, and caught our train.

Christmas pressure tasks the coaches heavily, even if the roads be clear of snow. They carry in the festive week as many as ninety thousand parcels. While, on a comparison of the first year's earnings with the tenth year's, the general increase of parcel post revenue will be found to have been about threefold, the earnings of this particular branch of the service have increased fourfold.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE OUTER WORLD.

IN the palmy days, when the Post-Office stood possessed, in its own right, of a fleet of ocean-going mail-packets—*i.e.*, before the ruthless hands of 1823 and 1837 had swept away its responsible and sometimes adventurous work on the high seas—that division of the secretariat which managed the naval business was appropriately named the Packet Branch.

So it continued to be styled, even though it had no packets to manage, until a committee of revision in the year 1854 renamed it more accurately the Foreign and Colonial Branch. To one relic of old times, however, the branch manfully held on, and, the work of Lords Liverpool and Melville in the past and committees of revision in modern days notwithstanding, adheres to still. All its choicest papers are tied up in numbered bundles and neatly labelled 'Packet Minutes.'

In my days the arrival of the West Indian mail or the overland mail from India and China set the Foreign and Colonial Branch in a ferment. Despatches

came in by the score from Jamaica, Demerara, Barbadoes; from Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, and Hong Kong, smelling in the latter case of the seawater in the bilges and of spices and lacquer and every Oriental perfume which the hot sun in the Red Sea could bring out of the cargo; while those from the West came with a flavour perhaps of some innocent aromatic gum, or, it might be, of yellow fever.

We had in the branch two admirable chiefs who revelled in this pressure of work. Once, perhaps, a word in season had ruffled our spirits, or possibly *trop de zèle* had called for a salutary check; any way, we—the understrappers—had occasion for reprisals, and planned a subtle revenge. This was nothing less than that the two unimpeachable chiefs should be made to give contradictory orders.

‘Mr. A.’ began the ringleader, ‘the agent on the Orinoco asks for a new dated stamp. Shall we tell Mr. Bokenham to send him one?’

‘Certainly not. A stamp on a South American river ought to last for a century.’

We bided our time until Mr. A.’s back was turned, and Mr. Z. was alone. Then:

‘Mr. Z., the agent on the Orinoco asks for a new dated stamp. A stamp on a South American river ought to last for a century. Shall we refuse?’

‘Certainly not. What has a river to do with a stamp? If he wants one, tell Bokenham to send it.’

As to the Eastern possessions, the despatch of the 'overland' mail *viâ* Marseilles, four times a month, twice to Calcutta and twice to Bombay, was the great event.

Next in importance was the departure on the 2nd and 17th of the West India mail-packets, which sailed then, as they sail now, from Southampton. They made for the Danish island of St. Thomas, from whence they spread themselves out twice a month (a few not so often) like the blades of a fan—to Bermuda and Halifax; to Hayti and Cuba; as far up in the Gulf as Vera Cruz and Tampico; to Trinidad and Barbadoes; to the Windward Islands, the Leeward Islands, and Demerara. At a good eight or ten knots an hour these well-found steamships were constantly ploughing the waves.

From the outward Southampton steamer were transferred to other packets the mails for Jamaica and Darien's Isthmus of Panama, thus supplying the metropolis of the West Indies and the Pacific ports with their European correspondence.

The Post-Office maintained a Surveyor for the island of Jamaica, and a Surveyor for the West Indies, the latter being generally stationed at St. Thomas. Their function was to travel incessantly here and there, to keep all the island posts in good order, and effect a general supervision.

Mr. John Kains was the chief Surveyor in my early years, and Mr. R. M. Perring, lately at the head of the south-eastern district of England, surveyed Jamaica.

The last of the West Indian Surveyors was Mr. C. Bennett, who until quite lately held office at home as postmaster of Exeter.

Shortly before my time, the posts in Nova Scotia, which had been under Imperial control, were handed over to the Colonial Government; and towards 1859 attention began to be turned to Eastern waters and the West Indies, with the view to the Home Administration relinquishing what it had still in its hands. It was borne in on the mind of the department that the colonies might be able and willing to look after their own posts just as well as, and a good deal more cheaply than, we could. So, in 1859, Mr. Anthony Trollope, the novelist, a Surveyor of the department, was sent out to the West Indies to give effect to this policy—at all events, to draw up a scheme of transfer. His plans were approved, and the control of the colonial posts was relinquished by the General Post-Office. Mr. Trollope's interesting book, 'The West Indies and the Spanish Main,' was an outcome of this journey.

My colleague of many years, Mr. E. H. Rea, C.M.G., went out in November, 1866, to the China Seas to arrange a similar transfer of agencies and posts dependent on Hong Kong, which were much too distant to be effectively managed from London.

It was not an easy task, as the relations between functionaries under the Foreign Office and those under the Colonial Office had to be adjusted, and the Postmaster-General's own people turned over to



colonial control. However, tact and experience carried the day.

Soon there were only left the posts of Gibraltar and Malta, and these were eventually transferred; so the Imperial Post-Office has now no colonial officials at all.

Then came an important change in the management of foreign and colonial business. Up to 1874 all foreign postages had been settled by treaty or convention—one for each State—all colonial postages by negotiation with the local government.

There had long been, within my own knowledge, sustained effort at the Post-Office, urged on chiefly by Mr. Frederic Hill, to cheapen, if not to render uniform, the postage of letters to the continent of Europe. His aim, too, in fixing rates to the colonies and elsewhere beyond sea, was to have regard to the cost of conveyance. Sometimes he was successful; sometimes timidity at home or obstacles abroad hindered him. At any rate, the official mind was being prepared for change of some sort. It came at last.

The impulse reached the Old World from the New. Mr. Kasson, of the United States Post-Office, who was, I think, First Assistant-Postmaster-General, proposed that there should be held at Paris a Postal Congress of all the nationalities, to lay the basis of a general postal union. If in a sober record such a phrase is permissible, I would say the idea 'caught on.' France, Germany, all the great States, and most

of the minor ones, readily assented. The British Post-Office, needless to say, did not hang back, though it must be owned that while it sent Mr. Hill as the Imperial delegate, and with him as secretary Mr. E. H. Rea, it approached the subject of uniform postage with much caution. Great interests and large revenues might be jeopardized by hasty conclusions; it was right to be circumspect.

Probably, next to the United States, Germany was the readiest to advance. Dr. Stephan, the head of the German Post-Office, warmly sympathized with Mr. Kasson's principles. This astute administrator, since ennobled, still retains his important position. At the head of the French Post-Office was Monsieur Vandal, whose name was long held in high esteem at St. Martin's-le-Grand. He summoned the Congress which met under his presidency at Paris in May, 1863. Germany, as it felicitously happened, had already formed a kind of postal Bund within the States of the North German Confederation, so here, at least, was a basis of discussion. Years, however, passed before the deliberations of the Congress bore fruit. Governments which had to sacrifice revenue were in no mood to do so; those who had little to lose had nothing to offer in the way of reduced transit rates. Still, the seed was sown.

Dr. Stephan, as Uncle Remus would observe, 'lay low' awhile. Then, probably on his motion, Herr Höhn, of the Swiss Post-Office, summoned in 1874 a new Congress to meet at Berne, which resulted in

the adoption of the 2½d. rate of postage and in the inclusion within an international agreement of all European Post-Offices, and those of Egypt and the United States. Here, at last, was the General Postal Union. Mr. William James Page and Mr. Alan Maclean were the delegates sent from St. Martin's-le-Grand. The new Convention came into force on January 1, 1875.

And there was yet another Congress at Paris. M. Vandal had by this time been made a senator, and the new French Postmaster-General, M. Cochery, guided the ship. The international agreement was renamed the Universal Postal Union, so admitting to its provisions all who chose to enter.

Whether England, which now, as part of the bargain, does so much for nothing of the carrying of the world's letters, has on the whole profited pecuniarily in a postal sense, may be matter of opinion, but of the collective benefits of this good and great work there can be, I should say, little question.

For a time, however, strange anomalies arose. We conveyed foreign letters by our own ships to our own possessions for less money than was charged for the letters of the British taxpayer. We collected a penny for an open inland communication if of the nature of a letter, carried, it might be, only from Dover to Deal, but we delivered, even in remote parts, the same sort of foreign packet, prepaid only a halfpenny. We delivered and re-delivered and re-sent abroad for nothing a foreign letter, but charged our good

patrons, the British public, double postage whenever we had the chance of handling an inland letter re-directed from one village to another. However, all came right in time.

On the United Kingdom and France agreeing to be parties to this new International Convention, old postal treaties between the two countries became obsolete, and instead of the letter-bill of the French mail being a marvel of complexity, because of the varieties of postage assessable on foreign letters, its intricacy vanished. No more need for negotiations to be opened with France or Belgium, with Prussia and Austria, or Sardinia and the States of the Church, before the postage could be reduced between London and Rome; no more haggling with intermediate countries for closed mails and altered transit rates. Our great Book of Conventions might have gone into the waste-paper basket, though as a relic of other days it is still a prized heirloom.

Relieved of much troublesome work, the Foreign and Colonial Branch struck out new lines. It arranged for the exchange of money orders with all the world. It brought about a weekly mail, not only to India, but also to Australia; for the monthly service in forty-two days to the Cape of Good Hope, it substituted the wonderful time-table of a mail once a week in seventeen or eighteen days. It contracted to pay for the use of the North American mail-packets no longer by a subsidy, but according to the weight of the mails.

Although the exchange of postal parcels with places abroad did not commence until two years after the establishment of the inland parcel post, the subject had occupied attention from a much earlier period, and the delay, though freely attributed to departmental inertness, had really its origin in causes which the Post-Office could not control.

As far back as 1878—at the Postal Congress held at Paris—an international exchange of small parcels had been proposed. Most of the delegates were in its favour, although Great Britain could not assent, because it had at that time no inland parcel post of its own.

In 1880 a special Postal Conference was held at Paris further to examine the question. By that time an inland parcel post in the United Kingdom was under consideration. The Secretary of the Post-Office himself, the late Sir Arthur (then Mr.) Blackwood, the late Mr. Benthall (my predecessor), and Mr. Buxton Forman, now Assistant-Secretary in charge of foreign and colonial business, attended as delegates and took part in drawing up an International Parcel Post Convention.

But the Convention could not even be signed, much less ratified by Great Britain, because it was not until 1882 that the Bill promoted in Parliament for the establishment of a parcel post in this country became law. Even then the Postmaster-General could not sanction it without the consent of the Treasury, nor, indeed, is it signed to this day. It was, however, intended from the first, as Professor Fawcett had

declared, to link the inland parcel post with the international system as soon as possible, though we contemplated a simpler and perhaps more rapid system of inland collection and delivery than obtains on the Continent. As a preliminary step, Mr. Fawcett, in the autumn of 1882, desired Mr. Jeffery, Mr. Buxton Forman, and myself to visit Germany, Belgium, Holland, and France, and collect information.

Nothing could be more kind and hospitable than our reception abroad, especially in Berlin, where Herr G. A. Sachse (now, by favour of the German Emperor, Wirtlicher Geheimer Rath, and 'Excellenz') at the instance of Herr von Stephan, was unremitting in his polite attentions. A carriage was placed at our disposal, we were taken over the palace at Potsdam, and even the opera changed its piece to 'Lohengrin' to please us.

Hard work, rapid travelling, and long journeys notwithstanding, no immediate action in setting up an international parcel post followed our return.

Very naturally, the Treasury wished to be satisfied with the progress of the inland post before sanctioning a new departure. But the public did not appreciate this prudent hesitation; and, as is usual in such cases, the Post-Office, which was only too eager to get on, had to accept criticism *sub silentio*. However, in November, 1884, we were allowed to go ahead. Even then there were difficulties. The International Convention was not well suited to British requirements. We wished to exchange light

parcels at a lower rate of postage than that chargeable on heavy ones. The Convention prescribed a uniform rate. There were other objections. Ultimately it was decided to proceed by separate agreements with each State of the Continent.

Accordingly, with nearly every country, parcels under three pounds in weight can be exchanged at lower postage than that paid on parcels between three pounds and seven pounds (one and three kilogrammes). There can be little doubt that the cheaper rate for the light parcels, which constitute about 50 per cent. of the whole, has greatly aided the development of the post.

The next step was a parcel post with India. The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company had long had an arrangement with the Indian Post-Office, under which it collected and distributed Indian parcels in this country, as well as conveyed them between London and Bombay. By an agreement negotiated at St. Martin's-le-Grand with that efficient Indian official, Mr. H. E. M. James, the Imperial Post-Office undertook the inland service in the case of such of these parcels as came within the rules applicable to postal parcels, and agreed to pay the packet company a separate rate for the sea conveyance. A good parcel post with India was thus established.

The Indian Post-Office is a branch of Government to which one has always been insensibly drawn by the prompt and intelligent hold it takes of official

questions. Such, at all events, has been my experience ; and although Anglo-Indian administration rather lends itself to forms, indents, and similar devices, yet the Indian Post-Office is singularly free—more so, perhaps, than we are at home—from anything approaching the obstruction of routine or pedantic insistence on the letter rather than the spirit of an agreement. Hence, both the cordial co-operation of the delegate, Mr. James, and the high administrative qualities of the chief, Mr. Fanshawe, are not easily forgotten.

As an instance of the enterprise of the Indian Post-Office, it may be mentioned that drugs, as well as stamps, can be obtained at local post-offices. In a single year 427 lb. of quinine have been sold by this agency in pice-packets to a public which dwells perhaps on the jungle border or in the marsh lands many miles from the nearest medical man.

Simultaneously with the parcel post to India there were commenced similar services to Egypt, where former colleagues of mine—men of marked ability, who have since risen to distinction in the Egyptian service—Messrs. Halton and Caillard, were in office. The parcel post was also extended to Gibraltar. The first mails sent abroad were despatched on July 7, 1885. The occasion was invested with some degree of formality.

Amongst those who carried out the arrangements with animation and completeness is one of the most efficient of colonial officials, Miss Creswell, the Post-



mistress of Gibraltar. Her father had held the position of Deputy-Postmaster-General and Surveyor of the post-offices in the Mediterranean with advantage to the public and credit to himself, and her appointment at Gibraltar was one of the good deeds on which the department may justly congratulate itself.

Somewhat later the post was extended to Malta and other British possessions in the East, to most of the colonies in the West Indies, and to the Cape of Good Hope. From first to last cordial co-operation was experienced at the hands of Mr. S. R. French, now the Cape Postmaster-General. He and I were old colleagues. In the telegraph branch in London, as head of the Post-Office at Cyprus, and in the Cape, Mr. French had displayed the qualities which made him alike valued as an official and cherished as a friend. Of his class are the men whom England scatters about the world to advance civilization and to do honour to the old flag.

Jamaica, British Guiana, Trinidad, the Straits Settlements, Malta, the Australian colonies, the Dominion of Canada, Cyprus, Natal—how pleasant was the correspondence with them all, and still more so the personal communication with certain of the postal chiefs!

Before January 1, 1886, parcel post conventions had been negotiated with Belgium and Germany, and early in that year an exchange of parcels was opened up with all the States of Central and Northern

Europe. In a leading article of January 1, 1886, the *Times* wrote :

‘ To-day, for the first time, parcels may be sent by post from this country to Belgium and Germany. In organizing that international parcel post, which the late Mr. Fawcett always referred to as the necessary supplement of the inland service, the Post-Office seems to have begun with the ends of the world and worked homewards.’

No doubt the post did begin to run to India long before a parcel could be sent to Ostend. But the reason was simple. India, as I have explained, had a kind of parcel post ready-made to the hand, and a few weeks of discussion and correspondence and the preparation of a Treasury warrant settled the matter. But in the cases of Belgium and Germany lengthy negotiations, and the drafting and executing of agreements outside the International Parcel Post Convention, took up much time. The *Times* went on to say :

‘ On July 1 last a post with India was established. On October 1 the comparatively near West Indies were admitted to the same privilege. With the commencement of the new year the postal wave has reached Germany and Belgium. Possibly in another three months the Post-Office will become aware of the existence of its next neighbour, and a parcel post will be established with France.

‘ It is most undesirable that this country should in

the international market be at a disadvantage in any respect, and it is to be hoped that the Post-Office will spare no effort to keep England abreast of the latest Continental improvements in the carriage of parcels and other postal arrangements.'

It may be avowed with confidence that from January, 1886, to the end of December, 1892, when questions arising out of the foreign and colonial parcel post ceased to be in my hands, no effort was spared to the end indicated.

The birthday honours of 1893 showed that knighthood had been conferred on that tried colonial servant, my excellent friend, Dr. Todd, Postmaster-General of South Australia, who signed with me the parcel post agreement. Sir Charles Todd, K.C.M.G., as he now is, has a remarkable record. He carried the telegraph across the Australian continent from Palmerston in the North to Adelaide, and built up a system of inland telegraphs in the colony. He is an astronomer and an effective administrator of the posts.

In 1886 the chief Australian colonies came into the parcel system, Tasmania and Western Australia following six months later. The *Australian Trading World* of November 19, 1892, expressed its opinion that 'the importance of the parcel post to Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand has not yet been sufficiently recognised. It places the customer in some remote town of the colony or on some out-of-the-way

station in direct trading communication with the great English shopkeeper. The middleman, or, rather, the series of middlemen, have been practically eliminated from the deal, and the lady 300 miles up-country from Sydney or Brisbane can have her bonnet or boots direct from Regent Street or Bond Street. We look to see this channel of trade increasingly used.'

The colonial representative with whom were my largest personal dealings was the popular Sir Francis Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G., a man distinguished alike by qualities of head and heart. We negotiated and signed the New Zealand parcel post arrangement of 1888. Many difficulties lay in the way, but Sir Francis, by adroit management, surmounted them all. He twice conveyed to me the thanks of his Government—first in a letter which, being dated November 10, 1888, came as a most welcome birthday gift :

'Permit me,' he wrote, 'to convey to you the best thanks of my Government for the courteous assistance you have given in bringing to completion a matter of so much postal advantage to the country and New Zealand.'

Next, in July of the following year, for a little timely co-operation he wrote as follows :

'It gives me much pleasure to be the bearer of my Government's thanks for the help you were kind

enough to give them on this, as on so many other occasions.'

Such acknowledgments are no mean compensation for any special labour and anxiety that may come in the civil servant's way. It was also pleasant work to negotiate agreements with colonial statesmen so distinguished as Sir Graham Berry, Sir Saul Samuel, Sir J. Carrick, and others.

In August and September of 1886 Canada and Newfoundland were included in the colonial post. The service with Canada was at first confined to certain selected offices in the Dominion, and the weight of the parcels was limited to three pounds. The postage also varied with the distance from the Atlantic seaboard of the place of destination or origin. These restrictions and distinctions have been gradually removed, sometimes on the initiative of the Imperial Post-Office, and sometimes voluntarily by the Canadian Post-Office; and there is now a uniform tariff, for parcels up to eleven pounds in weight, to and from all parts of Canada, alike to the maritime provinces as to the Rocky Mountains and far-off Vancouver's Island. In our efforts to establish this Canadian post, we found an effective coadjutor in Mr. W. H. Griffin, of Ottawa, the Deputy Postmaster-General of the day—one whose name had been for thirty years 'familiar in our mouths as household words' at the Post-Office. His successor, Mr. White, has helped it in every way. Prosper thy beaver-traps, thy corn-lands, thy factories,

thy mines, thy flocks and herds, thou vast Dominion, and sweep on in thy majestic course to a great future !

The Post-Office did not neglect the smallest of her Majesty's colonial possessions. Within the Antarctic drift-current is to be found under the Union Jack a reproduction of the British island of St. Kilda and its satellites in the North Atlantic Ocean—viz., the three islands of which the chief is Tristan D'Acunha.

To this remote place, after much correspondence as to ways and means, we at length extended the colonial parcel post.

Stupendous cliffs are surmounted by tableland, which is in turn dominated by a reproduction of the Peak of Teneriffe, its summit 8,000 feet above sea-level ; and on a tongue of land or grassy slope, situated under a perpendicular cliff 1,000 feet high, are the dozen or so thatched cottages which form the village of Edinburgh. All the 84 inhabitants speak English ; all belong to the communion of the National Church ; all have their being in a forlorn spot 1,323 miles from St. Helena, and 1,512 miles from the Cape of Good Hope.

St. Kilda lies about 40 miles west of the western side of North Uist, in the Outer Hebrides. Stornoway, about 100 sea miles distant, is the nearest port of any importance. Perched 1,220 feet above the sea, about 70 inhabitants dwell in sixteen neat stone cottages roofed with zinc, being in this respect less well off than the Tristan cottagers, who have thatch over their heads.

Once upon a time, whenever a vessel communicated with the island, a result was that its inhabitants were affected with a severe cold in the head, the mere fact of strangers mixing with them producing this distressing phenomenon.

In the year 1887 came the parcel post with France. The Post-Office had really been aware of the existence of France for some time, the doubts of the leading journal notwithstanding. But there were difficulties in the way of a Convention, which could not be immediately surmounted. At length it became possible to exchange parcels, not merely with France and her possessions, but with Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Switzerland *via* France, thus bringing into the English system all European countries except Russia.

The extension of the service to Natal (in effecting which Mr. Chadwick, Postmaster-General of the colony, helped us over many an unforeseen obstacle), to the colonies on the West Coast of Africa, and to the South American Republics of Argentina, Chili, Colombia, and Costa Rica, immediately followed.

At this time also it was possible to make reductions in colonial parcel postage, and the rates to India, Australia, the East, and the Cape were thereupon lowered. The reduction of postage stimulated the traffic, the number of parcels exchanged with some of the colonies increasing soon afterwards to the extent of about 20 per cent. Their average weight also increased.

Next came extensions of the parcel post to the Mauritius and Bermuda, and in 1890 to the British East African Possessions. There was, and still is, a certain fascination in creating facilities for trade with the West Coast of Africa. One never knows what may happen in the way of developments. Our settlements are on the very edge of the coast, sometimes at the mouths of the rivers, down which palm-oil comes for shipment, sometimes on a hot, sandy strip, in all cases with a vast, largely unknown interior behind. What will not some day be the trade of the tremendous untouched areas of the Niger Coast Protectorate?

Governor Sir Brandford Griffith, in a speech at Liverpool, on February 16, 1894, said that 'the parcel post had been established, and was a great boon to the people. It is remarkable what a large number of packages come to the natives as well as to the Europeans.'

Cordial help in establishing such of the posts as came within colonial jurisdiction was always available at the seat of government on the Gold Coast, where my friend and colleague, Mr. F. H. Hodgson, C.M.G., as Colonial Secretary, has done admirable work. (Hot weather does not seem to affect all European constitutions alike. The freshest, rosiest Englishmen that ever entered my room at the Post-Office hailed from Hindostan and the Bight of Benin.)

On January 1, 1892, Queensland (the last British colony to adopt the parcel post system) was added to the list of extensions. South, east, and west the



foreign parcel post threw out its arms ; and Uruguay, below Argentina, far-away Siam, and the hot plains of Mexico were included in its clasp. How pleasant was our passing intercourse, good Señor Don José Jacinto Jimenez, of Mexico city ; and how pure and fluent was the English with which you replaced the polished Castilian tongue when we foregathered in London !

Under independent agreements or conventions every British colony, every dependency of the Empire, from India, the Dominion of Canada, the Cape, and the Australasian group, all the States of America, except the United States, Brazil, and some of the smaller republics, have been linked by parcel post with this country.

The number of foreign and colonial parcels despatched and received was, in

1885-86 ... ..	112,700 (for 9 months)	1889-90 ... ..	1,025,892
1886-87 ... ..	393,520	1890-91 ... ..	1,148,320
1887-88 ... ..	637,942	1891-92 ... ..	1,261,760
1888-89 ... ..	867,045	1892-93 ... ..	1,308,066

An illustration as regards Eastern mails may be of interest. The first foreign and colonial parcel mails despatched to India, Egypt, and Gibraltar consisted of 25 boxes, containing 1,105 parcels. In similar mails despatched in October, 1892, which consisted of 195 boxes, there were sent 3,882 parcels—a pretty fair increase of business in a few years. No doubt, however, the approach of Christmas swelled the total. The whole parcel mails for the

East and Australia despatched on that day consisted of 348 boxes, and contained 7,581 parcels.

An analysis of the parcels dealt with in the year 1892-93 shows that the number exchanged with the principal States of the Continent and with British possessions, was as follows :

## FOREIGN.

France ... ..	287,205	Holland ... ..	53,017
Germany ... ..	262,263	Belgium ... ..	51,725
Italy ... ..	66,748	Switzerland ... ..	46,991

It would seem that the volume of parcel business with France and Germany is more than twofold that with all other parts of Europe combined.

## COLONIAL.

East Indies ... ..	137,482	Malta ... ..	20,486
Australasia ... ..	70,882	Hong Kong ... ..	16,909
Cape and South Africa generally...	37,067	Gibraltar... ..	14,276
Canada ... ..	48,193	Ceylon ... ..	12,500
West Indies ... ..	40,042	West Coast of Africa	7,612

England sends away nearly twice as many parcels as she receives. Unlike the practice followed abroad, the addressees of parcels in this country are not required to attend at the Custom-house, open their parcels, and pay import duties. Such duties are collected, at the very door of the recipient of the parcel, by the Post-Office, which itself discharges at the Custom-house all statutory obligations devolving on the public in respect of parcels received from abroad. Under the regulations in force, the convenience of the public and the security of their

foreign and colonial parcels against loss seems complete.

By the terms of the conventions with foreign countries, there is an obligation to pay a limited compensation for the loss or damage of parcels in the post, and this principle has been extended to most of the colonial services. Moreover, the parcels exchanged with India and several colonies can be insured against damage or loss up to the value of £50. This plan has answered so well that it has been extended to inland parcels.

The effective adjustment of foreign and colonial postal relations with the United Kingdom and the control of the transmarine packet service are matters of deep concern alike to the English race in the colonies and to the public at home.

The foreign and colonial branch of the Secretary's office is provided for packet business with a civil controller and a naval adviser. At a net cost of about six hundred thousand pounds a year, England is linked with the North American colonies and the West Indies on the one hand, and with the East Indian possessions and the Australian continent on the other. The West Coast of Africa is brought in touch with Liverpool, the Brazils and South America generally are served by fine packets from Southampton, and the Channel is bridged by night between Dover and Calais.

The Cape of Good Hope provides and pays for her

own swift mail-packet service to Plymouth, so does the Dominion of Canada for its Liverpool line, but of course the mails of the mother country are not carried by either gratuitously.

In 1857 a strange contract came to an end for the conveyance of the Cape of Good Hope mails and such Indian correspondence as the public chose to send by a line of steamers between Dartmouth and Calcutta.

There must have been good reasons for making the arrangement, but it was obvious that under it the punctuality of the Cape mail service depended, not only on the due performance of the voyage between England and the Cape, but also on what happened in the Indian Seas between the Cape and Calcutta. Any way, the new service soon collapsed, and no further attempts were made to use the Cape route for Indian mails.

The Union Steamship Company entered the field at a subsidy of £19,500 a year, and they despatched a small steamer (800 or 900 tons) once a month in each direction, and were allowed 42 days for the single trip, to or from Devonport and Table Bay. Such was the Cape service 37 years ago. As Tennyson's 'Northern Farmer' says, 'an' look at it now !'

The Castle Company's fine steamers have also come upon the station, and between the two companies superb fleets are sent to plough the South Atlantic, composed of vessels of 5,000 or 6,000 tons, which sight Table Mountain in 16 or 17 days from the Needles or Plymouth. Once a week the *Scot*, or some

other great steamer of the Union Line, or the *Tantallan Castle*, or other floating palace of the Castle Line, takes passengers and goods to the Cape or brings home colonists, feathers and gold. The *Tartar*, one of the Union Company's vessels, brought back in May, 1894, 246 passengers and specie of the value of £288,000.

Once, in my room at the Post-Office, Sir Donald Currie, K.C.M.G., gave me an outline of that wonderful career which has greatly helped to make the Cape mail-lines what they are, and perhaps, though in a less degree, the Cape Colony what it is in the present and what it hopes to be in the future. Some day, perhaps, Sir Donald will be induced to tell the story in full to the public.

In 1823 the Falmouth packets had been transferred to the Admiralty, and on January 16, 1837, the rest followed suit. This must have been in the earlier year a bitter trial for Sir Francis Freeling, and for the Assistant-Secretary, Mr. G. H. Freeling, who had especial charge of the sea service, and an alteration hardly agreeable to Colonel Maberly later on. But as a military man naval matters might not have been to his taste.

It is a long lane, however, that hath no turning. One day the good news reached the Foreign and Colonial Branch that on April 1, 1860, the packet services would be transferred again to it; not, indeed, to the extent of owning and working vessels, but as far as control went. So once more the great steam-

ship companies came under Post-Office review, and it was then that Mr. Frederic Hill, as Assistant-Secretary in charge of such business, helped, it should be added, by one of the most capable officers of the old *régime* that the department possessed—the late Mr. W. J. Page, and his partner Mr. Rea—successfully bent a vigorous mind upon the packet services in the direction of increased efficiency and diminished cost.

Once more the Post-Office could demand with authority an explanation of the late start by ten minutes of the mail-boat from the antipodes—once more knit the official brow over delay in raising the anchor at Aspinwall of the taut craft for Greytown and the Mosquito Coast, an unduly long stop of the packet at Callao on her voyage down the Pacific, or her late arrival by an hour at Valparaiso in Chili.

An idea had sprung up a few years previously that the delivery of homeward-bound letters would be quickened by a process of sortation on-board. In 1857-8 the Mediterranean packets were accordingly fitted up with sorting-rooms, and the plan seemed to answer very well. The same was done with the Canadian steamers, though a gloom was cast over the proceedings by the loss of the *Hungarian*, and with her the father of marine sorting, Mr. George Nash, an esteemed official of St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Some years passed, and the Canadians ran their own packets and did their own marine sorting; the Indian Post-Office agreed to prepare the letters on

the voyage to the eastward of Suez, so there was nothing left to be done in the Mediterranean, and at length the West Indian sorting was given up too. Thus the British Post-Office relinquished altogether the plan of sorting on board the ocean packets.

As to progress in the construction of mail-packets, let the first Peninsular steamer, the *William Fawcett* of 1837, of 206 tons and 60 horse-power, be contrasted with her owners' *Australia* of the present day, of 6,901 tons and 10,000 horse-power; or even the *Niagara*, of 1,825 tons and 251 feet in length, averaging  $10\frac{1}{4}$  knots an hour, of Sir Samuel Cunard's time, with the magnificent *Umbria* and the *Campania* and *Lucania*, of close on 13,000 tons Board of Trade measurement, which habitually steam at 20 knots an hour across the Atlantic.

The *Umbria* is two-thirds as broad—52 feet—as the *William Fawcett* was long—74 feet—and her length is more than six times as great. Yet the gallant little vessel of the thirties, after her fashion, did her duty on the stormy Atlantic not less stoutly than the *Umbria* does hers in the nineties. What, it might be asked, was the largest mail-packet afloat when the present nautical adviser of the Post-Office—Captain R. Patton Jenkins, R.N.—or his predecessor, Mr. J. Young Messum, R.N., first reported himself on board a man-of-war, or even when the ripe experience of both was put at the disposal of the Post-Office?

Have the public an idea of the vast quantity of mails the great packets carry? Before my eyes on

Carlisle Pier, at Kingstown, on an evening in August of 1890, no fewer than 800 sacks of United States and Canadian mails were hurried across from the mail-van to the ship's deck.

A Christmas mail for India and Australia has been known to consist of 1,595 sacks. Such were taken on from Brindisi in November, 1893, by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's packet *Arcadia*, which vessel had also on board 4,994 parcels, enclosed in 262 boxes. The parcels had been embarked at the Docks in the Thames.

Can the Gargantuan appetite be gauged of one of these great passenger mail-steamers? Take, as an example, the provisioning of the *Etruria* for so relatively short a trip as that from Liverpool to New York. On a single voyage her people eat 20,000 lb. weight of meat, of which nearly 13,000 lb. are British beef, while 1,500 head of game and poultry and 11,500 eggs are mere items in the menu. For the round voyage, more than 15,000 bottles of various fluids—wine, ale, spirits, and mineral waters—are laid down.

As to breakfast and five o'clock tea, 1,850 lb. of tea and coffee are the stock for the round voyage of 22 days, which commodities have to be sweetened by 5,100 lb. weight of sugar. By way of relish are thrown in 3,500 lb. of butter and cheese, and 4,500 lb. of bacon and ham.

In the fifties a small, gray-haired man, of quiet manners and not overflowing speech, used occasion-



ally to visit the packet branch of the General Post-Office. It was Sir Samuel Cunard, Bart., the chief figure in the Liverpool firm of Cunard, Burns, and McIver, who founded the British and North American Steam Packet Company. He received the distinction of a baronetcy in recognition of his successful efforts to establish a Transatlantic mail-service unsurpassed in speed and security.

Then, as now, the Cunard boats ran between Liverpool and Boston and Liverpool and New York; but one smiles to see, in a vision of the mind, the *Europa*, the *Niagara*, the *Asia*, the *Africa*, and the *America* lying in the Sloyne, their red funnels claiming cousinship (but many degrees removed!) with the *Campania* and *Lucania*, the *Aurania*, *Etruria*, and the *Umbria*.

In my early experience it was not unusual for some of the mail-packets to occupy 15 or 16 days on the voyage from New York to Liverpool; though it is true that the *Persia*, on her first homeward voyage, in August, 1856, made the passage in 9 days 1 hour. A few other vessels would perform it in 10 or 12 days. As a contrast, the *Lucania*, on May 12, 1894, arrived off Queenstown in 5 days 13½ hours—say, approximately, 6¼ days for the entire voyage.

By going back to a date beyond my own personal knowledge of facts, and relying on the 'American Notes' of a famous novelist, a still more striking contrast can be adduced.

Fifty-two years ago—that is, on January 4, 1842—the good ship *Britannia*, a paddle-wheel steamer of

the Cunard Line, left Liverpool with the mails for Halifax and Boston. She had on board 'Charles Dickens Esquire and Lady.' The reader should turn to Chapter I. of the graphic record of the voyage.

The *Britannia* was about one-tenth of the size of the *Campania*. She made Boston only on the 22nd—*i.e.*, after a passage of 18 days. It would now be within the bounds of possibility for the *Campania* or *Lucania* to run out and home and back again to Boston in less time than the *Britannia* occupied on the outward voyage alone. Yet the last-named vessel was regarded—no doubt with reason—as 'the far-famed fast American steamer.' It is true that the weather experienced was severe even for the Atlantic. The Cunarder came into Boston with crushed lifeboat and the planking torn sheer from her paddle-boxes. As to the details of that voyage, however, it is to the great writer's page that one should refer for a description unsurpassed in vividness and vigour.

But has not the Cunard Fleet published a history of its own, and shall I needlessly attempt to cover ground which has already been traversed with completeness and ability?

An unusual incident connected with the American mail-packet service occurred on December 15, 1892. On that occasion a gentleman who had booked his passage through from England to America, and who had an urgent engagement at New York, was unlucky enough to miss in Dublin the mail-train from Kingsbridge terminus to the south. He promptly chartered

a special train, which started from Dublin at 9.26 a.m., and reached Queenstown in the short space of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours—*i.e.*, at 12.57 p.m. But the mail-tender with the mails and passengers had started from Queenstown Pier at 12.31 p.m. Nothing daunted, our traveller boarded as speedily as possible another tender which was lying in the harbour. In this he set out in pursuit, and was lucky enough to reach the packet just as the mail-tender had been thrown off, and the transfer of the mails and passengers completed.

There is the legend which finds acceptance of a belated traveller having overtaken the mail-packet at Queenstown by means of a whale-boat; but in this case I am not able to 'verify the reference.' Association, however slight, with a 'whale' suggests a prudent reticence.

In May, 1894, there took place what has been described as a race across the Atlantic between two first-rate steamers, the *Majestic* and the *Paris*, carrying mails. Probably each commander would disclaim any notion of racing on his own part—would maintain that his own vessel steamed at an ordinary pace, but would see, no doubt, a futile desire to excel on the part of the other. So whether it was an actual race or not must be left to the reader's judgment, it being borne in mind, on the one hand, that it is no longer the custom, even on the Mississippi, for the captain, when desiring to pass another steamer, to sit on the safety-valve; and, on the other, that in this

case the steamers belonged not only to rival lines, but to different countries.

The *Paris*, bringing the bulk mails, left New York at 4.33 p.m. on May 16, and the correspondence was received at the General Post-Office, London, *viâ* Southampton, at 11.21 p.m. on the 23rd.

The *Majestic*, bringing mails for Ireland, and specially addressed letters, etc., left New York at 5 p.m. on May 16, and the correspondence for London was received at the General Post-Office, *viâ* Liverpool, at 10.52 p.m. on the 23rd. Thus the English ship left New York 27 minutes later than the American vessel, but her mails arrived in London 30 minutes earlier than those by her rival. Still, what shall be said of the result except that it was a dead heat?

From this country to the United States are sent annually 12½ millions of letters. Let us take a peep into the interior of one of a series of pair-horse vans which at ten minutes past eight o'clock on Saturday night rattle through Euston Square. It is on its way to the Irish mail-train, which stands ready, with steam up, in the western departure bay, to start for Holyhead. Piled to the roof are sacks of American letters, a contribution, in short, for the great *Campania*, or possibly the *Umbria*, which had sailed from the Mersey in the forenoon with previous instalments, and which the Irish mail, after delivering its inland bags, means to intercept at Queenstown.

At 8.20 p.m. the train rolls out of the station; at 11.48 it pauses at Crewe to receive the very latest

letters from London and the South, sent after it by the down special. It halts for awhile at Chester to take in bags from Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, and the North generally, and by half-past two in the morning the combined mails are at Holyhead and on board the packet bound for Kingstown.

From Carlisle Pier a special train hurries off to Dublin. At 6.40 a.m. it runs out of a station in Amiens Street over a line which curves around the city and makes for the Great Southern and Western Railway.

Once on the main line for Cork, and its head fairly set due South, the train soon dashes past the station for the Curragh of Kildare, past the Maryborough Junction for Kilkenny and Waterford, past historic Thurles, through Limerick Junction in view of the Galtees, by entralling reaches of the Blackwater at Mallow, within sight of Blarney Castle and its famous stone, and past the fine city of Cork; and then, skirting the bay, which can shelter more than a fleet, arrives at Queenstown soon after eleven o'clock.

With all the speed of willing Irish hands, the mails are transferred to the mail-tender and embarked on board the liner lying in the Cove of Cork or Queenstown Bay. It is Sunday, at noon. By Saturday our mails will be in New York—possibly by Friday night, if the *Campania* repeats her wonderful performance of making the outward voyage in 5 days 12 hours and 7 minutes.

Or it is Thursday. The magnificent *Teutonic*, of

the White Star Line, is steaming out of the bay with Wednesday's mails from London, etc., intent on beating her record and passing Sandy Hook before 1.36 on the following Wednesday morning.

If the outward service is swiftly performed, how as to the homeward? Let events speak for themselves. On February 21, 1894, at 5.30 a.m., the *Majestic*, sister ship to the *Teutonic*, left New York with the mails for the United Kingdom, consisting of 745 bags. She landed them at Queenstown on the 27th at 8 p.m., after a passage (allowing for difference of longitude) of 6 days 9½ hours.

At 8.25 Irish or 8.50 English time, this mass of mails was sent away from Queenstown by special train to Kingstown. At 2.2 in the morning of the next day a special steamer left Kingstown and took the mails over to Holyhead in 3 hours and 35 minutes. From Holyhead, at 5.50 a.m., another special train ran with 398 bags for London and the Continent to Euston, which was reached at 11.32 a.m., and by five minutes past noon the mails were in the General Post-Office, thus completing the journey from Queenstown Station to Euston Station in 14 hours 42 minutes, and to the Post-Office in 15 hours 15 minutes. An hour later—*i.e.*, at five minutes past one o'clock—the postmen had commenced to deliver the letters in the City.

It follows that letters written in New York on the night of the 20th were read in London soon after noon on the 28th, and replies posted the same day

were embarked at Queenstown on a White Star Liner, and were well on the way to New York before noon of the next day. By an arrival in New York early on Wednesday, March 7, the course of post would have been little over a fortnight.

I narrate elsewhere the circumstances attending the swift transit of the despatches from America consequent on the *Trent* affair a long time ago.

For some years after my entry into the Post-Office the Dover and Ostend, as well as the Dover and Calais mails, continued to be carried under the British flag.

One of the finest men and sailors with whom official business ever brought me in contact was for many years a commander on the Dover station—Sir Luke Smithett. He was generally selected to take charge of the special packet provided for the conveyance of a royal passenger across the Channel, and was doubly associated with the Post-Office, both in connection with the mail-steamers and in the assistance he gave in 1853, in the mail-packet *Vivid*, in marking the course to be taken on the occasion of laying the Dover and Ostend cable, which is now public property.

Eventually the Belgian Government undertook the night as well as the day service, and all that her Majesty's Government does is to make a contribution towards the cost. The night mails to and from Calais continue to pass under the British flag.

It was while the Ostend night mail was still carried

in a British vessel that the gallant Marine Mail-guard Mortleman lost his life in an effort to save the bags during the melancholy wreck of the *Violet*, on the passage between Ostend and Dover, in 1856. The Duke of Argyll, whose name, after so many years, has still a sweet savour at St. Martin's-le-Grand, in the third annual report on the Post-Office, paid tribute to his bravery in warm terms.

'Mr. Mortleman, the officer in immediate charge of the mails,' wrote his Grace, 'acted on the occasion with a presence of mind and forethought which reflect honour on his memory. On seeing that the vessel could not be saved, he must have removed the cases containing the mail-bags from the hold, and have so placed them that when the ship went down they might float, a proceeding which ultimately led to the recovery of all the bags except one containing despatches, of which, from their nature, it was possible to obtain copies.'

Then was added that which—true as regards the period anterior to the year in which it was written, 1857—is true to the present day :

'I may add that a similar spirit of determination to perform their duty to the last has on several previous occasions of exposure to imminent danger distinguished the conduct of our officers.'



## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE TRAIN AND THE BOAT.

BETWEEN thirty and forty years ago Mr. Robert Stephenson, president of the Society of Civil Engineers, threw down the gauntlet to the Post-Office, by representing the railway system as essential to the fiscal success of penny postage.

As might be expected, Sir Rowland Hill flew to arms, and both sides splintered lances with more or less effect. Probably these distinguished men considered the matter from different standpoints. Mr. Hill would naturally have had regard to the produce of penny letters and the cost of conveying them by road; Mr. Stephenson had in view the bulk, not of letters alone, but of the entire mails sent by rail, which comprised, of course, all classes of correspondence—newspapers and book-packets as well as penny letters. Be that as it may, one of my predecessors, Mr. Edward J. Page, furnished an able report on the subject, which, dated February 29, 1856, is still of interest. Each party maintained his

position, and the academic discussion was without final issue. Nowadays, however, no one doubts that without the help of steam and the railways the Post-Office would be shorn of the major part of its fame and utility.

The lighting of the postal buildings at St. Martin's-le-Grand could hardly be effected by electricity, unless steam worked the dynamos, while the heavy sacks and multitudinous baskets which mount from the ground-floor to the attics are lifted by steam. In the telegraph galleries the 'Wheatstone' processes are facilitated by the expansion of air compressed by the agency of steam. Gigantic pop-guns shoot telegrams under the streets, steam again being the means of propulsion.

The reader does not need to be reminded that these apart, it would be impossible for the department, without railways, to grapple successfully with the immense mass of correspondence to which cheap postage and the growth of the population have given rise. Railroads and steam-ships alone render possible frequency of service, celerity, and, on the whole, an exact regularity.

Between the contracting companies and the Post-Office exist strong bonds of sympathy and goodwill. These companies render valuable services to the Post-Office on not illiberal terms. They are cordial in their dealings, take a pride in the effective performance of the mail-service, are attentive to suggestions, and at all times ready to help in a difficulty. Such

has been my experience, as Inspector-General of Mails, for more than ten years.

On the other hand, the Post-Office is not without its value to the railway companies as a client. It pays to them in the aggregate a million and a half pounds sterling per annum—a million or thereabouts for the general mails, and half as much more for the parcels. This is a comfortable sum, though there is rendered in return for such payment a full and complete equivalent, at all events, as regards the letter mails.

Of all the persons with whom it is agreeable to negotiate, commend me to general managers. They are men of great astuteness and ability, who have a thorough knowledge of their work; who, moreover, being the trusted agents of their directorate, know exactly how far they may go in negotiations, and what terms they may safely accept. Finally, and this is the great point, they know their own mind.

More than twenty years ago I was travelling by special train with the General Manager of an Irish line on a tour of inspection over some hundreds of miles of railway, part of it laid as a single road. My genial companion, as a cheerful means of beguiling the time between stations, regaled me with his personal experience of half a century of railway accidents. He began with the train—he was a passenger by it—which struck down Mr. Huskisson on the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway on September 15, 1830; and he ended with the remarkable instance

of the Cork and Dublin mail-carriage, while at a speed of 40 miles an hour, leaping from the rails within 200 yards of the next station, and springing on to them again, with bodily harm to no one, just as it was about to strike the massive stone coping of the station platform.

The narrow escape of the Cork mail recalls the peril of the Bristol mail as narrated in the diaries of Sir Daniel Gooch :

‘The whole of the Great Western Railway between London and Bristol was opened on June 30, 1841. The question of working through the Box Tunnel, up a gradient of 1 in 100, was a source of anxiety to Mr. Brunel. . . . I cannot say that I felt this anxiety. I felt we should have no difficulty. Only one line of rails was complete through the tunnel the day we opened, and the trains had therefore to be worked on a single line. I undertook to accompany all the trains through the tunnel, and did so the first day and night, also the second day.

‘At about eleven o’clock the second night we had a very narrow escape from a fearful accident. I was going up the tunnel with the last up train, when I fancied I saw some green lights, placed as they were in front of our train. A second’s reflection convinced me it was the mail coming down. I lost no time in reversing the engine I was on, and running back to Box Station with my train as quickly as I could, when the mail came down behind me. The policeman at the top of the tunnel had made some blunder, and

sent the mails on when they arrived there. Had the tunnel not been pretty clear of steam, we should have met in full career, and the smash would have been fearful, cutting short my career also.'

But that which impressed me most amongst the disturbing stories of my travelling companion was one to this effect: He was standing in the station of a large town. Opposite was a very long siding which ended in the abutments of a bridge. On the up line an express train, half a mile off, was approaching. To his horror he plainly saw it switched on to the side line. He swiftly turned to a porter: 'Jump on a car,' said he; 'gallop for your life. Send back by it the first doctor you can find. Send by other cars every doctor you can lay hands on. Tell them there is a terrible accident.' Two minutes later a wrecked train; ten minutes later, surgical aid.

For a person in an official position, with some definite and sufficient object in view, there can be nothing more enjoyable than a visit by appointment to the Railway Clearing House in Seymour Street, near Euston Square Station, there to encounter either the full conference of general managers or a committee of their body. My experiences, at any rate, of these meetings, were all of an agreeable kind. Stiffness and formality were conspicuous by their absence, though each side fought for its own hand. The managers rarely made difficulties that they were not ready themselves to assist in solving.

Some of the eminent men whom it was a duty and privilege to confer with, on my appointment as Inspector-General of Mails, in 1882, have passed away; some, in retirement, are enjoying a well-earned rest. So the visitor to a conference at the Clearing House would now look around in vain for the handsome presence of J. Grierson, with his winning smile; for the stalwart figure of Sir George Findlay, with his soft, leisurely voice; for the hard-working Underdown, the shrewd persistent Walker, or the cheery, easy-going Knight. Alas, too, we should in vain desire to see the valued Secretary of the period, the late Mr. Dawson!

In 1830, soon after the opening of the line between Liverpool and Manchester in September, the mails were for the first time conveyed by railway. But it was not until 1837 that the iron road began to play an important part in postal economy. Some of the best administrative work done by Sir Rowland Hill at the Post-Office for fifteen or twenty years lay in this direction. He possessed a special qualification in the shape of practical knowledge gained as a Director and a successful Chairman of the London and Brighton Railway Company.

There was room for reform. In 1838 the speed of the mail-train was a gentle twenty miles an hour. It was even so, at a somewhat later period, when the railway northward had been completed as far as Lancashire, and the mails took eleven hours and a half for the journey from London to Lan-

caster, a distance of 241 miles. Now, when the 'special' to the North has travelled eleven hours and a half, it is pulling up at Bridge of Dun, north of Forfar, which is distant  $497\frac{1}{4}$  miles from London.

Even in 1851 it was alleged, though legal opinions established another view, that the Post-Office could require a railway company to convey its mails at no greater speed than 27 miles an hour including stoppages.

But Rowland Hill brought about a good understanding between the contracting parties, and the great arterial lines were put on an improved footing. On these lines the very life of the Post-Office depends. Let me describe them—not precisely as Sir Rowland left them, but as they are now.

First—place to the North! At 7.8 every night there starts from Newcastle-on-Tyne what might not inaptly be termed the Northumbrian night mail 'up.' But as the Isis becomes the Thames, so does this train, when it has passed through York and is making for Normanton (10 miles south-east of Leeds), gradually acquire the title by which it is known all over the West, of the North Mail. From Newcastle to Normanton the North-Eastern Company are answerable for its progress; onwards, the Midland.

As it rolls south and by west, it gathers in its course mail-bags at Sheffield and Chesterfield, Derby and Burton-on-Trent, but it does not attain to its

full dignity until, at Tamworth, it receives a good load from the up night mail train from Scotland. There, under the stars, in the small hours, mail-bags and parcel-baskets are swiftly transferred by the aid of machinery between the Midland Company's bridge above and the level of the Trent Valley Railway in the cutting below.

At Birmingham other heavy loads are exchanged, and the train then makes for Gloucester and Bristol. From the former city, which is reached at 4.36 a.m., a branch train continues the service into South Wales, and from Bristol, where the mail is due at 5.45 a.m., the Great Western Railway carries it on to Devonshire and Cornwall.

There is a similar train in the opposite direction; also a train from Plymouth, in connection with one from Cornwall, which runs through Bristol and proceeds by the Severn Tunnel, *via* Hereford and Shrewsbury, to Crewe. It there fits into a special down night mail train from Euston Square, which in due course will be more particularly described.

As Crewe is a wondrous junction, the times of the mail-trains will not be without interest. The Irish mail-train leaves London at 8.20 p.m. The special postal train, or down night mail, follows at 8.30, and the Irish train, and trains from Leamington and Birmingham, Bristol, Swansea and South Wales generally, as well as other important districts, are due in at Crewe, in front of it, as follows :



					P.M.
The mail from	Birmingham	...	...	...	11.33
"	"	"	North Wales	...	11.33
"	"	"	the West of England	...	11.35
"	"	"	" Potteries	...	11.35
"	"	"	London for Ireland	...	11.48
"	"	"	Manchester	...	11.50

All these trains must be in the station before the arrival of the down special, which is due at 11.54, or the regularity of the services to Glasgow, Aberdeen, Inverness and Wick, and to Belfast and Londonderry, Galway, Sligo, Limerick, Cork, and even New York, would be jeopardized.

At midnight, *i.e.*, six minutes after the arrival of the 'special' with the latest bags from London, etc., the mail for Ireland is despatched. The mail for Scotland goes on at 12.5. When all the great trains are cleared off, the mail from Shrewsbury is started at 12.15, to catch, at Normanton, the mail for York at 2.23.

Next in importance northward of Crewe are Wigan and Preston. Here come in Manchester and Liverpool trains with bags for the North and a cross-post from Normanton. This cross-post, termed the Normanton and Bangor mail, throws out a spur at Staleybridge, and, taking in mails from Manchester, ties in the up Newcastle mail going south and south-west, and the up mail from Hull with the down night mail going north and north-west.

There is another cross-post from Normanton, *via* Leeds, which outstrips the Wigan route, and falls into

the down night mail at Carnforth, a station north of Lancaster. This second spur assures the circulation of letters, say from York or Hull, for places north of Carnforth, which would be thrown out of course, if, being sent *viâ* Staleybridge, they were delayed on the way, and there being only a few minutes to spare, they missed the down night mail at Wigan.

To refer to the working of the 'limited' mail-train which follows the special on the journey North and precedes it on the journey South would perhaps only complicate matters. For the same reason details are omitted of the running of the important train from Peterborough to Rugby, which conveys North mail letters from East Anglia and elsewhere.

The 'limited mail' was one of Rowland Hill's achievements. It had long been a principal object with him to limit the length, and consequently the weight, of the mail-trains. By such means he hoped not only to accelerate the correspondence, but also to secure punctuality.

The acceleration and limitation which Sir Rowland planned of the night mail on the London and North-Western Railway was carried out on February 1, 1859. It was a great step in advance. Prior to this change the train started from Euston Square at 8.45 p.m., and was due to arrive at Glasgow at 9.10 a.m. and Aberdeen at 2.18 p.m. The change, which fixed the departure at 8.30 (later on, 8.50), made it due at 7.12 a.m. and 12.35 p.m. respectively.

On the duties of Inspector-General of Mails being

added to mine as Assistant-Secretary, it struck me that a wide field of improvement opened out in the direction of accelerated and multiplied mail-trunk despatches. Mr. Fawcett was nothing loath to enter upon it; but he did not live to see the full fruition of his schemes.

A great work in connection with the railways, which, however, was completed in Mr. Fawcett's term of office, was a new acceleration of the English and Irish mails. This involved negotiation, personal and in writing, with the London and North-Western Railway Company for the service between Euston Square and Holyhead, with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company for the sea service to Kingstown, and with the Dublin, Wicklow, and Wexford Railway Company for carrying the mails on to Dublin. The result gave general satisfaction, a saving both of time and money being effected.

The public had long desired an acceleration of the London night mail to Scotland. At the same time, as rapid development of the parcel post appeared to follow every improvement of process which we could devise, the department wished to effect assortment of the parcels in the train itself during the journey in each direction. This would be feasible only in carriages specially set apart for the purpose. Newer and larger travelling post-office carriages were required for extended facilities for letter-sorting, and the claims of letters and parcels together pointed irresistibly to the use of a train which should travel faster and be

wholly set apart for postal purposes on the North-Western and Caledonian Railways.

Many of my most experienced colleagues saw insuperable difficulties even in the effect of acceleration on provincial mails. Nor was the scheme really so simple as at first sight appeared. To hasten the arrival of the mails in Scotland meant that the mail-train must leave some intermediate stations earlier, and that might involve an earlier closing of rural letter-boxes and restriction of postal facilities. But Mr. Fawcett was not to be stopped by difficulties if he saw that the interests of the public, as a whole, were really concerned.

When at length all objections were overcome, the scheme well-nigh collapsed because of the apparent impossibility of carrying bags from certain Derbyshire towns across country to Wigan in time for the proposed earlier despatch thence of the mail-train northwards. The circulation of letters by the principal mails is so complicated that any alteration, however minute, at one point may throw out the due course of post between many important towns and populous districts. So in pulling the machine to pieces and building it up anew, the greatest caution had to be exercised.

But when the last obstacle was overcome, and the final details adjusted, the able and successful administrator who had encouraged and cheered us in the labour of preparation had passed away. On July 1, 1885, the old limited mail-train, after a reign

of 26 years, was superseded by the special train, which starts earlier, runs faster, and admits none but officials between London and Perth, and but few others between Perth and Aberdeen. To deliver the London night mail at Glasgow at 6 a.m. on the second day rather than at 2 p.m. on the third was certainly an advance on the quickest journey of the mail-coach of fifty years ago. In 1884, the Southern letters of overnight due at Glasgow next morning were too late for the first suburban delivery. In 1885, the mail arrived by the special train at 6.15 a.m., and merchants residing in the suburbs got for the first time their letters from the South at the breakfast-table before leaving home for business in Glasgow. At Aberdeen the mail was due at 10.35 a.m.; it now arrives at 9 o'clock. The time-bills are printed in the Appendix.

The late Sir George Findlay, of the London and North-Western Railway, and Mr. James Thompson, of the Caledonian Railway, were especially my valued coadjutors in establishing this train, and those experienced officials, Mr. G. P. Neele and Mr. Irvine Kempt, the superintendents of the respective companies, in adjusting the working details. The terms of payment, after much personal negotiation, once being settled, their active co-operation soon brushed away every obstacle which arose in fitting the branch and auxiliary services to the main trunk line.

Sir George was an admirable general manager, and a man of excellent judgment and rare decision.

Familiar with every detail of the vast railway traffic which he regulated, taking broad and far-sighted views of every question, and being a man of transparent fairness, he made negotiation an agreeable rather than a laborious effort. A remark of mine to him—and he repeated it to his chairman—once was that my acquaintance with railway matters tended to prove that the bigger the man (*i.e.*, the more weighty and responsible his position), the easier it was to deal with him. He died, deeply regretted, in the spring of 1893.

It is easy to imagine the pleasure which Mr. Fawcett would have expressed could he have stood at the Euston Square Terminus in the train that he did so much to set up; how he would have felt his way from carriage to carriage throughout the full length of the first corridor mail-train established in this country, viewing with those blind eyes the long vista of postal cars—here letter-bags massed on the floor, and there parcel-baskets stacked to the roof; anon, a busy group of letter-sorters, whose craft and methods he would master in a moment; again, baskets being received and opened, and the parcels contained in them reassorted.

With a bright, pleasant look upon his frank, manly face, he would be handling some big parcel packed to the full limits of weight and size, speculating on its contents, and perhaps discerning evidence of a new industry to which his parcel post had given rise. Again, he would view—yes, literally *view*—the

apparatus for exchanging mails; have it put in action sufficiently to demonstrate the principle, and then make some shrewd, kindly and considerate remark concerning the personal welfare of its attendants.

But, as stated, he did not live to see the day. Mr. Fawcett died in 1884, the year before that in which Mr. Shaw-Lefevre was able to establish the train.

On the eventful night when the 'special' started on its first trip, we made very complete arrangements for watching its course. My own headquarters were temporarily established in the post-office in Euston Square Station, which had been connected by direct wire with the railway-station at Crewe. From thence it was possible to overlook all the working. At Crewe Station, my coadjutor and successor in the office of Inspector-General of Mails, Mr. Sifton, had taken up his post. To Normanton went Mr. Oakeshott, and to Birmingham Mr. Aitken.

Thus we were in touch with the salient points. There was no hitch of any kind, and when the out-posts were called in, we all, in seeking our pillows and turning to account what was left of the night, reposed with the pleasing consciousness of 'something attempted, something done.' This well-appointed train ran without mishap for eight years, *i.e.*, until July 19, 1893, when, unhappily, on entering Glasgow it left the rails, and the poor stoker on the foot-plate of the engine lost his life.

If Mr. Fawcett firmly grasped the reins of improved railway services, not the less decided was his

successor, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre. Besides his share in the actual establishment of the special train for the Northern mails running more than a thousand miles every night, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre either devised or carried out many other large schemes.

A mid-day travelling-post-office mail-train was set up from Euston Square to Liverpool and Manchester; a similar service to Leeds, Halifax and Bradford; and an early mail (the train leaves King's Cross at 7.15 a.m.) which carries to Yorkshire the night mail from France. Trains were established in the opposite direction, and a large number of minor improvements were effected.

Many of these changes came into operation on the same day, and were heralded in glowing terms by the press. I went down to King's Cross to see the early mail leave on its first trip as the accelerated Continental mail-express, trailing a sorting-carriage. The appointed time, 7.15, came, but, to my dismay, no mails! It turned out that the roads were slippery, and so the cart had lost time, but just as the grant of five minutes grace had run out, it galloped up, the mails were hustled along the spacious platform, and the train started as the last bag was hurled into the mail-van. We nearly made shipwreck of our fine new despatch.

Otherwise things went merrily. A general idea may be obtained from the increased bulk of the letter-books of the growth of work in the Home Mails Branch of the Secretary's office consequent on the



activity of these two gifted and far-seeing Ministers. In 1881 about 1,400 pages of letters were written to railway companies. In 1886, after the work had been going on for about four years, the letter-book contained 2,500 pages, and in 1891, energy still prevailing, the letters filled close on 4,000 pages. The Inspector-General was backed by capable and untiring colleagues—Messrs. Sifton, Badcock, E. Yeld, Chambrè, Ash, Bruce, Oakeshott, Gates, James, Wickham, Aitken, Horne, and among others, one who has passed away, Mr. Challice. None could eclipse them in the interest and application which they brought to bear on the work of that active and fruitful period.

On the morning of April 20, 1894, the parcel post receptacles—exclusive of letter mails—brought by the up special were counted for me at Euston: they numbered 427, and contained perhaps 16,000 parcels.

Nor did activity slacken with the advent of Lord John Manners (now Duke of Rutland) to office. Much was done for Ireland in the shape of improved services to the North and to the South, while considerable benefit was secured to the West by establishing at no small cost a new mail-train to Galway, Sligo, Westport, etc. It left Dublin in the early morning and out-stripped the later and slower day mail. But the change was not brought about without difficulty, the necessities of the country probably justifying what rigid postal principles might not have borne out.

In 1888 the payment to railway companies was less

than two thousand pounds a year; ten years later it was as much as a hundred and twenty-two thousand; in the Exhibition year more than four hundred thousand; and, as stated, in the last financial year a round million of pounds was paid to them, besides half a million for the conveyance of parcels.

In a general way, the contracts which the Post-Office makes with the railway companies provide for the conveyance of mail-bags by any of the companies' trains, whether employed in the passenger or goods service; and unless a postal officer is sent in charge of the bags, the railway-guard takes care of them.

On all the great lines, however, certain trains are run for Post-Office purposes under a statutory notice, compulsory in its terms, or in accordance with the conditions of a time-table settled by mutual agreement. These are the mail-trains proper, the hours of which cannot be altered without the consent of the Postmaster-General.

In the earlier years of my service, despatches from London to the provinces were as a rule made twice daily, the night mail sent away, then as now, from the General Post-Office at 8 p.m., carrying the bulk of the correspondence.

Next in order of importance came the day mail. This was got off at about 8 a.m.; and its chief function, besides that of taking letters posted late at night or (though to a very small extent) early in the morning, was to carry forward 'through' letters—that is, letters posted in some part of the provinces

and sent up by the night mails to London, addressed to other parts beyond it or to places abroad.

When the clause for the general use of ordinary trains was introduced into railway contracts, changes of great importance by degrees took place; the night mail did not lose its pre-eminence, but other mails sprang into life.

Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons, the eminent news-agents in the Strand, unconsciously did the Post-Office a good turn. For the purposes of their business, they arranged with the London and North-Western Railway Company some years ago for the use of a train specially arranged for the conveyance and assortment of newspapers, which should leave Euston at 5.15 a.m. every weekday and run swiftly to Stafford.

This was the parent of the so-called newspaper trains, which now leave all the railway termini in London shortly after five o'clock in the morning, carrying passengers, mails, and the first edition of the London morning daily papers. These trains, anticipating the departure of the day mails by two or three hours, clear off all, or almost all, the letters posted after the last mail of the previous night is closed, and deliver them at all or most of the principal towns at a proportionately earlier time.

Simultaneously, advantage was taken of the growing practice of the companies of running passenger trains from London at midnight, or, where such were not established, of the customary night

goods trains, to send supplementary bags containing letters posted after the six o'clock closing of the letter-boxes at St. Martin's-le-Grand, so that at many towns such correspondence is received in time even for the rural posts—at many more in time for the first town delivery. Between one and the other, a later night mail and an earlier day mail were sown broadcast.

Further, by special arrangements mid-day mail-trains with a travelling post-office have been established from London to many great towns. Letters written in London, or coming up from other parts of the country to London, in the forenoon are delivered by these means in such places in the afternoon or evening.

The provincial correspondence benefits in this way. A letter for Leeds, posted at Brighton in time for the 11 a.m. up train, would go direct to the Great Northern mid-day travelling post-office, which leaves King's Cross at 1.30 p.m., and would be delivered at Leeds in the evening.

It might be thought that these anticipatory and supplementary despatches have cut into the bulk and pressure of the London night mail down. But because of increased activity of correspondence, the night mail duty at the General Post-Office and the district offices has become even weightier than ever.

Parcels, it must be understood, are kept out of the sorting-office in St. Martin's-le-Grand, and to a great extent out of the district sorting-offices, too. For the

most part, they have an assortment and a circulation of their own.

Euston Square is the great point of despatch. At 8 p.m. starts the Highland mail, taking relief bags; at 8.20 the Irish mail; at 8.30 is despatched the down special—the chief mail-train of the night. It was measured on April 19, 1894, and found to be, from the front buffers of the engine to the tail-lamp of the hindmost van, 448 feet 5 inches long. It trails none but Post-Office vehicles, and carries none but official passengers. The down special is followed by the so-called 'limited' mail-train, though on the down journey it is no longer limited. At ten o'clock starts the Holyhead mail (taking bags for English and Welsh towns only), and at midnight the last mail-train for Scotland. All these trains are more or less heavily laden with mails, and all are under legal notice.

From the other termini a single 'notice' or agreement train suffices for the night mail, usually starting at 8.30 or 9 p.m. We must, however, except the Great Western and the South-Eastern Railways, on the former of which the Bristol, Exeter, and Penzance mail leaves at nine o'clock, and the mail for South Wales at 9.15; and on the latter the Continental mail leaves Cannon Street at 8.23, and the Dover night mail-train at 9.45 p.m.

The great bulk of the night mails is sent by twelve or fourteen trains, prominent amongst which stand the 8.30 from Euston, the 8.30 from King's Cross, the

nine o'clock train from Paddington, and, on Friday night, the 8.23 train from Cannon Street.

In order of aggregate weight, the despatches at night from Euston Square stand first, next come those from Paddington, then King's Cross, Waterloo, London Bridge, St. Pancras, and Liverpool Street.

In 1838 the London night mail was despatched from St. Martin's-le-Grand by 28 mail-coaches. They carried a gross weight of 4 tons 6 cwt. 1 qr., or an average weight of bags for each coach of 3 cwt. 9 lb. In 1856 the gross weight of the London night mail had increased to 12 tons 4 cwt. 3 qrs. It cannot now be less than 50 tons (and this is wholly irrespective of parcel mails), or nearly twelvefold the weight in *pre*-penny-postage days.

The following comparison may be of interest. In 1838 the mail-coaches which carried mails now leaving London in a concentrated form by the London and North-Western Railway at night were perhaps eight in number. They would take, on the basis of the foregoing average, a total weight of 1 ton 4 cwt. 2 qrs. 16 lb. The bags despatched, in a week, in 1893, by night mail from Euston weighed 169 tons, exclusive of parcels, as compared with about 9 tons in 1838.

Meanwhile, other mails have grown so much in importance that they have outstripped in weight even the night mails. If the aggregate weight of the night mail proper, from the chief and district offices in London, be set down at 50 tons, the weight of the

day and supplementary mails cannot be estimated at less than 55 tons; so altogether there is a despatch from London every week of between 600 and 700 tons of letter mails. As for parcels, 150 tons go in a week by night from Euston alone.

If mail-coaches were still the sole means of conveyance, and each coach bore a load of bags to the weight of about 15 cwt.—the maximum load admissible—besides passengers' baggage, as many as 140 would have to be despatched from London with the letter mails alone.

Surprise is often expressed that the Post-Office continues to use mail-carts when the railway could afford a swifter, perhaps even a safer, means of conveyance. But the explanation generally lies in the fact that a train is not running at a suitable hour, and to put one on for the mails means great expense. Railway accounts usually show that the average cost per train mile is 2s. or 2s. 3d. Some profit should, of course, be realized over bare cost, and one great company holds that nothing less than 2s. 6d. per train mile is remunerative. Take, then, the post to a town 20 miles distant. The engine, going and returning, would cover 40 miles, and at 2s. 6d. per single mile would cost £5 per trip, which multiplied by the days in the year works out to £1,825 per annum. A mail-cart contractor usually receives about £10 per double mile for the year; so that £200 would, in this case, compare with £1,825. This disparity, especially when the correspondence is limited

or the gain in time is unimportant, necessarily enjoins caution in making a change from road to rail.

I have referred elsewhere to the extraordinary diligence used in conveying despatches from Queenstown to London, in 1861, on the occasion of the *Trent* affair. When Messrs. Mason and Slidell, Commissioners of the Confederated States during the civil war in America, had been seized by an officer of the United States navy and forcibly removed from the British mail steamer *Trent*, in West India waters, her Majesty's Government demanded their release.

The despatch written to this effect was drafted by Lord John Russell with studious care—it was amended by the Prince Consort, and revised by her Majesty the Queen herself—so that while the demand of the British Government should be clear and precise, not a word should be used likely to arouse antagonistic feeling in a high-spirited and friendly nation. The answer was naturally awaited with anxiety, because peace or war was to be its issue.

The Cunard steamer *Europa* was expected to bring the momentous letter, and I was sent from London to receive her despatches at Queenstown, and in concert with Mr. Anderson, then Inspector of Mails in Ireland, to bring them express to London. But before I could reach Queenstown, the *Europa* had arrived. She hove to off Roche's Point, four miles out, at 9 p.m. on a Monday. A tender brought in her mails to Queenstown Pier, an express steamer took them up the cove to Cork, and an express train



carried them over 166 miles of railway from Cork to Dublin in 4 hours and 3 minutes. They were hurried through the streets of Dublin and taken by rail to Carlisle Pier at Kingstown in 36 minutes; they were ferried across the Irish Channel to Holyhead by the *Ulster*, against a contrary tide and heavy sea, in 3 hours and 47 minutes; and now comes the crowning incident. The London and North-Western Railway Company flashed the mails from Holyhead to London—264 miles—in 5 hours. The 'special' ran from Holyhead to Stafford—130½ miles—without a single stop, at the rate of 54 miles an hour.

In short, the whole distance—515 miles—from Queenstown Pier to Euston Square, including two changes of steamers, a land transit, and three changes of trains, was accomplished in 15 hours. Such was but the reflection of the spirit which prevailed throughout the land at the time of the *Trent* affair.

In 1851 the London and North-Western Company built and exhibited at the Great Exhibition the express engine Liverpool. It was said at the time that one of their engine-drivers offered to take her from London to Birmingham in two hours, if the directors would provide for his wife and children in the event, he euphemistically added, of *anything happening*. But the directors, according to report, wisely and properly declined the bold offer.

Yet the driver was only in advance of his time, and clearly enough foresaw what, with fished joints and heavy steel rails, stout sleepers and a well-packed

permanent way, could in all probability be now safely attempted.

It seems to me a question whether the greater speed of trains at the present day is not due more to the omission of stops than a swifter revolution of the wheels. According to the best authorities, the Great Western Railway Company, about 1846, ran the broad gauge express from Didcot Junction to Paddington (53 miles) in less than the hour.

Such a rate of travelling is hardly surpassed at the present day. Even the narrow gauge did wonders. In 1845 Mr. Nicholas Wood, in a train consisting of an engine and two first-class carriages (Mr. Wood being the solitary passenger), was drawn from Darlington to York, a distance of 45 miles, in 44 minutes. This achievement will compare favourably even with the famous run of the special engine, carriage and van, which on June 24, 1866, took down Mr. Thomas E. Harrison, C.E., from London to Gateshead, when the high-level bridge was threatened by fire. Mr. Harrison left King's Cross shortly after 2 p.m., and arrived at a little before 8 p.m., having accomplished the 270½ miles in less than 6 hours, the average speed being 45 miles an hour.

Later still—in August, 1888—in the days of a too active competition, the London and North-Western and Caledonian Railway Companies ran a passenger train from Euston Square to the Caledonian Station in Edinburgh, a distance of 399 miles, in 8 hours, or at the rate of 50 miles an hour. The train left

London at 10 a.m., called at Rugby, Crewe, Preston, and Carlisle, and reached Edinburgh at 6 p.m. On the east coast the Great Northern, North-Eastern, and North British Railway Companies accomplished a similar feat. Their mileage is a trifle less. On August 31, 1888, the morning express ran from King's Cross to the Waverley Station in 7 hours 27 minutes. Including stoppages (26 minutes was allowed for dinner at York), the average speed was  $52\frac{3}{4}$  miles an hour. Excluding stoppages, the running attained an average speed of  $57\frac{1}{4}$  miles an hour.

The first occasion of making use of a trunk line of railway—*i.e.*, of the Grand Junction—for the conveyance of the London and Liverpool correspondence deeply impressed Mr. George Louis. He travelled down himself with the night mail coach of July 3, 1837, leaving London at 8 p.m., and keeping to the usual road as far as Coventry. Then, instead of turning to the right hand and passing through Lichfield, the coach now bore off to the left and made for the railway-station at Birmingham. The train was appointed to leave New Street about 7.30 a.m., and was due in Liverpool at 11.30 a.m. The following private note tells the whole story :

Liverpool,  
July 4, 1837.

'DEAR SIR,

'We reached this place precisely at half-past twelve, exactly one hour behind our time. The loss arose out of various little *contretemps*, which a little practice will set right.

' This is the first time in Europe so long a journey was performed in so short a time, and if some very few years ago it had been said a letter could be answered by return of post from London the idea would have been treated as chimerical; and yet at eight last evening was I in London, and this letter will reach there to-morrow morning, the proceeding of these operations occupying a period of  $34\frac{1}{2}$  hours only, out of which a rest of 3 hours is to be taken, thus performing a distance of 412 miles in  $31\frac{1}{2}$  hours !

' Our mail-coach was before its time full 15 minutes; notwithstanding at one place we could not find horses except posters, and at another, when posters were found, there was no coachman. Luckily there was [one] on the mail looking out for a place, with which we suited him. To-night, doubtless, all will go right. Some dispute among the amiable contractors I believe to be the cause. I need hardly observe I have adopted proper measures.

' Yours very faithfully,

' GEO. LOUIS,

' Superintendent of Mail Coaches.'

The time-bill of this hybrid journey was approximately as follows :

	<i>Down.</i>			
G.P.O. coach departure	...	...	...	8 p.m.
Birmingham arrival	...	...	...	7 a.m.
Ditto train departure	...	...	...	7.30 a.m.
Liverpool arrival (due)	...	...	...	11.30 a.m.
Ditto (actual)	...	...	...	12.30 noon.

*Up.*

Liverpool (rail) departure	...	...	...	2.30 p.m.
Birmingham arrival (about)	...	...	...	7.15 p.m.
Ditto coach departure (about)	...	...	...	7.30 p.m.
G.P.O. arrival	...	...	...	6.30 a.m.

The difficulty about horses occurred between Coventry and Birmingham, because of the deviation from the customary Liverpool coach-road.

Not to be compared with the imposing flotilla for ocean packet service, yet not in itself by any means unimportant, is the fleet employed under thirty-seven distinct contracts for conveying mails in British waters, under the supervision of the Inspector-General of Mails, at subsidies amounting to £156,210 a year.

First for comfort, for speed, and security stand the contract packets of the famous Holyhead and Kingstown day and night mail line. Immense paddle-wheel steamers, which I have already described, navigate the waters at such a pace as to cover 63 statute miles in 4 hours, and sometimes in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours, or at the rate of 18 land miles in the hour.

In July, 1882, it was once a moot question whether the mail-service from Holyhead to Ireland should not find its western terminus in the Liffey at Dublin rather than at the pier of the harbour in Kingstown Bay.

An agreeable command sent me over to Ireland to examine the question on the spot. After exhaustive inquiry, and viewing the matter solely from a postal

standpoint, the conclusion could not be avoided that a change of packet station would be a public misfortune. Perhaps the Government accepted my reasons—at any rate, they did my conclusions—and the new contract established the mail-port at Kingstown for a further period of years.

Then there are the greyhounds of the English Channel, which run to and fro between Southampton, Weymouth, and the Channel Islands. Further, elaborate services have been perfected in the waters which surround the remote, little known, but beautiful Western Islands. They bring the Lews within little more than 24 hours of London; and as for Tobermory, Lochmaddy, Rum, Canna, Coll, and Tiree, one may start from London to-day and be due there to-morrow.

The Post-Office runs its mail-packets up to North Isles in the remote Shetlands, and if the little contract vessel which plies for a subsidy of £52 a year between Walls and Foula omitted a trip, the department would soon know the reason why. Even the Arran Islands, in Galway Bay, on the western coast of Ireland, have their duly appointed packet; and as for Belfast and Larne, are they not the ports of arrival and departure of some of the finest craft to be found in home waters?

Sir John Burns, Bart., the great shipowner of Glasgow, and chairman of the Cunard Company, possesses two lines of mail-packets from Scotland to Belfast. He takes a just pride in the efficiency of this service, and in a speech at the Glasgow Post-

Office in April, 1890, humorously referred to the incidence of postal control exercised by the Inspector-General of Mails by saying: 'If the Irish mails were delayed his master and friend, Mr. Baines, came down upon him; but he gave him the soft answer which turned away wrath by telling him there was fog in the Channel.'

Good luck to you all, noble steamers which four times in the twenty-four hours, while the long days last, salute her Majesty's ship of war in Kingstown harbour—*Ulster, Munster, Leinster, Connaught, and Ireland!* May your paddles never cease to beat! nor yours, beauties of Stranraer and Larne, the *Princess Victoria* and the *Princess May*; and last, but not least, you of the Greenock and Ardrossan lines plying to Belfast—*Dromedaries* and *Hares*, which symbolize the fleetness of four-footed creatures ashore, and *Alligators* and *Seals*, which quickly walk the deep like things of life—an old official salutes you!

For very many years her Majesty's mails were carried to Belfast actually for nothing by the *Stork*, the *Lynx*, and others of like class, the mere honour of the thing satisfying the future old Sir George and young Sir John, until there came a time when, due to no abatement of lawful pride or pure patriotism, circumstances altered. Steam away, friends for close upon forty years! May the swift revolving screws of the new dispensation churn up from the free-running waters of the Clyde and Belfast Lough an ever-increasing advantage to the owner and the State!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## BY CORAL STRANDS.

IF one of the two great companies concerned in carrying the mails to 'India's coral strand' should ever return to its first love, and berth once again a powerful flotilla in the new and spacious docks of the flourishing port of Southampton, then might a curious experience be acquired by the globe-trotter.

For, at no greater exertion than is involved in crossing a gangway or two, he should at pleasure pass direct from Orient to Occident; from the mouths of the Hooghley, 7,895 nautical miles from Southampton; from hot, prosperous Hong Kong, 9,635 miles off; from Ceylon and its pearls, the Persian Gulf and its coral, or from the calm waters of the perfect harbour of Sydney, 11,981 nautical miles distant, to the far-away West, by floating palaces under the British flag which carry her Majesty's mails. He might catch sight of the coral reefs of the Virgin Gorda group, and of the Greater and Lesser Antilles; be landed at sugar-making Barbadoes, 3,635 miles from Southampton; or view the



splendid scenery and mountain ranges, but also the cane-brakes and relapsing scrub, of Jamaica. He should, if he desired it, be landed at Colon, 5,252 miles off, to inspect those late devourers of human life, the now abandoned works of the abortive canal of the Isthmus of Panama.

He might travel from one to the other—10,000, nay, even from Sydney to Colon, 20,000 miles—without once quitting steamers which all, in a way, owe allegiance to the Imperial Post-Office.

In considering the case of corporations which have grown up from small things to great ones, the earliest effort, the beginning of all, usually strikes me as the most effective feature of their history; and although admiration cannot be repressed at the sight of the stately *Australia*, of almost 7,000 tons register, lying at anchor, or of the *Himalaya* gliding, outward bound, down the Thames, yet the heart goes out to the valiant, if tiny paddle-wheel steamer, *William Fawcett*, built in 1829, eight years before the Peninsular Company sent her out as their first mail-packet to Lisbon.

She ought to have been laid up in whatever is the nautical equivalent of lavender and preserved to this day, like the famous steam-engine, Locomotion No. 1, which stood for many years outside the Darlington railway-station, or Brunel's broad-gauge giant, the 'Lord of the Isles,' at Swindon.

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, which have now been identified with the

conveyance of the Indian mails for so many years that it is difficult to realize the fact that the overland route was founded before they came into existence, date from 1837. Their style, however, was the 'Peninsular' Company; they had not become Oriental. The company were formed in this way: The Admiralty, as successors to the Post-Office, had long carried the mails to the Peninsula and other parts by steam-packets from Falmouth. It was resolved to give up the station, and rely on private enterprise.

Then two merchants and ship-brokers, Messrs. Willcox and Anderson, who since 1835 had been running steamers of their own to Lisbon and other ports, made an offer, in 1837, for a regular mail-communication with Spain, Portugal, and Gibraltar, which offer was accepted.

On this basis these two gentlemen, in conjunction with Captain Bourne, R.N. (alluded to in an earlier chapter), established the Peninsular Company. In the Post-Office Daily Packet List of the period, besides the *William Fawcett*, figures another small vessel owned by the new company, the *Royal Tar*, of a gross tonnage of 308 tons. It was this vessel which, in July, 1835, conveyed to San Sebastian a British auxiliary legion, under Colonel (afterwards General Sir) de Lacy Evans, for service under the Queen of Spain, and with it the late Mr. Harrington, afterwards Postmaster of York. He showed me at his house a complimentary certificate from, I think, the General himself. When the legion landed at San

Sebastian, Don Carlos published a proclamation to the effect that all 'strangers' taken prisoners would be shot, which was cold comfort to the sea-sick contingent at his gates.

While the Peninsular Company were feeling their way about the Peninsula, and seeking to recoup the heavy loss of £30,000 which had been sustained before the contractors derived any remuneration from the enterprise, great things were happening in another part of the world directly bearing on their future fortunes. Let me diverge.

Sir James Cosmo Melville, Secretary of the East India Company, has placed on record the fact that the first efforts to open a communication by steam between England and India were made by that company in 1830 and 1831, when the *Hugh Lindsay*, a steamer of from 80 to 100 horse-power, and not much over 400 tons in burthen, performed five voyages between Bombay and Aden and Suez, a distance of 2,970 geographical miles. One voyage was accomplished in 32 days. On the Mediterranean side of the Isthmus, however, steam was not applied regularly to the conveyance of mails until 1838.

But if 1830 saw the first use of steam for Indian postal purposes in the Red Sea, an earlier year had witnessed the successful transmission of despatches. For in 1826 Lieutenant Thomas F. Waghorn, of the royal navy, and some time of the Honourable East India Company's service, had actively promulgated the idea that, by using steamers to and from Suez

and Bombay, and by suitable arrangements through Egypt, the Continent of Europe, and in the Mediterranean, an overland route could be established which should do away with the grievous delays *vid* the Cape of Good Hope. At length, in 1829, being in London, he was allowed to put his faith to the test, and carry a despatch to the Governor of Bombay, through Egypt, on the understanding that he would bring back a reply within three months.

The gallant officer started for Egypt, made his way up the Nile, and crossed the desert to Suez. There an expected steamer which was to round the Cape had not arrived. Waghorn therefore pushed on in a sailing-boat, fell in with an Indian cruiser, and, reaching Bombay, delivered his despatch. After vanquishing many difficulties, he returned to London with the reply within the stipulated time. That adventurous journey of 1829 was the true foundation of the overland mail-route.

Public attention was aroused, and Parliament began to take notice. But for many years the service, if it can be called such, was of a very uncertain nature.

Waghorn got but little help. He had to rely on his private means, and force conviction as he best could on the official mind. Steamers had to be established on the eastern side of Suez, and Mehemet Ali induced to grant facilities for the transit, the dues of which, Waghorn showed, would bring grist to the Egyptian mill. The arrangements were not framed on a grand or lavish scale. How, from the slender funds

of a lieutenant of the royal navy, was a broad and stable bridge to be built for an empire's passage? Yet alone he did it, although it is probable that the Bombay or East Indian Steam Company eventually improved the arrangements.

Up to 1840 the traveller found on the Nile and Mahmoudieh Canal a steamboat placed there by Waghorn. It would accommodate a dozen passengers. To supplement it were native boats; though when they went and came, who should say? For traversing the 84 miles of burning sands which lie between Cairo and Suez, two rough tilt-carts, horses of a kind, and camels and donkeys, were the best means he could provide. Still, in two or three days, by hook or by crook, Indian passengers found that they had crossed the desert.

The world looked on; but little help or even praise came from any quarter. Hints were freely dropped that coal would cost at Suez £20 a ton, and so by its expensiveness crush steam enterprise. Waghorn got it across in baskets on camel-back for £4 2s. 6d. No difficulty daunted him; and the same unquenchable spirit which carried Gordon to Khartoum half a century later bore up the brave Waghorn in his plan for crossing the Egyptian Isthmus. He spent twelve years in Egypt perfecting these plans. How letters came at all up the Red Sea, and along the Mediterranean to Europe, between 1829 and 1838 there is, however, but little trace.

'I saw,' records Rowland Hill, writing in 1847,

'for the first time a fellow-labourer in the great cause of postal improvement, Lieutenant Waghorn, who, in establishing the overland route to India, had surmounted formidable difficulties and rendered invaluable services without, I fear, securing either to himself or his family any proportionate recompense. He is a man of singularly energetic appearance.'

Eight or nine years later, at Sir Rowland's request, I got together the main facts of the successful scheme of this far-seeing but little regarded pioneer of the quickest route to India. Messrs. Smith and Elder, who were his agents, lent me many interesting papers. The story is one of courage and enthusiasm triumphing over inertia, doubt, and indifference.

'Mankind show themselves strangely forgetful of their chiefest benefactors,' wrote Dean Burgon in his 'Life of Hugh James Rose.' But if it was the case that in the mother country the official ear was deaf to the merits of Waghorn, and its tongue silent in his praise, it was not so in the great colonies of Australasia. A select committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, on October 27, 1846, paid him tribute.

'We have access,' said they, 'to a valuable pamphlet published on the subject [of steam communication with Australia] by Lieutenant Waghorn, R.N., being a letter to the Right Honourable William Ewart Gladstone, the present Secretary of State for the Colonies.' The committee referred to the high authority of the author, 'whose indefatigable exertions in the promotion of steam between England and her Majesty's Indian possessions have gained for him the well-merited applause of the British public; whilst his proposed extension of the benefit of this

arrangement to the Australian colonies will also entitle him to the grateful acknowledgments of the colonist generally in these portions of her Majesty's dominions.'

Waghorn was a man not only of singularly energetic appearance, but of extraordinary stature. He went on one occasion to a country fair with a friend. A showman attracted custom to the exhibition of a giant with the usual cry of 'Walk up, walk up!' They walked up, but admission was denied. The show was alleged to be full. This happened a second time, and expostulation following, the showman said to the friend, referring to Waghorn: 'I pray you, sir, take that gentleman away. The fact is, he is two inches taller than my giant!'

In January, 1850, Waghorn died at the age of 49. So, in the fulness of powers, checked, it may be feared, by disappointment and neglect, departed a benefactor of the human race, of whose enlightened aims and great public services time at length has written the memorial.

After forty years of silence, the town of Chatham has done honour to her illustrious son. A spirited statue of Waghorn, now stands at the foot of the hill which forms Maidstone Street, and not far from the High Street, in which, it is said, he was born. The City of London shared the cost of the memorial. At the entrance of the Suez Canal also stands a bust of the persistent pioneer. Is there not space for his statue in certain government offices and public institutions in London?

In the forties postage to India was very high. Most of the correspondence for Calcutta, the heavy letters certainly, went by private ship or by private hand, the law exempting letters for the East Indies from the necessity of passing through the Post-Office. But the tax most severely felt was that of one rupee fourteen annas, equal then to nearly four shillings sterling, for expressing a letter by dāk between Calcutta and Bombay. Yet the money was well earned, inasmuch as the dāk covered in eight days a distance of a thousand miles over a country traversed by rivers and without roads.

It may be asked, What was the state of postal communication before the incorporation of the Peninsular Company? An effective answer will be found in the unstudied sketches afforded by the letters\* of the Hon. Emily Eden, written from Calcutta and elsewhere when her brother, Lord Auckland, was Governor-General of India.

‘Till we get to Calcutta,’ wrote Miss Eden on November 9, 1835, then 37 days out from Portsmouth, and no further on the voyage than 9 degrees of south latitude—‘a physical impossibility, for we shall be dead of old age before the Cape——’

As a matter of fact, the travellers did not reach the Cape of Good Hope until December 14, having so far occupied 82 days on the voyage. When one has regard to a passage of the *Scot* or the *Tantallan Castle*, which vessels now bring passengers into Table

\* Richard Bentley and Son, 1872.



Bay on the seventeenth day from England, the duration of the voyage sixty years ago seems almost incredible.

There was, however, as bad to come :

‘Wednesday, *March 2*, 1836,  
‘Off Saugur.

‘At last! Here we are, after seventy-two days out of sight of land’—153 days from Portsmouth.

After a year in Calcutta, what was of greater interest to the exiles than the arrival of the post, the early fruit of Waghorn’s enterprise ?

‘Think of your overland letters of February 1 [1837], with papers of February 3, arriving to-day—April 12—only two months and a week. To be sure, that overland business is a lottery. We have had in the last five days letters by sea of September and October, up to October 24. Yesterday there came, by a *sailing* vessel, the overland letters of September, October and November 24.’

So in a bunch came the September, October, and November letters in the following March.

Again :

‘I received your overland letter of April 2 [1837] on June 12 [in 71 days, be it remembered].

‘*August 7*.

‘The June letters are actually come. We have letters to June 15—just seven weeks crossing here.’

Home-sickness began to tell, and the delays of the post became almost unbearable :

‘*September 15*.

‘We are in such a way: the July letters won’t come, and have been due these ten days. A horrible idea—war in Egypt, and

all letters stopped, and will have to go back to England, and then round by the Cape! I don't remember ever reading in history of anything so bad!

However, matters began to mend :

'Calcutta,

'June 29, 1840.

'Was woke this morning by the May letters. I have both yours, one by Falmouth [that probably went by the *William Fawcett* or the *Royal Tar* to Gibraltar, and then onwards by stages], and another by Marseilles.'

And then, at last, adieu to belated posts :

'March 1, 1842.

'Our ship is dropping down the river. It has 80,000 cock-roaches on board : that I know as a fact.'

Better things were at hand. The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company had now been established. It has been stated that steam was not applied to a regular conveyance of mails in the Mediterranean until 1838. In that year the Indian service took shape. The East Indian Company sent monthly a frigate from Bombay to Suez ; vessels of the royal navy passed the bags up the Mediterranean.

Some of the Bombay frigates were very slow : 12 or 13 days to Aden were occupied as a rule. Once, however, the *Ajdaha* steamed down in 7 days 3 hours, and it is on record that in 1850 the *Sesostris* left Bombay on January 17 and reached Aden on the 28rd. So quick runs were possible. Six days are now allowed, and two more during the monsoon.

In the year 1839 the British Post-Office made a new Postal Convention with France, and the transit of Indian mails through that country was recognised in a regular way, the French transit postage of letters being fixed at the high rate of 4 francs the ounce, net weight.

As previously, small vessels of the fleet still took the mails to and from Marseilles and Malta and Alexandria. The East India Company provided for the Egyptian transit, as well as for the passage between Suez and Bombay, which, for passengers, who could only take this route by favour of the captain, was one of much discomfort. For the mails it was slow work. Is it not remembered how Albert Smith told the audience in his *Overland Mail*, at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, of the passage of the mail up the Nile, and the struggle to get it and the passengers across the desert to the Red Sea? But, still, where time was regarded, the overland route beat the Cape line hollow. Within two months from Southampton the mails, etc., were landed in Bombay.

Thirty years ago, as I lay in the harbour of Alexandria awaiting the mails from Suez, a stately *ci-devant* P. and O. boat moored itself close at hand. It was the *Himalaya*, a vessel of 3,438 tons and 2,050 horse-power, but with lines and spars—so those who were experts said—as fine as a yacht's, which in 1856 had been sold to the Government as too large for the mail-service. She became one of the most efficient

transports ever known, and is still employed as a troopship.

Since 1882 the *Himalaya* has been in continuous commission, only requiring minor repairs from time to time, although she is now 41 years old. As I write, the vessel lies alongside the wharf at Devonport ready for sea.

In recent years, in adding to their already superb fleet, the P. and O. Company have built a new *Himalaya*. She is close on seven thousand tons (registered tonnage), and is fitted with engines of ten thousand horse-power.

Envious of the great reputation of her namesake, the first *Himalaya*, what has this spacious and powerful vessel done for the mail-service? The contract time for the conveyance of the mails between London and Bombay, *via* Brindisi, is 16½ days. On November 4, 1893, at 2.40 p.m., the new *Himalaya* sailed from Bombay. At 11.36 a.m. on November 17 her mails arrived at Cannon Street—that is, in 12 days 21 hours, or almost four days before the contract time. She has since (May, 1894) improved even on this record.

The 17th was Friday. The *Himalaya's* letters were distributed in the City by the 1.5 p.m. delivery. The same night the overland mail left Cannon Street with replies. It was conveyed from Brindisi by the P. and O. boat *Arcadia* (6,362 tons) as far as Aden. There the *Siam* took over the Indian portion, which arrived at Bombay at 9.49 a.m. on December 3, so

accomplishing the course of post with London—*i.e.*, India to England and back—in 28 days 19 hours. The latest performance of the *Himalaya* is equal to a round trip of 25½ days. How does this compare with Lord Auckland's time, when 153 days for the voyage, *viâ* the Cape of Good Hope, was not too generous an allowance—306 days for the course of post?

Soon it struck the authorities that letters could be sent by way of Gibraltar without going through France at all. There was arranged a postal line, which by a succession of jerks passed on the mails to destination, from England to Gibraltar by the Peninsular steamer, from thence to Malta by a small Government steamer, and thence by another of the same stamp to Alexandria. From Alexandria the letters went by a boat up the Nile, by a camel across the desert, by a frigate to Bombay. Even if two months were sometimes occupied in the transit, it was better than 4 or 5 months by the Cape.

But this piecemeal work could not last long. The first stage of improvement was entrusting the Peninsular Company with an unbroken service from Southampton to Alexandria. Order and regularity began to dawn. The Admiralty clung for awhile to the Marseilles service, but at length gave it up.

Soon the Peninsular Company became truly Oriental, and established a service on their own account from Suez to Aden, Ceylon and Calcutta. The despatch from this country, on September 24, 1842, of the *Hindustan*, the first steamer sent out by the P. and O.,

to Calcutta to open communication with Suez, was treated as a national event, the ships in harbour dressing with flags and the public prints of the day notifying the occasion. Well might Reginald, Lord Bishop of Calcutta, predict that 'steam with India would open the flood-gates of numberless blessings to mankind.' In 1844 the company contracted to carry the Calcutta mails; but the East India Company held on stoutly to the Suez and Bombay service until 1854.

So monthly by the old line, and monthly by a branch packet from Aden out of the new line, Bombay at length received an English mail twice in every month. This was a great advance, but the weekly mail from London to India was still far distant.

It may here be remarked that although the Peninsular and Oriental Company, no doubt, have had, like most great enterprises, serious difficulties to surmount, and especially so in early years, yet in another and most important respect they have been highly fortunate. In the stormy, intricate, and then little-known navigation of the seas east of the Bay of Bengal, heavy loss from accidents to vessels was not improbable. But up to the year 1857 the service to China, which commenced in 1845, cost them no more than two ships, viz., the *Pacha*, lost on July 31, 1851, in collision with another of the company's vessels, and the *Douro*, wrecked May 26, 1854, on the Paracels, a reef in the northern part of the China Sea. She had been disabled in a typhoon, and being unmanageable, was carried by the storm wave on to

the reef. There was happily no loss of life in either case. The mails were saved.

Bearing in mind the difficulties that had to be encountered in those early days in navigating the China seas, it seems to me that it was a great achievement that the China service should have been carried out with losses relatively so small. A collision might have occurred at any part of the globe, and the cause of the *Douro* being lost on the shoal was the incidence of a typhoon of unusual vehemence.

As a proof of the comparative immunity from maritime casualty which the P. and O. steamers have enjoyed, I may state that, on an average capital employed of approximately two and a half millions of pounds each year, the company's losses, as underwriters of their own ships, have only averaged during the last thirty-six years the small sum of 21s. 4d. per cent. per annum. When this figure is compared with the charge which underwriters make for insuring steamers for the year—viz., from £5 5s. to £10 10s. per cent.—it will be seen with what relative freedom from loss the P. and O. vessels have been worked.

The overland route by 1844 was firmly established, but it had not ceased to be a novelty. The *Illustrated London News* of July 6 gave a graphic description of the transit of the mail through Folkestone. After explaining the method of conveyance from Bombay to Suez, across Egypt, and up the

Mediterranean to Marseilles, the account proceeded thus :

‘ At this port the papers for France are delivered, and an abstract of the Indian news drawn up for the instant information of the French and English Governments. This abstract is sent by telegraph [meaning the semaphore] to Paris, and thence to Boulogne by a one-horse *malle-poste*. In France the telegraph usually occupies the top of a church-tower.

‘ On reaching Boulogne, the “ abstract ” India mail-express, bearing on its envelope the significant words “ *Très Pressé*,” is placed on board a steamer, or in extreme cases a sailing-smack, and forwarded with all possible speed to Folkestone. In approaching this port, the vessels hoist a signal of the “ mail ” called a “ whiff,” or pennon tied at the end in a knot, to give notice to the harbour-master and the railway authorities to have all things in readiness to speed it on its flight to the Metropolis; but if the coast be made during the night, a red light under her bows and a white light at the masthead are the only signals given. The answer to these signals from the pier-head is made by a double white light.

‘ The passage by steam vessels has varied from 2 hours and 40 minutes to 14 hours, and by sailing vessels from 3 hours and 55 minutes to 48 hours. Immediately on the mail-signal being observed, the railway harbour-master, the indefatigable Mr. Faulkner, makes the necessary arrangements for its re-



ception. If it be high-water, these are simple and common-place enough, as the despatch has merely to be landed and sent by the mail-omnibus to the station [no doubt what is now Folkestone Junction on the main line], a journey of about a mile, performed amid the shouts of the company, who usually assemble in great numbers to welcome its arrival, at the break-neck pace of 20 miles an hour.

‘ But if it be low-water, the weather rough, and the time night, a scene of exciting adventure ensues. A galley—a long, clear-water boat, manned by some eight or more stout fellows, under Mr. Faulkner’s command—is launched from the beach and sent off to the approaching vessel. On reaching it a large blue light is fired, and in the glare of its ghostly fume the captain of the steamer descends, bearing the express, and is immediately rowed to the shore, where, if it be dark and a heavy surf rolling, a number of fishermen are usually posted with flambeaux to light them through the breakers. On landing, the express is committed to Mr. Faulkner, who carries it to the train.

‘ The abstract mail having thus escaped the perils of the water and reached the Folkestone station in safety, is placed in the carriage of a special train, which is usually in waiting a period, more or less, of three days for its arrival, and despatched in less than two hours to the Metropolis. The *Times*, the *Herald*, the *Chronicle*, the Government, the stockbrokers, have often their separate expresses. Each of these

despatches costs the parties upwards of £100 from Marseilles to London, £50 from Marseilles to Boulogne, £35 for the voyage and £25 for the special train.

'The abstract usually anticipates the mail itself by about two days. While the 'heads' of the intelligence have been progressing at the rate we have described, the iron boxes of details, about 2 feet long and from 30 to 40 in number, are packed in a hearse-like coach, called by the *estafettes* a "fourgo," which has been dragging its comparatively slow length along at the rapid pace of 63 hours from Marseilles to Boulogne, on reaching which it is shipped on board the mail-packet and sent direct to Folkestone, and thence by rail to London; but formerly—we believe even to the arrival of the present mail—it was sent to Dover and despatched by coach to London, a proceeding attended by the loss of at least 10 hours.'

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation, being now in full operation, became known as the 'P. and O.' It was time they were well rooted in India, for the Mutiny was at hand. In the Crimean War their ships had carried 2,000 officers, 60,000 men, and 15,000 horses; during the Mutiny the numbers conveyed were less, but the service was still more arduous and urgent. They extended their sailings, or, rather, set up a new line from Southampton to Alexandria, touching at Malta, and established services to Bombay. They put on two fast paddle steamers—the *Vectis* (No. 2) and the *Valetta*, of

about 850 tons, and more than 1,000 horse-power — from Marseilles to Malta and Alexandria. I remember both vessels very well, and have taken passage in the former to Egypt. A terrific story was once told to me about the *Valetta*. She, like the *Vectis*, had paddle-wheels of great size and weight, which, actuated by the powerful engines, produced high speed. On a voyage up to Malta the rate of the *Valetta* was much reduced, because of a flaw suspected in the crank-shaft next the port paddle-box. It was said that if the engines were urged the flaw might develop, the shaft break, the paddle-wheel tumble off, and the ship heel over to starboard! Happily, nothing of the sort occurred.

To see the *Vectis*, bound for Marseilles, give the *Sultan*, bound for Southampton, a good start, and overhaul her by sundown, imparted to me much the same sensation as the winners' experience when one University boat passes the other at Barnes Bridge; but, then, the *Sultan* was double our tonnage, and not half our horse-power. One vessel would make the run from Alexandria to Marseilles (1,465 miles) in six days; the other would perhaps take fourteen or fifteen days to accomplish the 2,975 miles to Southampton.

Travelling by the overland route was very expensive. Mr. Murray Gladstone left Calcutta for England, *viâ* Egypt, in 1851. He paid £100 for the voyage to Suez, and in covering the 238 miles which lie between Suez and Alexandria £12 more. From

Alexandria he went by Trieste to London at a further expense of £48, so that the entire journey cost £160. The fare from London to an Indian port is now only £55.

But that was in the days when prices generally ran very high: when for the carriage of opium from India to China would be paid 8 or 10 dollars, or even more, a chest, and that, too, on 60,000 chests of Malwa and Bengal opium, and when as much as £3,000,000 sterling of Sycee silver would be received in a year from China at Bombay in return for the drug. What would now be said to £16 per ton measurement for cargo between two Eastern ports?

The Pasha of Egypt took not unkindly to the British transit. No wonder! If he received £12 a passenger for conveyance from Suez to Alexandria, he took also a duty of £8 a ton for the merchandise.

To Captain J. H. Wilson, of the Indian navy, belongs the distinction of having commanded the first steamer which ploughed the waters of the Red Sea, and which in 1830 took the first mail ever carried by steamer from India to Egypt.

The East India Company's boats out of the way, and the heavily subsidized French steamers not as yet in Indian waters, the P. and O. for a time stood alone in that service to the eastward of Suez which, in later years, has attained, in size and character of the mail-packets, and in the frequency and extent of the voyages, to such magnificent dimen-

sions They served India, China, Australia, and even Mauritius, with the mails. The extension to Japan was yet to come.

My recollection is that the mail-subsidy in those days was as much as half a million sterling.

Many years have passed since the discussions which took place in Parliament about the Suez Canal, and which at the time impressed me with the idea that reshipment of the mails to Alexandria and Suez was an order of Nature which nothing could change. Lord Palmerston insisted on the chimerical nature of M. de Lesseps' scheme, and the English engineers were strong and clear in their opinion, that, as soon as the canal was made, differences of level between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea would cause it to silt up.

However, the Frenchman having shown the way across country, and the canal being opened, the 'P. and O.' with boldness and energy reconstructed their fleet, built vessels suited to the new navigation, and, though with foreign and domestic competition springing up on all sides, established themselves more firmly than ever as the great mail-carriers to the East.

This company from their birth have commanded the services of men of undisputed energy and capacity, such as were Messrs. Wilcox and Anderson, their earliest managers. For commercial ability, the late Mr. James Allan, the secretary of the company at the time of their formation, and afterwards a

managing director, always struck me as belonging to the first rank ; while for geniality and persuasive presence the late Mr. Henry Bayley was second to none. But in these latter days, since the opening of the Suez Canal, the architect of the company's fortunes is their chairman, Sir Thomas Sutherland, K.C.M.G., Member of Parliament for Greenock, and formerly one of the company's managers in the Far East. He and Mr. F. D. Barnes, as managing directors, practically steer this great organization.

Figures standing alone seldom convey an adequate idea of magnitude. If it be stated that the Peninsular and Oriental Company employ 54 ships in carrying the mails, and that the aggregate registered tonnage is 234,000 tons, the effect, though great, may be indefinite ; but when the facts are put in another way, they must strike the least reflective mind. A mail-coach drawn by four horses required an equipment calculated on the basis of a horse for each mile traversed. So the London and Birmingham Express Day Mail-coach employed more than 100 horses. Regarding, then, the company, as great carriers, it is the fact that they use in motive power the equivalent of 2,400 four-horse coaches plying between towns 100 miles apart ; in other words, the propelling energy of the engines of their fleet is equal to the effective energy of 239,550 horses.

Shades of Vidler, of Sherman, of Chaplin, of Benjamin Worthy Horne, of Mrs. Nelson, of the hundred and one contractors for the upper ground,

and the lower ground, and the ground which lay mid-way! how would you have regarded a contract for two or three thousand mail-coaches in the memorable thirties?

Whether Waghorn ever foresaw what his venturesome trips up the Red Sea and across the sands of Egypt with the homeward despatches, between 1829 and 1835, would lead to, who shall say? But could he have conjectured that one day an English company would spend two millions three hundred and twenty thousand pounds in building steamships for giving full effect to his plans—that most of those ships would be equal to taking on board at need a regiment of soldiers or the population of an English village (two, indeed, did actually embark 1,500 troops during the war in Egypt, and sailed, the one at less than ten and the other at less than sixteen hours' notice, for the scene of operations), and would transport per voyage, in cargo, specie, and ship, the worth of, perhaps, half a million of pounds sterling—surely his valorous heart would have glowed with sacred joy, and all his exertions, sacrifices, and tribulations been richly repaid by anticipation. He certainly realized no other payment, and barely saw the day of the fulfilment of his schemes.

It is Friday, at night, in London. The Indian and Australian mail, *via* France and Italy, is being despatched. The colonial division on the upper floor at the General Post-Office has sorted its last letter

and tied and sealed its last bag. The mail-vans have received the mails in the courtyard below. The yard-officer has seen to a punctual start. They rattle down Cheapside and into Cannon Street Station not a second too soon.

At 8.23 p.m. the mail-train guard gives the signal, and away across the Thames and the pleasant garden of Kent the South-Eastern Railway Company whisk the overland mail with letters for well-nigh half the eastern hemisphere.

At Calais, the British officer in charge of Indian and Australian mails through the Continent of Europe awaits the arrival of the 8.23 despatch from London. He has seen to the safe custody of such mails as have been received in advance. For throughout the day the London office has sent large instalments. The object has been to lighten at night the final transfer from the train to the boat at Dover, and from the boat to the special mail-train for Brindisi, now drawn up on Calais Quay. Already have the passengers for India started by the special train for Brindisi of the Peninsular and Oriental Company.

A long, fatiguing ride of nearly 1,400 miles has the officer in charge of mails across Europe at the best of times, taking from midnight (or thereabouts) on Friday, to 9.20 p.m. on Sunday. A journey by the Mont Cenis Tunnel is not the less arduous from carrying with it a weight of responsibility.

A P. and O. steamer leaves the Thames for the Mediterranean with the parcel mail every week—



usually on Thursday. It calls ten days later, on Sunday, at Brindisi, and there receives the overland letter mail, sent away from London eight days after the departure of the steamer from the Thames.

The P. and O. vessels, after leaving Brindisi, sail alternately to Bombay and Adelaide. On the Bombay voyage the Indian passenger, who enters his cabin in London, keeps possession of it until he arrives at his destination.

On the voyage of the Australian packet, mails and passengers for Bombay are transferred to a branch steamer at Aden (so securing a weekly service to India); the mails for Ceylon are handed over to the post-office at Colombo; the mails for the Straits Settlements and China are transferred in Colombo Harbour to a packet bound for Hong Kong and Shanghai; and the main steamer from London goes forward to Australia—*i.e.*, to Albany in King George's Sound, Port Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney.

In the case of the Orient Line, a vessel sailing in alternate weeks from the Thames with the parcel-mail picks up the overland letter-mail at Naples, and then shapes its course for Ceylon and Australia. This secures a weekly mail to the antipodes.

In  $16\frac{1}{2}$  days from London the Indian mails will be due at Bombay, while those for China will take no longer than 32 days in the voyage to Hong Kong, and 3 or 4 days more to Shanghai. These are contract times, not to be exceeded; but what good and spirited management may accomplish in giving even

a better service than Parliament pays for has already been seen.

From the coral formations of the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and Mauritius to West Indian lagunes and the Coral Islands of the western tropics is a long way.

For half a century the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company have carried on the mail-service to the West Indies with indomitable energy and unsurpassed punctuality and despatch.

The Admiralty, it may be explained, which on April 5, 1823, had taken over the Falmouth packets from the Post-Office, continued to maintain postal communication with the West Indies, Brazil, etc., from that port for nearly twenty years. As long as sails had to be relied on, the services were kept up by the use of 10-gun brigs, which have been described as 'pretty-looking craft, apple-sided, with a clean run under the counter.' By good luck and fair wind they made the West Indies in about 28 days from Falmouth. They were, however, ill fitted for the service, and acquired the lugubrious cognomen of 'coffin' ships.

The West India mail for embarkation at Falmouth, in the thirties, consisted of six sacks, each 7 or 8 feet long, and very bulky. Occasionally the mail reached nine sacks. They were all made up in London, letters from the West of England being sent first to London to be enclosed in the mail-bags, and then sent down again for embarkation at Falmouth.

The homeward mails were carried direct to Exeter and there reassorted.

On the outward voyage the first port reached was Funchal, in Madeira. From thence the boats ran to Barbadoes, where the contents of the sacks—mainly letters—were again sorted and sent on to destination as opportunity offered. The mail-boat itself went on to Jamaica before the trade-winds. As may be supposed, it was quite another voyage to get back from Jamaica to Barbadoes against the ‘trades,’ and sometimes weeks were occupied in sailing out of these remarkable air-currents. It is singular how history repeats itself. With sails, we sent the Transatlantic boat to Barbadoes; with steam, to St. Thomas, far away to the northward; and now, with swifter steamers, again to Barbadoes. However, a British port is, of course, the natural rendezvous of British steamers.

The time likely to be occupied in the round trips of the Falmouth packets was officially estimated as follows: To and from Jamaica, 12 weeks; America, 9; and Brazil, 20. To and from Mexico 18 weeks, and the round trip to Gibraltar 20 days.

The return to England from the West Indies was, however, always uncertain, the mail-boat which left in March sometimes coming home before that which left in January; and sometimes two boats, which ought to have been a month apart, arrived at Falmouth on the same day.

When this happened, the mails were more than one

coach could conveniently stow away, and two vehicles were employed between Falmouth and London. As they went by different routes, a race usually took place. Men on horseback were sent in advance to warn the changing stations to have horses harnessed before the arrival of the coaches, the object of each being to establish in the eyes of the public a reputation for superior speed.

As the wealth of the country increased and trade relations, not alone with the colonies on the east of the Isthmus, but with South and Central America, grew in volume, it was clear that this state of things could not long endure. The same policy which suggested the relinquishing by the Admiralty of the conveyance of mails to the Peninsula pointed to the transfer to private hands of the conveyance of the West Indian mails. In 1839 the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company was formed to do the work by means of first-rate steamships; the old 10-gun brigs were given up, but some of the commanders were retained in the service of the new contractors. The familiar Cornish names of Restanick, Vallack, and others were still known, for a time, amongst West Indian corals and palms.

The company commenced their adventurous career by despatching the mail steam-packet *Thames* (under a contract made in March, 1840) on January 3, 1842, from Falmouth. At Southampton, which was then, as it is still, the company's marine headquarters, there was little of that extensive dock accommodation

which has been provided in later years, and Falmouth, which had long been the port of despatch, continued for a time to be so.

In consideration of a subsidy of £240,000 a year, the company sent their packets twice a month to Barbadoes, and from thence to British and Dutch Guiana, to ports on the Spanish Main and the Isthmus of Panama, and to the whole chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea, and once a month to the Gulf of Mexico, and to New York and Halifax.

The subsidy, large as it was, proved inadequate, as the receipts from traffic were limited—passengers were not over-numerous, trade was undeveloped, and cargo as a material source of revenue was as yet undreamt of. The expenses were enormous, chiefly owing to the complex arrangements of routes, involving an immense amount of mileage, a large portion of which was unproductive.

Every now and then a shipment of specie recalled the days of the rovers of the Spanish Main, when Drake and Hawkins spoiled the Spaniard, took his plate ships, and pillaged his Central American towns. Once the *Teviot* received on board at Vera Cruz two millions seven hundred thousand dollars, which weighed 130 tons. A graphic account is given of this by Captain Woolward, one of the company's commanders, in a recent book.\* All this precious metal was shipped for Southampton. At St. Thomas

\* 'Nigh Sixty Years at Sea.' London: Digby, Long and Co., 1894.

the *Thames* transferred to the *Teviot* five hundred and seventy thousand dollars more—in all there were more than three millions and a quarter of silver dollars in one mass. When this valuable freightage arrived at Nine Elms Goods Station, no fewer than eighteen four-horsed Pickford's waggons were required to convey it to the Bank of England. The consignment blocked up the street from nine o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon. Nothing had been seen like it in the City since the arrival of the Chinese indemnity, which was paid in silver many years ago.

The company's headquarters in the West Indies were eventually shifted from Barbadoes to St. Thomas. There, sloping from the red-tiled roofs of the town at their base, rise three conical hills, covered with verdure to the summit. Overhead the tropical sky. In the deep water outside the main harbour cruise sharks of prodigious size; in the lagunes, or almost land-locked bays within, were then the coal-wharves. To give such a wide berth was the wisest policy. Near at hand is the Anegada coral reef, on which many a noble vessel has left its bones.

The circumstances of traffic and so forth just stated, and the misfortune of the company in losing several ships, led in 1846 to an amended arrangement. The mileage was greatly reduced. Subsequently other contracts were entered into, and notably the Brazil and River Plate service—which hitherto had been performed by gun-brigs—was added to the

company's responsibilities, but with an increase of only £30,000 a year to their subsidy.

Again they had to encounter serious losses. Their new Transatlantic steamer *Amazon* was burnt at sea, with melancholy consequences, on January 4, 1852, two days after leaving Southampton. The new ship *Paramatta* was lost on the Anegada reef on her first voyage out to St. Thomas in 1859, while the great hurricane in the West Indies of October 29, 1867, played havoc with the shipping and trade. The splendid mail-steamship *Rhone* was driven ashore at Salt Island, and sank in deep water. Her masts were, however, visible for a year or more. The contract packet *Conway* was dismantled and driven ashore at Tortola; the *Solent* and *Tyne* were dismasted, but rode out the hurricane at sea; the *Wye* steamed out of St. Thomas for safety, and was totally lost on Buck Island; the *Derwent* was thrown ashore in St. Thomas Harbour.

When Mr. C. Bennett was Surveyor of the Post-Office in the West Indies, he gave me a graphic account of the damage wrought on the island of Tortola by the storm which well-nigh destroyed the company's fleet :

'The hurricane came on, which swept away a good house, the huts of the labourers, and killed the overseer and two other persons by the falling inwards of the walls. Many people sustained contusions. The force of the wind was so great that it stripped up the pitch-pine flooring of the house, 40 feet square. until there was not a piece 4 feet long by 6 inches wide. All the other farm-buildings were utterly demolished by the hurri-

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cane, and for many days most of the population of the estate had only sheds against trunks of trees to shelter them. The morning after the hurricane the island was a scene of utter desolation. Not a leaf was left on a tree, the grass was stripped of its greenery, and only its long canes remained.'

Such disasters as happened to the mail-steamers would have crushed the life out of most marine enterprises. Yet the Royal Mail Company's spirit was not dimmed. They did not even allow the regularity of their service to be checked.

Taking a rapid decision when the storm was over, and undismayed by the ruin around and the loss of the homeward Transatlantic packet, the company's superintendent at St. Thomas despatched an inter-colonial boat with the mails and passengers for Southampton, and modified the itinerary of the branch routes, so that to all appearance things went on much as usual. But these are the moments when weight of responsibility and wearing anxiety, though they may not meet the public eye, can well be conjectured. The directors showed a bold front—

'It will be satisfactory to the shareholders,' said they in their report of April, 1868, 'to know that, notwithstanding the loss and damage of so many ships of the company's fleet, the superintendent at St. Thomas, by prompt arrangements, prevented any failure of the mail-service, and although the company's operations have since been performed under great disadvantages, yet the service throughout has been maintained.'

Behind so brief a statement lay the persistent courage of Englishmen who never know when they are beaten. Nor, indeed, were they. The Royal

Mail Company replaced the *Wye* by buying the *Corsica* (renaming her the *Wye*), and the ill-fated *Rhone* by the *Neva*, then being built by Caird. They ordered new steamers, larger and swifter ones, and they firmly established to and from Southampton and all parts of the West Indies, to the chief ports of Brazil, and to the River Plate, mail-services unsurpassed for completeness and regularity. The beautiful paddle-wheel *Atrato* of my time, of 3,126 tons and 800 nominal horse-power, which used to perform the voyage of 3,622 miles between Southampton and St. Thomas in 14 days and 9 hours like clockwork in the early sixties, when it was my function to keep the log in the packet branch of the Post-Office, is replaced by a still more beautiful *Atrato*, of modern build and 5,140 tons, which, propelled by screw and fitted with engines of 6,779 indicated horse-power, makes the Transatlantic voyage, still like clockwork, and even at a higher rate of speed, in 11 days 12 hours to Barbadoes.

On the Brazil and River Plate line are some of the finest steamers afloat. The *Nile*, which is within an ace of 6,000 tons register, and of the indicated engine-power of 7,500 horses, transports the mails in 17 days from Southampton to Rio de Janeiro, and in 4 or 5 days more to the River Plate. As I write, the *Darube*, a sister ship to the *Nile*, is making her trial trip down the Solent. She is to go to the Brazils, too.

Throughout the half-century, the Royal Mail

Company's services have been constantly extended and improved, notwithstanding that the postal subsidies, so far from increasing, have rapidly dwindled. Every five years or so down goes the financial thermometer of the Exchequer, so that that which at one time marked over a quarter of a million of money now records only £92,500 as the annual subsidy. Still the management is marked by unabated energy ; still the proprietors keep the fleet abreast of the times. Admiral A. J. Chatfield is their managing director. They had a devoted servant in Mr. R. T. Reep in the past. Can any testimony be too warm which points to the merits of Mr. J. M. Lloyd, the company's secretary, in the present ?

As in 1842, so more than half a century later, the ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company are amongst the best appointed of the great postal steamers. No Post-Office servant, and probably no private citizen, could do otherwise than rejoice at a general revival of prosperity in the West Indies, and, as one result, abundance of additional and long-sustained profit to the coffers of this courageous corporation.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## OVER THE DEEP BLUE SEA.

IF the post ran slowly in the thirties to the Cape and India, it naturally went no quicker to the little-known if extensive and promising colonies in the antipodes. What of those remote regions, with their spacious harbours and vast solitudes, their once tardy mails and high-priced letters?

'We are sailing,' wrote Henry Kingsley,\* 'slowly along, under high-piled forest-capes, more strange, more majestic and more infinitely melancholy than anything we have seen in our strangest dreams. What is this awful, dim, mysterious land, so solemn and so desolate? This is Australia.'

He had in his mind's eye New South Wales, and especially that district which now forms the important and still rising colony of Queensland. When he wrote, the settlements had found their feet, and colonial legislatures were beginning to send men of eminence to European councils.

\* 'The Hillyers and the Burtons.' Ward, Lock and Co. London.

It was not so at the date from which this narrative begins. Sixty years ago Australia, from the postal point of view, was little more than a geographical expression. In the official table of rates of foreign postage, dated November 23, 1830, it has not even a heading to itself, but is grouped under the East Indies. 'Letters for Australia, New South Wales, including Sydney, Swan River and Van Diemen's Land,' says the table, 'which may be sent through the Post-Office, are liable to a sea-postage of two-pence each letter if under the weight of three ounces, and one shilling per ounce if above that weight, in addition to the inland rates to London.'

So a letter could at all events be got out, say, from Devonport to Australia for 1s. 1d., subject to a local sea-postage rate of 3d., 4d. or 6d. on arrival. But the name of the antipodean continent was not yet quite familiar to ordinary English ears.

Sydney, on the shores of Port Jackson, it is true, had been founded for half a century, and as the capital of the province which subsequently maintained a Captain and Governor-General, it was the metropolis of the Australian group. To and from Port Jackson sailed nearly all the vessels which made for Australia.

Freemantle, at the mouth of Swan River, Hobart Town, because of the convict establishments, Botany Bay, for the same reason, rather than for the richness of its flora which had provoked Dr. Solander's enthusiasm, and Moreton Bay, perhaps made up the sum of popular European knowledge of Australia.

The towns and cities which now fringe the Great Australian Bight, where were they? Where were Melbourne and Adelaide? where even Perth and Albany in the west, and Brisbane and Rockhampton in the tropical far east?

The Colonial Office List is a sure authority on all colonial matters. From that publication it may be gathered how comparatively recent is the prosperity—even the very origin of Melbourne.

In 1788, on the shores of Port Jackson, a few miles to the north of Botany Bay, Captain Arthur Phillip, R.N., established a permanent settlement. This was Sydney. But for nearly ten years afterwards nothing was done towards the exploration of the southern shores of Australia. At length, George Bass, a surgeon in the royal navy, started in a whale-boat, manned by six seamen, and, rounding the southernmost point of the Australian Continent, entered Western Port on June 4, 1798. He returned to Sydney, however, without discovering Port Phillip Bay, which was first entered on January 5, 1802, by Acting-Lieutenant John Murray, in command of the armed brig, *Lady Nelson*.

For the next twenty years the district attracted but little attention. Then two explorers, Hume and Hovell, made their way overland from Sydney, and on their return gave a satisfactory report of the country. The first permanent settlement in Victoria was formed in 1834 at Portland Bay by Mr. Edward Henty, from Van Diemen's Land, who commenced to

till the soil, run and breed stock, and carry on whaling operations. But the capital was eventually founded at the northern end of Port Phillip Bay in 1835 by John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner. They were soon followed by others, who brought stock with them and commenced to push their way into the interior. After a time, shiploads of emigrants arrived from the United Kingdom, and ship-letter mails began to be more frequent. Regular government was first established under Captain William Lonsdale, who, having been sent from Sydney to take charge of the district of Port Phillip, landed on September 29, 1836. On March 2 of the following year Sir Richard Bourke, the Governor of New South Wales, visited it, and named the metropolis, after the Minister who was long to guide the young Queen's hand, Melbourne. On July 1, 1851, the settlement was separated from New South Wales, and created a separate colony under the name of Victoria. Shortly afterwards rich deposits of gold were discovered, which led to a great influx of population. A new constitution, giving responsible government to the colony, was proclaimed on November 23, 1855.

That, in a nutshell, is the early history of Port Phillip and the great colony of Victoria.

As the thirties grew, and the city on the shores of Port Phillip began to raise its head, it took to letter-writing as a municipal duty, and Melbourne now and again was heard of in St. Martin's-le-Grand. Still, the letters were relatively very few, ten thousand in



a year perhaps between Port Phillip and Great Britain being the total.

So, too, a long way up Investigator Strait another city was founded, which perpetuates the name of the good Queen-dowager, and Adelaide took its place amongst the growing townships. South Australia really dates its history from a settlement on Kangaroo Island, and also from 1836, when, on September 10, a dinner was given at the Albion Tavern, in Aldersgate Street, close to the Post-Office, to Captain Hindmarsh, R.N., its first and then newly-appointed Governor.

Western Australia, described in the Act of 1835 as 'on the western coast of New Holland,' had been settled under the Act of the last year of George IV.'s reign.

Letters for outlying parts were sent to Sydney for distribution by the local posts which went along the coast by schooner once a month to Adelaide, and once a fortnight to Melbourne and Launceston, or by inland post twice a week (600 miles) to Melbourne. There was already a colonial Postmaster-General, Mr. John Raymond, who from the late twenties to, at least, the early fifties, ruled the posts in New South Wales, and he naturally took the view which long prevailed, that Sydney was the postal centre of Australian interests, and should be the first and best served with its European mail.

There was reason on his side, for as late as the middle forties more than six times as many letters

from the mother country were received at Sydney as at other ports. Even in 1845 Melbourne contained only ten thousand inhabitants, whereas Sydney was already a city with a population of 200,000 souls.

In 1843 two events directly bearing on the future prosperity of Australia occurred—a legislative council was established at Sydney, and a postal commission was sent out by the mother country. The latter was in due order, whether done at the instigation of the colonists or not, for by law the Postmaster-General of the United Kingdom is still held to have authority over the rates of postage leviable in the colonies—at any rate, to places outside colonial jurisdiction—and his power may legally extend even further. At all events, unless by Order in Council or Act of Parliament the management of postal arrangements within a Crown colony is specifically delegated to the colonial authorities, there the orders of the Postmaster-General run until he himself shall tacitly, or by instrument, waive his legal rights.

The posts in Nova Scotia were, almost within my own recollection, administered by the Imperial Post-Office, as were those of the British possessions in the West Indies, China, and the Mediterranean, until the missions were fulfilled of my colleagues of the past, Messrs. Anthony Trollope and E. H. Rea. So as regards Australia, although the colonists had hitherto managed such posts as existed, the view presented itself to the authorities at home that the services, both in Australia and New Zealand, should come under the

control of the Imperial Post-Office. The commission sent out consisted of Mr. E. J. Smith, already mentioned; Mr. James, afterwards Postmaster of Glasgow; and Mr. R. R. Smith, a Surveyor of the Post-Office in Ireland; and in the years 1845-6 and 1847 they held an inquiry into the rates of postage, mode of communication, and all matters connected with the antipodean Post-Offices.

In the result, the opposite policy was followed by leaving such colonial posts as were already locally managed in the hands of the colonists, and by transferring to local control other posts whereof the Imperial authorities still held the reins.

However, without awaiting the report of its commissioners, the Post-Office—stirred into activity by the accomplishment of penny postage, by Parliamentary Committees, by the spirit of the new Legislative Council, or by the representations of Sir George Gipps, Governor of New South Wales—took a decided step. In conjunction with the Admiralty, it gave form and substance to an Australian postal service by despatching, from January 1, 1844, a regular mail once a month, by subsidized sailing packet, from England to Sydney. Three separate tenders were received: one of £2,000 for the round trip, one for £600 per mail, and a third (which was accepted), from Phillips and Tiplady, for £100 for a single voyage, or £150 the round trip.

What the department expected to gain by this course is doubtful. The payment agreed to be made

was too small to induce shipowners to strive after speed or punctuality, and, as a matter of fact, the mail-packets were beaten by the private ships. The former certainly started on a given day, but what would be the duration of the voyage none could predict. In fact, whether by ordinary vessel or by mail-packet, voyagers to and from Australia had to spend an appreciable part of their life on the deep blue sea. The sailing packets with the mail occupied, on an average, 119 days to Sydney, *vid* the Cape of Good Hope, and they were 138 days coming home by Cape Horn. The course of post on this basis was, therefore, not less than 257 days, or 8½ months. The *Meg Merrilies*, carrying a mail, got out to Sydney, it is true, in 3 months and 14 days; but, on the other hand, a less-favoured vessel took 5 months and 1 day.

The private ships averaged only 113 days per voyage. The postage of a ship-letter, too, was cheaper, even though it had been raised from 2d. to 8d. Amongst other changes, the Post-Office in the early forties had fixed on a packet-rate of 1s. per letter, which franked collection and delivery in the old country, but only carried the letter to the sea-board of the new one. It then became liable to a colonial sea-postage of at least 3d., besides inland rates; so that while the ten thousand people in the district of Port Phillip could receive a ship-letter direct from London for 8d., plus a local charge of a few pence, a packet-letter coming *vid* Sydney and by the Bush mail cost half a crown.

But, as I have said, the total correspondence dealt with in Australia was extremely small. In twelve months, about 1845, the letters which passed through the post to and from the mother country, whether direct or through India, were only a quarter of a million. The colonists wrote rather more letters to England than the old folks at home wrote out to them.

Newspapers were more numerous; and printed publications, impressed with the old red Government inland stamp, the duty ranging from 1d. to 5d., as they only paid a penny an ounce for postage, freely took the place of letters. At all events, 172,609 newspapers went out to Australia, and 171,055 came home.

One can picture the consternation of the Circulation Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand if on a Friday in 1894 there were for Western and South Australia, for Victoria, Tasmania, and New South Wales, no more than the sum total of the letters which were sent to Australia in 1844. The mail for Sydney would consist of 1,332 letters, that for Port Phillip of a couple of hundred; for Hobart, twice as many (the penal settlement, while it lasted, no doubt giving rise to a good deal of correspondence) would be sent; for Perth, a handful or two, and for Adelaide and New Zealand eight or nine score apiece.

The weekly mail for Australia now contains not fewer than 50 or 60 thousand letters, and 150 thousand other postal packets; so vigorously have

social and commercial relations grown with the antipodes in fifty years.

Sailing packets for the mail-service, therefore, because of slowness and higher postage, soon went out of favour, the postal contract lapsed, and the public fell back on private ships, and paid only the ship-letter rate on their correspondence.

Such was the state of things even when the fifties were reached. The colonists had hailed with joy Waghorn's proposal to quicken the communication by steam by way of the Red Sea and an Indian port; they now roused themselves to action.

The Legislative Council of New South Wales had long shown the metal they were made of. An active Colonial Secretary led them on. They inquired, reported, and memorialized; they threw themselves by petition at the foot of the throne; they craved for steam communication, and that by way of the Indian Seas. Weary of waiting five months for their post from England by the Cape of Good Hope, they thirsted for letters in half the time by way of Singapore. It is strange that so little could be done to help them.

The powerful young statesman at the Colonial Office in 1846, the Right Honourable William Ewart Gladstone, M.P., however sympathetically he listened, did not see his way to a compliance with the colonial wish. How was that eternal want of pence, which so sorely hinders great enterprises, to be met? The colonists asked for steam. The sea-postage, said they,

produced £14,700 a year ; they would add £6,000 to it themselves. Surely, for somewhat less than £21,000 steam could be forthcoming.

Steam ! Why, a mere sailing schooner plying once a month out of the overland mail at Point de Galle or Singapore would cost £14,400 a year ! What, then, it was urged, would be the enormous outlay on a sufficient line of steam vessels ? Of course it would be very great ; but the colonists, though expressing 'disappointment and mortification,' did not relax their appeals.

Western Australia strove to move the official heart by a proud humility. They wished to send their English mails to Batavia, and pass them to and from that port by the Dutch mail-steamer which plied to Singapore. But while sails would take a schooner swiftly up to Angiers Point, in the island of Java, steam alone could bring it quickly back with the return mails to Perth ; so that any old disused steam-tub would be better than a sailing vessel.

'Your lordship,' wrote Governor Fitzgerald to Earl Grey, 'will, I trust, observe . . . the incalculable advantage this colony would derive did the Lords of the Admiralty furnish us, as they have done the colonies on the West Coast of Africa, with some half-worn-out steamer of the old model, not deemed fit to sustain the flying rapidity of European communication, yet, my lord, possessing a certainty and rapidity, as compared to our present movements here,

that would be deemed almost miraculous.' Surely this would persuade the officials in Downing Street and Whitehall!

But Governor Fitzgerald had no better luck with Earl Grey than had the Speaker of the Legislative Council of New South Wales with Mr. Gladstone. The cost of the schooner to Java was only a little over a thousand pounds a year; that of a vessel with auxiliary steam power would be from four to five thousand pounds for coals alone. So there was an end of Governor Fitzgerald's aspirations.

The colonies, however, renewed their appeals with vigour and persistence. Nor was New Zealand silent, though its Legislative Council was inactive. The venerable Sir George Grey—who is returning to England as I pen these lines, and was then colonial Governor—sent home within twelve months, in 1849, three forcible despatches. Earl Grey, at the Colonial Office, had little peace. At last, in 1851, Parliament took notice of the matter; and there was a full inquiry.

Still, it could not be denied that the colonists chiefly concerned were relatively few in numbers, though great in spirit and commercial enterprise. There were at that date not more than 350,000 British subjects in the whole Australasian group. The population of Sydney, all told, was 200,000—not, perhaps, all British subjects, and, in any case, leaving but a handful of Englishmen to be scattered over the Australian continent, and the colonies of



Tasmania and New Zealand. At the present time the population of Australasia exceeds four millions. Yet, small or great, the several communities were at one in desiring steam postal communication, and that with India, or a port in the North-West, so that a mail-line might join them up with Waghorn's overland route for home through Egypt.

When it came to the choice of routes to the northward, agreement seemed impossible. The reason was obvious, and found its parallel when, some years later, the Post-Office rearranged the letter delivery of London. The process as a whole was quickened. But where, in achieving that object, the route of the postman in certain streets was necessarily reversed, those who formerly received their letters first and under the change got them last, did not like it.

So in Australia. To send the mails by Torres Straits to Singapore meant despatch from Sydney last, and from Melbourne and the other ports first; in the reverse direction, delivery at Sydney first, at the other places last. To set a line by the route now followed would be to favour Albany, Adelaide, and Melbourne, and put Sydney at a disadvantage. In either event there was to be looked for a storm.

As a matter of fact, in after-years, when Victoria had made a packet contract of its own for a branch service to Ceylon, one of the conditions limited the voyage southwards to Melbourne only. Sydney then sent its mails across the Pacific to San Francisco.

Queensland to this day maintains its own mail-service by the British Indian Company's line *via* Torres Straits.

New Zealand provides a steam line from its shores to Plymouth direct, besides branch lines to Australia proper and sometimes to San Francisco.

But to resume. New South Wales supplied India with good horses. A 'Waler' is a household word amongst Anglo-Indian riders. The trade began as early as 1841, when 35 horses were exported. It grew so quickly that in 1845 as many as 1,156 were sent up. A 'Waler' carried Sir James Outram through the embrasure at Lucknow. Naturally, New South Wales wished to cultivate closer relations with India, expand her trade, and mount the entire cavalry divisions of the Anglo-Indian army. That was a worthy object. A quick post with home was, perhaps, an object more worthy still.

The excusable impatience, or, as one would prefer to say, the reasonable desire, of the colonists was met by what seemed to be a want of earnestness at home. It was not really so. The cost of an effective scheme of steam communication was not the only difficulty. The question was complicated, and included both a choice of route and a choice of means. If a line of steamers landed Australian passengers at Singapore, the branch ship might have filled up at Hong Kong; or if at Ceylon, then, more probably still, passengers from Calcutta, Madras, and Ceylon itself would leave no room in the homeward steamer for the Australians.

There might at least be from this cause discomfort on the voyage.

As to means, were there not many competitors already in the field; some waiting for the chance to extend their services, some to originate new ones? On whom should the choice rest? Who, in any case, was to pay the piper?

New South Wales was all for a route by Torres Straits, and heeded little the danger of the Coral Sea. Its channels could be lighted and rendered safe. But Torres Straits did not catch the fancy of the British Legislature. The Sea of Arafura had not then been surveyed. Coral abounded in sunken patches, especially in 11 degrees 36 minutes of south latitude. A beacon had not been established on Raine's Island, 70 miles from the mainland.

Parliament, too, attached much importance to the comfort of passengers. It naturally thought even more of that than of the swiftness of the mails, and considered that, on the whole, the easier, if the slower, passage was by way of the Cape. It was not daunted by the fact that when the mail-packets did reach the Cape after 32 days' steaming from England, they would still have before them 38 days' transit over almost shipless waters before land could again be made.

While there might be comfort in avoiding the transshipments and breaks of the journey by way of Suez, a voyage to Australia by the Cape would not be always a smooth one. With the force of wind 5—that is, a fresh breeze—Captain Owen Stanley, in

H.M.S. *Rattlesnake*, in April, 1847, determined the velocity of the sea east of the Cape at 27 miles an hour, the height of the waves at 22 feet, and their length 55 fathoms, or 330 feet.

Notwithstanding the prospect of stormy seas, the voluminous statements of the Australian colonies, and their urgent appeals in favour of the North Indian Ocean as a water-way, the Committee of 1851 formally pronounced in favour of the long sea route by the south. Steam, it is true, was to be called in aid.

But steam, whether as auxiliary to sails or independent of them, by 13,000 miles of open sea could not long hold its own against the overland route. The Admiralty had had before them no fewer than twenty-three distinct tenders, some for performing the voyage by paddle vessels, some by screws, some for taking the mails by way of the Cape, one or two by the route of Panama, others through Singapore, and all by steam.

The colonial mind was not to be balked of steam to an Asiatic port, whether the open waters of the Indian Ocean, and the route of Mauritius, Reunion, or Ceylon, or Torres Straits and Singapore, were to be the channel. Steam to the north was the rallying cry! Scarcely was the ink dry of Lord Jocelyn's report of 1851, when the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company threw out a branch in alternate months from Singapore to Matama and the Australian ports *via* King George's Sound. That in principle settled the matter.

The branch from Singapore, however, endured only for a season. The Crimean War broke out, and the Government required for transport duty all the large and swift merchant-steamers which could be procured. The Australian service was suspended, and was never resumed on the same basis. The Post-Office had to fall back on the track by the Cape.

Then came to the front the splendid steamers and clipper ships with auxiliary steam-power, by which Liverpool carried on the Australian trade. The names of the vessels of Messrs. James Baines and Co., Gibbs, Bright and Co., and others, became household words. The *James Baines*, named after its owner, was, I believe, the first to take the mails from Liverpool. She sailed on December 10, 1854. Then the *Royal Charter*, the *Red Jacket*, the *Lightning*, the *Golden Age* (which accomplished the passage in 47 days), the *Champion of the Seas*, and other ships, made their mark. I think the subsidy was £1,000 for the round voyage, but I am not sure.

The tragic end of the *Royal Charter* still stirs the memory. That famous vessel was an auxiliary screw-steamer of 2,756 tons register, and had, on a voyage in 1856 from Melbourne, while carrying the mails, brought home the largest number of letters then ever received by the Post-Office from one ship, and the enormous sum of £734,000 in gold. On October 26, 1859, on her homeward voyage, with a valuable cargo on board and gold to the amount of £400,000, she went ashore in a storm off Moelfra Head, on the east

coast of Anglesey, within a few hours of port. Nearly 500 lives were lost.

This was the period of the great gold discoveries. An idea of the wealth which suddenly poured into the country may be gathered from the fact that on one occasion, in November, 1856, three ships arrived within twenty-four hours at Liverpool, bringing, chiefly from Australia, bullion of no less value than a million and a half sterling.

During the period of interruption of the regular service, the well-remembered vessel, *Great Britain*, took part in carrying the Australian mails. She was by far the largest steamship then afloat, being of 3,500 tons burthen and 1,000 horse-power; so large and so powerful that she was regarded as not only 'noble,' but 'stupendous.' On her maiden trip in 1845, she took only 15 days to go out to New York, and 16 to come home, such in those days being regarded as quick passages.

In 1846, I recollect, she went ashore in Dundrum Bay, on the north-eastern coast of Ireland, and lay there a whole year with holes in her sides through which, an eye-witness said, a man with a wheelbarrow could freely pass. Such, however, was the strength of her hull that, when patched up and floated, she was found to have sustained no material damage. In 1852 she took 600 passengers to Melbourne.

But with the restoration of peace in October, 1856, the long-sea contract terminated, and the overland route again came into requisition. The Government,

probably with the view of encouraging competition for the Eastern service, contracted with a new steam packet company for an independent line from England to Australia by steamboats plying from Southampton to Alexandria, and from Alexandria, *vid* Mauritius, to the Australian ports. But the venture was premature. The company lost, it is said, close on three-quarters of a million of money in making it; they collapsed and withdrew.

The P. and O. Company again became contractors for carrying the Australian mails, and although the packets of the French and Germans soon entered Australian waters, and although eventually another great English corporation—the Orient Steam Navigation Company—began to send its vessels to Australia, the older company had established itself too firmly to fear competition.

The complicated history of the Australian mail-service from that date may be epitomized by the statement that the Peninsular and Oriental Company have carried the mails wholly or in part ever since. For a brief period the route of Mauritius and the Seychelles was followed, but in 1861 Point de Galle made the point of departure and arrival of a monthly mail-packet.

There had, indeed, been a time when the fortunes of Mauritius seemed to be in the ascendant in a special and particular degree; that is when, in the early fifties, a project was afoot for making it a rendezvous for packets traversing the South Indian

seas. Its time even yet may come, especially when Western Australia rises to opulence, and trade relations between Australia and the Cape of Good Hope and India ripen still further. Port Louis is almost equidistant from many of the great channels of trade in Indian, African and Australian waters, *e.g.*, the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and Malacca, the Hooghly, Port Jackson, and Table Bay. But this fine scheme never came to pass. As it is, Mauritius subsidizes a local line of steamers to Ceylon, and makes use of a French mail-steamer for mails to Marseilles.

A monthly steam service to and from Ceylon, which years before had seemed to be the goal of Australian aspirations, no longer contented the prosperous colonists. They pressed onwards to better things. They helped to bring about a Select Committee in 1866, for by that time they could speak with weight. British goods and produce sent to Australia in 1865 were valued at ten millions and a quarter sterling; the produce which came back, exclusive of precious metals, at thirteen millions and a half. Twenty-four million pounds' worth of British trade was not below a statesman's notice. The monthly mail now cost £120,000 a year. No longer did references to the expense of a sailing schooner or the overwhelming cost of steam encumber despatches. Improvement advanced as though by the leaps and bounds of the kangaroo. Colombo replaced Point de Galle.

In 1880 the mails were exchanged with twofold frequency—*i.e.*, fortnightly—and in 1887 was estab-



lished the present magnificent service from the Thames and Brindisi by vessels which, passing through the Canal, make the passage to Adelaide direct. The P. and O. and the Orient Company's steamers sail from London alternately, and together maintain a weekly communication with Australia, for a subsidy of £170,000 a year, divided equally between the two companies.

By either of these lines the passenger from the Thames for Australia knows no change of quarters until he sets foot on the great continent which lies under the Southern Cross.

The Orient Line, which afterwards became the property of the Orient Company, was started in June, 1877, by Messrs. Anderson, Anderson and Co. with chartered steamers. On the strength of experience gained, the company was formed by the joint exertions of that firm and Messrs. F. Green and Co., who became associated with them for the purpose.

The first ship (the *Garonne*) was despatched in March, 1878. For four years the company only received for their postal services the meagre remuneration, under the Ship Letter Act, of 1d. per letter. About 1883 they contracted with the Governments of New South Wales and South Australia on the basis of payment according to the weight of mails carried. At length, in 1887, both companies, as stated, agreed with the Imperial Government to establish the weekly mail-service.

A singular and costly incident occurred early in

the Orient Company's career. A brand-new vessel of 5,524 tons sank at her moorings in deep water in Sydney Harbour. On arrival, her cargo had of course been removed, and her stock of coals being largely burnt out, the ship floated high in the water. Advantage was taken of this fact, before re-coaling or shipping new cargo, to open for ventilation, drainage, or cleansing purposes certain low-lying valves.

Unluckily they were left open. When coaling commenced the valves sank below the water-line, and it may be that the wind, as in the case of the *Royal George*, gave the vessel a cant to one side or the other. At all events, it began to fill, and before the cause could be conjectured and the inflow of water stopped, down went this splendid packet clean out of sight beneath the deep blue sea.

There, I know not how many fathoms deep, she lay for months, while skilled divers and powerful pumps were being procured from England. Then came an exciting time. The divers planked and stopped every aperture, and formed (my belief is) a kind of coffer-dam of the ship's sides.

The steam-pumps were fixed on a raft close by, and the signal to pump was given. Before long, torrents of coal-black water poured from the nozzles. Soon there were signs that the hull was vibrating. Hopes rose; so at length did the masts. Now success was assured. Above sea-level appeared the funnels, the deck-houses, the very bulwarks.

Next, they moved the ship. A tug was made fast

to stem or stern, and very slowly the vessel, still submerged, was towed at high-water on to a gridiron. When the tide ebbed all the water ran out of her, and the good ship was found to be as sound as ever. When the tide flowed she floated. They lighted a furnace or two, turned a few pounds of steam into the cylinders, and little was found the worse for so long a bath.

It took some time to dry the ship and refit her; but as far as the conveyance of the mails and the safety of the vessel went, her head might as well that moment have been turned homewards, and she would have cleared out of Port Jackson in her old fine style. But neglect of those sub-aqueous valves cost the under-writers, or the company, or both, a large sum of money.

From Cannon Street, London, to the *Semaphore* anchorage at Adelaide, *via* Naples, is a journey, as measured by time and the contract, of 34 days 5 hours and 37 minutes; *via* Brindisi it is nominally ten hours longer. The penalty for delay is £100 a day.

The splendid steamers which the two companies provide, however, are not to be held back by mere contract stipulations, but, like the 'steed unbroken when first it feels the rein,' traverse their course at a pace none may overtake. In this way, the same *Himalaya* which, as has been seen, had proved her mettle on the Bombay line, won laurels on a voyage to Australia. On May 19, 1893, her mails left

London at 8.23 p.m. She delivered them at Adelaide on June 15 at 2.54 a.m.—that is in 26 days 6½ hours.

Place to the 'Orient' Line! The *Ophir* left Adelaide on November 2, 1892, at 1 o'clock p.m., and her mails got to Cannon Street on the 29th at 5.15 p.m.—that is in 27 days 4¼ hours.

Half a century ago what did we see? A passage of 118 days, a course of post of 8½ months. Now the passage is made within 30 or 35 days, and the course of post with Australia, and its ocean trade of a hundred millions sterling, may be put down as 2½ months. So in 40 years we have at any rate gained 6 months on the round voyage in the transit of passengers and in the exchange of commodities with that delightful land which, British to its core, was rightly named, by its earliest explorer, *Australia Felix*.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## JUBILATION.

THE Post-Office, inexhaustible at the desk or on the field of duty, has not always been disposed towards collective festivity.

The cause may not be very far to seek. Having given to the service of the commonwealth the best of the day, its members not unreasonably fly away to their homes to make the best of the night.

So it fell out that the several branches of the Post-Office pursued for many a long year the even tenor of their way, without so much as a thought of jubilation in respect to official toil. The chief clerks had other things to think of; the juniors neither the cash nor the power. However, a change was at hand.

The cheers of the million which had saluted the jubilee of her Majesty Queen Victoria were yet in the ears of the people, when the Post-Office became aware that the fiftieth year of penny postage verged on completion. It resolved to celebrate the occasion, and lost no time in appointing a committee and making preparations. The first step was to roll

together in the office itself a large guarantee fund. Next, before buckling on the harness of festive organization in earnest, 250 of its principal people struck out the novel design of dining together. That dinner has its memorable recollections. It took place as near to the semi-centenary of penny postage as could be arranged. Amongst the guests there was one who already filled high office when the penny became the Shibboleth of progress—Sir John Tilley, K.C.B.; near him sat the son of the Reformer, and over against him a nephew of Sir Rowland, who has done more for the Office than the public are aware of—Mr. Edward Bernard Lewin Hill.

This first act of jubilation has, too, its sorrowful associations. The guests of the past look in vain for the genial chairman of the night, the Right Honourable Henry Cecil Raikes, Member of Parliament, the political Chief of the Office, and for their vice-chairman, Sir Stevenson Arthur Blackwood, K.C.B., the lamented secretary.

But at that moment all the chords which were struck gave out the note of rejoicing.

Pitched in a key in close sympathy with the sentiments of his followers was the chairman's harangue:

'I think these' (the facts which he stated) 'will justify me in saying that it is probably to that happy thought, that patient research, that heroic persistency of Rowland Hill, that this department has become the most important administrative department of the State.

‘Talk of armies,’ continued Mr. Raikes in a jubilant strain of good-humoured banter, ‘why, the numbers of officers I have just mentioned to you are more numerous than any regular forces which the Secretary for War can show within the compass of her Majesty’s dominions. The fleets over which the Postmaster-General exercises control are faster, better found, and more efficient, than any which obey the bidding of the First Lord of the Admiralty. Talk of the Foreign Office—or the Colonial Office—why, half of the work of those departments is what we make for them, and in which we have to assist them. I believe, in fact, that the growth from this grain of mustard-seed, this little penny post which was invented by the Worcestershire schoolmaster, has been such that we are approaching a period, if we have not reached it, when the Post-Office will be regarded with eyes of envy and suspicion by every other department in the State.

‘We are always told that we ought to be making a new departure. We are always making new departures. If the public only knew the secrets of the Post-Office, they would find that there is no department on the face of the earth which is so prone to ventilate and push new ideas.

‘A Treasury minute penned on the occasion of Sir Rowland Hill’s retirement from the office he had so long adorned, salutes him, not merely as a faithful servant, but as a benefactor of the human race.

'It is with that great example before us that every man in this service does his daily work. As long as that example is cherished and honoured as it is to-day, there need be no fear for this great department, which goes step by step and stride by stride in advancing the welfare of mankind.'

Mr. Raikes concluded by describing the Post-Office as one of the first civilizing agencies of the century, and as embodying, year after year, one after another, those peaceful revolutions which make up the happy history of man.

What was the cause of jubilation? The main intention was to do honour to the memory of Sir Rowland Hill, to impress yet once more on men's minds the magnitude and beneficence of his work and the vast extension of usefulness which had accrued to the department, thanks to the seed sown by the famous pamphlet on Post-Office reform and the fructifying genius of its author.

The department had become a greater carrying agency than ever. Cheap letters, cheap book-packets, samples and patterns, trade circulars, newspapers, manuscripts for the press, postcards, registration, had sprung into life and flourished in the jubilee period.

It had become a banker, and had received the enormous sum of 304 millions of pounds sterling as deposits, all in small sums, saved by the thrift of the nation. It transmitted millions of money by money order and postal draft.



The Post-Office was a telegraphist on the largest known scale, and the paymaster of military pensions. It even insured the lives of its clients. It had cheapened postage to the colonies and foreign parts, established a parcel post, fostered the springs of commerce, and sweetened home life.

Its revenue had risen from two and a half millions to twelve millions per annum; its profits from little better than a million and a half to nearly three millions of pounds.

It had so thoroughly won its way to the heart of the nation by promptness, efficiency, and zeal that even so unimpressionable a being (in his official capacity) as the Chancellor of the Exchequer was moved to admiration. Shortly before the resignation of Lord Salisbury's Administration the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Goschen) spoke in generous and encouraging terms of the Post-Office. He said, amidst the cheers of the House of Commons, that 'so far as he could exercise any influence over the Post-Office, he should encourage them to improve their service. He should be sorry to take a churlish view of the splendid efforts of one of the most successful departments that ever existed—a department full of energy, which deserved the great thanks of the country for the magnificent manner in which it had conducted a most complicated service.'

These were noble and stimulating words, and not likely to be forgotten. They acknowledged the results of fifty years of sustained effort to work out Sir Row-

land's schemes and keep the department abreast of the requirements of the age.

There was a further and not less worthy object in view—the strengthening of the hands of the trustees of a beneficent investment known as the Rowland Hill Benevolent Fund.

On May 16, 1890, came a magnificent demonstration at Guildhall. The Corporation of the City of London had bent their shoulders to the work of jubilation. They appointed a committee of reference; they invited a committee of co-operation formed of postal officials.

The Guildhall was a sight to behold. The like of it had never before been seen. One end of the noble hall was crowded with telegraph apparatus, the other with the work of a post-office. Three thousand guests were invited. The Prince of Wales moved amongst the throng.

Had the occasion been honoured by the company of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, there might have been arranged, with the concurrence of the royal couple, a curious telegraphic feat. For in the Guildhall were fixed two Hughes' type-printing telegraphs, one working direct to Berlin, the other to Paris. Had the Prince stationed himself at one instrument and the Princess herself at the other, they would have been perhaps two lineal yards apart.

Now, the feat would have been to send a despatch from the Prince to the Princess, who, telegraphically, would have been seventeen hundred miles apart.

The message would have had to be signalled to Berlin by the route of Bishopsgate, Mile End, and Lowestoft, the North Sea and North Germany. At Berlin it would have been repeated—flashed across the Rhine to Paris. From Paris the signals would have passed through Normandy, across the Channel from Dieppe, through England by Tonbridge, across South London and the Thames, and through the General Post-Office to the Guildhall.

The interest would have lain in the brevity of the interval between the last 'click' of the signals to Berlin by the North Sea and the first click of the twice-repeated message turning up from Paris across the British Channel. How long would the interval have been? Perhaps fifty seconds!

In front of the Guildhall, at the close of the day preceding the Jubilee conversazione, shortly before eight o'clock, stood a coach labelled 'London and Edinburgh.' It was about to go back to the stable-yard after rehearsing some duties appointed for the next day. It was still broad daylight; the evening was genial. An immense crowd had assembled outside the Guildhall in expectation of something unusual occurring. The thought struck me that it would be a pity to disappoint them. So the coachman and guard were told that the start was to be deferred until the first stroke of eight from the church clock hard by.

The word was soon passed about the crowd that the

coach would be off with Post-Office punctuality exactly at that time, not a second sooner or later. We began to load up with dummy mail-bags, the process being watched with deep interest. Then eight or ten of our colleagues ascended as passengers; some, by good luck, had hand-bags with them; one rejoiced us by producing a portmanteau.

At length every place was taken. It seemed that there was even a lady inside the coach—at all events, someone with a bonnet. Eight o'clock impended. The crowd thickened. Excited expectation increased. The horses champed their bits, pawing the ground. The clock now was within a minute of eight. The coachman tightened his reins. The guard grasped his far-sounding horn. The clock struck the first stroke of eight.

Then came the grand *finale*. At the sound of the clock, from the post-office inside the Guildhall rushed a postman carrying a mail-bag. 'Last bag out!' he loudly cried, and hurled it, in view of the somewhat awed, but wholly absorbed, mass of onlookers, to the top of the coach. The guard blew his horn, the leading bays reared up, the wheelers settled to the collar, the enchanted crowd cheered, and with a flick of the whip the skilful charioteer on the box started his four-in-hand with the 'down night mail.'

Said a bystander in my hearing, at the corner of the Guildhall Yard: 'I should not like to be one of the fellows on that coach.' 'Why not?' inquired his friend. 'Don't you see?' was the rejoinder; 'they

are going all the way to Edinburgh, and they have not got a great-coat amongst them !'

The exhibition was thrown open on two days following the conversazione, when 21,000 persons visited the Guildhall.

The Committee of Reference at its close brought up to the Common Council a jubilant communication :

' We have received on all hands the most gratifying testimony of the success of the proceedings undertaken by us, on the reference from your honourable Court.

' We have audited the various bills and accounts, which we have the satisfaction to report amount in the total to £1,675 4s. . . .

' We have specially recorded our thanks to the Postmaster-General.'

The Common Council received the tidings with approval, and signified the same in a stately fashion :

' The Penny Postage Jubilee Committee did this day deliver into this Court a report in writing, under their hands, of their proceedings ; and a motion being made and question put, That this Court doth agree with the committee in their said report, the same was resolved in the affirmative and ordered accordingly.'

The Corporation of the City of London from 1837 to the present day has consistently been the good friend of the Post-Office. It backed up penny postage with the same vigour that it showed in doing honour to its author and in celebrating the Postage Jubilee.

One feature of the conversazione was the Guildhall post-card, struck for the occasion, the plate being

afterwards destroyed with much formality and many blows. This penny post-card brought into the fund referred to more than £200.

The crowning event was to come. Lord Cranbrook and Sir William Hart Dyke, M.P., as Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Education, lent the use of the extensive Museum of Art treasures at South Kensington, and on July 2 the Post-Office gave its own conversazione. About four thousand persons were present. Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh were graciously pleased to accept an invitation to preside; they admired the arrangements, and inspired their guests with the pleasure which is occasioned by natural and spontaneous politeness.

Wonders were spread before their eyes: some in sober earnest, some as calculated to contribute to the entertainment of the evening. Mr. Sims Reeves came forth from his retirement and sang airs which were applauded to the echo. A staff of well-known ladies and gentlemen took charge respectively of a post-office reputed to be a hundred years earlier than our time, and of another of a hundred years hence. A royal procession preceded by heralds paraded the building.

Improvised post-offices dealt with letters by the thousand. A telegraph-office in the midst brought congratulations from all parts of the world—from the Isles of Shetland, from India, Australia, New Zealand, the Cape, and the Dominion of Canada. All were

tuned to one key ; all were in harmony with the spirit of the night.

If within the scene was brilliant, without exciting spectacles delighted the crowd. The Brighton mail parcel-coach dashed away with four prancing steeds, so also did the mail-coaches for Watford and Oxford. Guards of honour presented arms, the bands played the National Anthem.

There was yet to come the special feature of the occasion. At 10 o'clock Her Royal and Imperial Highness touched the key of a telegraph arranged by the electrician, Mr. Preece, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland broke into a cheer.

Officials off duty at distant towns spontaneously returned to their post offices, and as the signal arrived cheered with their fellows. At Grantham 6,000 people awaited its arrival in the ancient market-place, and at Bradford 6,000 more did the same. At Collinstown, in Westmeath, the sub-postmaster, 'all unaided,' gave three cheers, his wife 'being unable to sit up later than 8.30.'

At Letterfrack, in County Galway, the Queen's official reported that, 'Myself and sister being in charge of this post-office in the far west of Ireland, she as assistant, myself as sub-postmistress, felt very great pleasure in assembling in the office at 10 p.m. and with our old postman in uniting in giving three cheers in right hearty old style for our beloved Queen, and in wishing health, long life and prosperity to her Majesty.'

And from fair Scotland? From the North as from the South, from the East and from the West, came the cheering—from bonnie Dundee was telegraphed the following :

‘ Her servants pray, God save the Queen !  
With one united heart,  
From banks of Tay and Forth and Clyde,  
Spey, Ness, Dee, Ayr, and Cart.’

Nor did the Outer Hebrides forget to give *slainte Banright*, and telegraph to let the London people know that cheers were resounding (as they were careful to add) ‘ amongst the dim shielings on the misty Islands.’

Amid the greater and more striking demonstrations, shall the tribute of the solitary watcher at Vigo Street Post-Office, awaiting the signal at her desk, be forgotten ?

The Office bent itself to the work of enlarging the Rowland Hill Benevolent Fund. It designed a special envelope, which sold for £11,166. The Baroness Burdett-Coutts, Sir James Whitehead, Bart., M.P. (a tried friend of the Post-Office), and Mr. Lidderdale, Governor of the Bank of England, joined in an appeal to the public which brought in £12,000 more. In the result, after defraying every expense, we were able to transfer to the fund the sum of £22,056.

Lastly, Mr. G. A. Aitken, fresh from the ‘ Lives of Steele and Arbuthnot,’ compiled a Jubilee Book. Her Majesty, who had graciously become the patron of the Benevolent Fund, accepted a copy.



We sent the volume to all the principal English-speaking colonies and dependencies, and to the Postmaster-General of the United States, from whom, as from others, came letters conveying most cordial sentiments.

The Jubilation of 1890 came to an end. Then the Book of Life turned another page. In 1891 passed away Mr. Henry Cecil Raikes; in 1893 Sir Arthur Blackwood, and in the same year illness constrained the writer of these pages to bid farewell to the Post-Office.



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## APPENDIX A.

A LIST OF COACHES TO AND FROM LONDON WHICH PASSED THROUGH BARNET ON THE GREAT NORTH ROAD WHEN HIS MAJESTY KING WILLIAM IV. WAS ON THE THRONE.

Coaches to and from towns marked thus § followed the Hatfield and York road north of Barnet; the rest took Telford's Birmingham mail-road.

\* \* Although no date can with certainty be assigned to this table, which was compiled—but in a slightly different form—by the late Mr. J. J. Cowing, proprietor of the Public Library at Barnet, it probably belongs to the year 1829. The coaches passed under Mr. Cowing's windows. The up Glasgow mail is timed at 8.45 p.m., but this is perhaps an error. In 1832 the coach was due at 5.30 a.m.

Destination.	Name of Coach.	London Inns.	Time due at Barnet by Local Clock.	
			Down.	Up.
Barnet	Royal Union	Cross Keys, St. John Street, and Royal Exchange	6.0 p.m.	8.15 a.m.
Ditto	Tally Ho!	Cross Keys, St. John Street	11.15 a.m.	6.0 p.m.
Ditto	Times	Blue Posts, Tottenham Court Road	5.40 p.m.	8.40 a.m.
§Bedford	Royal Pilot (Tues., Th., Sat., Mon., Wed., Fri.)	Three Cups, Aldersgate Street	2.30 p.m.	11.45 a.m.
Ditto	Times	George and Blue Boar, Holborn	4.30 p.m.	12.15 p.m.
Ditto	Umpire (Mon., Wed., Fri., Sun., Tues., Th.)	Boar and Castle, Oxford Street	3.30 p.m.	2.0 p.m.
Birmingham (via Coventry)	Albion	Bull and Mouth	7.45 p.m.	7.45 a.m.
Ditto	Emerald	Golden Cross, Charing Cross	8.40 p.m.	7.0 a.m.
Ditto	Greyhound	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane, and Castle and Falcon	8.15 p.m.	6.30 a.m.
Ditto	Independent Tally Ho!	Golden Cross, Charing Cross	8.15 a.m.	6.0 p.m.

Destination.	Name of Coach.	London Inns.	Time due at Barnet by Local Clock.	
			Down.	Up.
Birmingham viâ Coventry)	Tally Ho!	Saracen's Head, Snow Hill	7.45 a.m.	5.30 p.m.
Ditto	Union Balloon	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	6.15 p.m.	7.30 a.m.
Ditto (viâ Warwick)	Crown Prince	Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill	8.15 a.m.	7.5 p.m.
§Boston	Perseverance	King's Arms, Snow Hill	8.40 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Chester	Royal Mail	Golden Cross, Charing Cross	9.15 p.m.	5.30 a.m.
Daventry	Accommodation (Mon., Wed., Fri., Tues., Th., Sat.)	Three Cups, Al- dersgate Street	8.15 a.m.	3.45 p.m.
§Glasgow	Royal Mail	Bull and Mouth	9.15 p.m.	8.45 p.m.
Ditto (viâ Mancheater)	Royal Bruce	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	5.0 p.m.	8.0 a.m.
Hatfield	Royal Sovereign	Boar and Castle, Oxford Street	5.30 p.m.	8.10 a.m.
Hitchin	Times (Mon., Wed., Fri., Tues., Th., Sat.)	White Bear, Picca- dilly, and Three Cups	4.30 p.m.	8.45 a.m. 11.10 a.m.
Holyhead (viâ Shrewsbury)	Royal Mail	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	9.15 p.m.	5.30 a.m.
Kettering (viâ Bedford)	Uppingham (Mon., Wed., Fri., Tues., Th., Sat.)	George and Blue Boar, Holborn	9.30 a.m. 8.45 a.m.	4.30 p.m. 6.30 p.m.
Leeds	Courier	Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill	4.0 p.m.	3.0 p.m.
Ditto	Rockingham	Saracen's Head, Snow Hill	3.15 p.m.	9.15 a.m.
Ditto (viâ Nottingham)	Royal Express	Bull and Mouth	5.15 p.m.	9.45 a.m.
Leeds	Royal Mail	Bull and Mouth	9.15 p.m.	8.30 p.m.
Ditto	Royal Union	George and Blue Boar and Three Cups	10.0 a.m.	1.0 p.m.
Leicester	Union	Bull and Mouth and Bull Inn, Aldgate	8.50 a.m.	6.45 p.m.
Leighton Buzzard	Accommodation	Cross Keys, St. John Street	3.15 p.m.	10.30 a.m.
Luton	—	Three Cups, Al- deragate Street	5.0 p.m.	8.45 a.m.
Liverpool	Alliance	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	3.15 p.m.	10.0 a.m.

Destination.	Name of Coach.	London Inns.	Time due at Barnet by Local Clock.	
			Down.	Up.
Liverpool	Royal Express	Saracen's Head, Snow Hill	5.15 p.m.	5.30 p.m.
Ditto	Royal Mail	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	9.15 p.m.	8.45 p.m.
Ditto	Sovereign	Three Cups, Al- dersgate Street	9.30 a.m.	1.50 p.m.
Ditto	Umpire	Golden Cross, Charing Cross	3.30 p.m.	3.45 p.m.
Manchester	Defiance	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	7.20 p.m.	4.40 p.m.
Ditto	Herald	Spread Eagle, Gracechurch Street	6.45 p.m.	5.10 p.m.
Ditto	Independent	Bull Inn, Aldgate	6.45 p.m.	4.30 p.m.
Ditto	Peeveril of the Peak	Blossom's Inn, Laurence Lane	10.15 p.m.	10.30 a.m.
Ditto (and Glasgow)	Royal Bruce	Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	5.0 p.m.	8.0 a.m.
Ditto	Royal Mail	Ditto	9.15 p.m.	5.30 a.m.
Ditto	Telegraph	White Horse, Fetter Lane	6.30 p.m.	2.45 p.m.
Ditto (through Bedford)	Times	Golden Cross, Charing Cross	9.0 p.m.	11.0 a.m.
Northampton	Post Coach	Bull and Mouth	1.50 p.m.	1.30 p.m.
Nottingham (via Leices- ter)	Times	Swan with Two Necks Lad Lane	7.20 a.m.	8.0 p.m.
§Oundle and Kimbolton	Improved Safety (Tues., Th., Sat., Mon., Wed., Fri.)	George and Blue Boar, Holborn	8.45 a.m.	2.50 p.m.
St. Albans	Favourite	Windmill, St. John Street	6.30 p.m.	8.10 a.m.
Sheffield and Nottingham	Royal Hope	Angel Inn, Angel Street	7.20 p.m.	6.30 a.m.
Shrewsbury	Wonder	Bull and Mouth	7.5 a.m.	8.45 p.m.
§Stamford (via Hunt- ingdon)	Regent	George and Blue Boar, Holborn	8.50 a.m.	5.15 p.m.
Woburn and Welling- borough	—	Ditto	11.30 a.m.	1.15 p.m.
Ditto	(Mon., Wed., Fri., Tues., Th., Sat.)	Ditto	3.0 p.m.	10.30 a.m.
§York and Carlisle	Royal Express	Saracen's Head, Snow Hill	8.20 a.m.	11.50 a.m.

## APPENDIX B.

A LIST OF COACHES RUNNING TO AND FROM NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE  
IN THE YEAR 1831.

(Extracted from Oliver's 'Picture of Newcastle.')

## MAIL AND STAGE COACHES.

*From Queen's Head Inn, Pilgrim Street.*

The Royal mail *from* London arrives every morning (Tuesdays excepted) at 2.30, and departs for Edinburgh immediately after changing horses, and arrives there at 2.30 p.m.

The mail *from* Edinburgh arrives every evening (Fridays excepted) at 9.15, and departs for London at 9.30, where it arrives at 6 o'clock the second morning.

The mail from Carlisle *arrives* every day at 2.30 p.m., and *departs* again to same place at 7 a.m., and arrives at 2.30 p.m.

The Times *from* Leeds arrives every evening at 7, and departs every morning at 5 for same place, alternately, one morning from here, and the next from the Sun Inn, Newgate Street.

The Chevy Chase *from* Edinburgh arrives every evening at 8, and departs every morning at 6 (Sundays excepted), by way of Eladon, Jedburgh, Melrose, etc., alternately; one day from here, and the next from Sun Inn, Newgate Street.

*From the Turf Hotel, Collingwood Street.*

The Highflyer *departs* for London every morning at 5, through Durham, York, Biggleswade, Hertford, etc., and arrives at 6 o'clock next evening.

The Wellington *departs* for London every morning at 8, through Durham, York, Doncaster, Stamford, Ware, etc., and arrives at 9 the next evening.

The Wellington *departs* for Edinburgh every morning (Sundays excepted) at 6.30, through Morpeth, Wooler, Coldstream, Kelso, and Lauder, and arrives at 9 the same evening.

The Express *departs* for London every morning at 10.15 to York, where it arrives at 9 the same evening. It starts next morning at 9, running through Doncaster, etc., and arrives next day at 1 p.m.



The Union *departs for* Edinburgh every morning (Sundays excepted) at 6, through Alnwick, Berwick, Dunbar, and Haddington, and arrives at 9 the same evening.

The Lord Exmouth *departs for* Lancaster every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at 5, through Bishop Auckland, Barnard Castle, and Brough, and arrives that evening at 8.

The Royal Telegraph *departs for* Leeds every morning at 5.45, through Durham, Catwick Bridge, Harrogate, etc., and arrives at 8 that evening.

The True Briton *departs for* Carlisle every morning at 8, through Hexham, Haltwhistle, etc., and arrives 2.30 p.m.

The Wellington *departs for* Sunderland every morning at 8.

*From the Sun Inn, Newgate Street.*

The Chevy Chase *departs for* Edinburgh every morning (Sundays excepted) at 6, alternately, one day from here, and next from Queen's Head, through Cambs, Otterburn, Jedburgh, Melrose, etc., and arrives at 8 the same evening.

The Times *departs for* Leeds every morning at 5 (Sundays excepted), and from Queen's Head Inn, by way of Durham, Stockton, etc., where it arrives at 7.30 in the evening.

The Wonder *departs for* Alnwick and Berwick at 10 every morning, and arrives at Alnwick at 3 and Berwick at 8. The Wonder *departs for* Durham every afternoon at 4 o'clock.

*From Half Moon Inn, Bigg Market.*

The True Briton *departs for* Durham every afternoon at 4.

The Phoenix *departs for* Morpeth every afternoon at 5.

The British Queen *departs for* Hexham every afternoon at 4 (through Corbridge).

The Adventure *departs for* Bedlington on Tuesday and Saturday at 4 p.m.

*From Rose and Crown, Bigg Market.*

The Defence *departs for* Alnwick and Berwick every morning at 10 by Morpeth and Belford.

The Wansbeck *departs for* Morpeth every afternoon at 5.

*From White Hart, Cloth Market.*

The Doctor Syntax *departs for* Hexham every afternoon at 3.30, through Gateshead, Stella, Prudhoe, etc.

The St. George *departs for* Sunderland at 8.30 every morning.

*From Theatre Tavern, Theatre Square.*

The Union *departs for* Sunderland every afternoon at 3.

*From the Lord Collingwood, Theatre Square.*

The Collingwood *departs for* Sunderland every afternoon at 5.

*From the Wheat Sheaf, Bigg Market.*

The Royal Pilot *departs* for Morpeth every afternoon at 5.

*From the Unicorn, Bigg Market.*

The Wear *departs* for Houghton le Spring every Wednesday afternoon at 4, and from the Black Bull, Gateshead, every Saturday afternoon at 4.

N.B.—Besides the above, there are about ten coaches and 28 gigs regularly employed in conveying passengers to and from North Shields and Tynemouth. These are generally found at the stand upon the quay. The gigs run once, twice, and sometimes thrice a day.

*Note 1.*—November 9, 1838. The railways from Newcastle to the South were so far completed as to enable two mails to be despatched daily to London, Liverpool, Manchester, etc. (*Vide Newcastle Courant.*)

*Note 2.*—July 1, 1847. The railway from Newcastle to Edinburgh was opened throughout.

*Note 3.*—July 5, 1847. The *last* mail-coach arrived in Newcastle from Edinburgh; the *first* coach November 27, 1786. (*Vide Newcastle Courant.*)

## APPENDIX C.

A LIST OF COACHES STARTING FROM ELLIOTT'S ROYAL HOTEL,  
DEVONPORT, IN 1830.

(From Brindley's 'Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse Directory.')

*The Quicksilver, Royal Mail to London.*—Every morning at 6 o'clock, through Ivybridge, Ashburton, Chudleigh, Exeter (New London Inn), Honiton, Yeovil, Sherborne, Shaftesbury, Salisbury, and arrives at Nelson's Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, the following morning at half-past 6 o'clock. The London mail arrives at 8 o'clock p.m., and the letters are delivered the same evening. The Exeter mail arrives at 12 midnight, and the letters are delivered in the morning.

*The Royal Mail to Bath.*—Every evening at 5 o'clock, through Erme Bridge, Newton, Exeter, Wellington, Bridgwater, and arrives at York House at half-past 5 the following evening.

*The Royal Mail to Bristol.*—Every evening at 5, through Totnes, Chudleigh, Exeter, Taunton, Cross, and arrives at the Bush Inn and White Lion the following evening at 5 o'clock, in direct communication with the Birmingham mail.

*The Royal Mail to Falmouth.*—Every morning at 7 o'clock, through Liskeard, Lostwithiel, St. Austell, Truro, and arrives at Falmouth the same evening at 4 o'clock, from whence passengers are forwarded to Helston and Penzance.

## APPENDIX D.

A LIST OF COACHES DESPATCHED FROM EXETER IN JANUARY,  
1840, AS SHOWN BY 'WOOLMER'S GAZETTE.'

Time of Despatch.	Name of Coach.	Destination.
a.m.		
4.15	Royal Mail	Devonport.
5.45	—	Bath.
6.0	Telegraph	London in 15 hours (partly by rail).
6.20	Estafette	Taunton, Bristol in 7½ hours, Birmingham, Gloucester, and Oxford.
6.20	Regulator	Truro and Falmouth.
7.0	Red Rover	Dorchester, Weymouth, Southampton, and Portsmouth.
9.0	Exquisite	Bristol, Cheltenham, Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool (partly by rail).
9.0	—	Teignmouth.
9.0	Traveller	Dorchester, Weymouth, and Salisbury.
9.40	Royal Mail	Barnstaple, via Tiverton, Bideford, and Ilfracombe.
10.0	Ditto	Bath and Birmingham.
10.30	Subscription	Plymouth.
10.45	Quicksilver	Falmouth.
11.0	Subscription	Barnstaple, through Crediton and Eggesford.
p.m.		
12.30	—	Dorchester and Weymouth.
1.0	Nonpareil	Bristol and Birmingham.
3.0	Quicksilver	London in 14½ hours (partly by rail).
4.0	Herald	Salisbury.

## APPENDIX E.

A COMPARISON OF THE TIMES OF THE MAIN LINES OF MAIL-COACHES IN ENGLAND AND WALES, *circa* THE ACCESSION OF HIS LATE MAJESTY KING WILLIAM IV., WITH THE TIMES OBSERVED IN THE YEAR OF THE ACCESSION OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA.

*Note 1.*—The figures printed in italics are estimated times.

*Note 2.*—Certain of the services were still further accelerated, and some new ones were established after 1836.

Mail-Coach. From London to	By what Route.	Distance.	Some Points of Call.	Time of Arrival or Departure	At the Queen's Accession.
		Miles.			
Bath	<i>Maidenhead</i>	109	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Down, 11 h.	<i>Hungerford</i>		Bath arr.	7.54 a.m.	7.27 a.m.
54 m.	<i>Devizes</i>		„ dep.	6.15 p.m.	7.10 p.m.
Up, 11 h.			G.P.O. arr.	6.9 a.m.	6.40 a.m.
54 m.					
Birmingham	<i>Edware</i>	119	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Down, 13 h.	<i>Tring</i>	42	Aylesbury	12.40 a.m.	12.40 a.m.
34 m.		74	Banbury	4.40 a.m.	4.15 a.m.
Up, 12 h.		98	Warwick	7.37 a.m.	7.3 a.m.
42 m.			(stop 20 m.)		
			Birmingham		
			arr.	9.34 a.m.	9.39 a.m.
			„ dep.	5.30 p.m.	5.30 p.m.
			Warwick	6.55 p.m.	7.46 p.m.
			Banbury	9.52 p.m.	10.34 p.m.
			Aylesbury	2.19 a.m.	2.19 a.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.12 a.m.	6.12 a.m.
Brighton	<i>Croydon</i>	53	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Down, 7 h.	<i>Crawley</i>		Brighton arr.	3.45 a.m.	3.20 a.m.
45 m.	<i>Staplefield</i>		„ dep.	10.30 p.m.	10.30 p.m.
Up, 7 h.	<i>Common</i>		G.P.O. arr.	5.55 p.m.	5.55 p.m.
25 m.					

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Mail-Coach. From London to	By what Route.	Distance.	Some Points of Call.	Time of Arrival or Departure.	At the Queen's Accession.
Bristol Down, 13 h. 37 m. Up, —	<i>Reading</i> <i>Newbury</i> <i>Marl-</i> <i>borough</i>	Miles.			
		122	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
		109	Bath	8.11 a.m.	7.21 a.m.
			Bristol arr.	9.37 a.m.	8.43 a.m.
			.. dep.	5.50 p.m.	6.15 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	Not known	6.58 a.m.
Carlisle Down, 34 h. 7 m. Up, 35 h. 50 m.	<i>Barnet</i> <i>Doncaster</i> <i>Ripon</i> <i>Brough</i> <i>Penrith</i>	311	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
			St. Neots	2.10 a.m.	—
		65	Alconbury	—	2.59 a.m.
			Hill		
		110	Grantham (stop 40 m.)	8.5 a.m.	7.40 a.m.
			Leeds (stop 35 m.)	4.50 p.m.	
		(In 1836, 302 miles to Car- lisle)	Carlisle arr.	6.7 a.m.	4.17 a.m.
			.. dep.	7.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
			Leeds (stop 46 m.)		
			Newark (stop 40 m.)		
Chester Down, 21 h. 47 m. Up, 22 h. 47 m.	<i>Redbourne</i> <i>Nantwich</i>	191	G.P.O. arr.	6.50 a.m.	5.15 a.m.
			London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
		67	Northampton	3.29 p.m.	3.31 a.m.
		101	Hinckley (stop 30 m.)	7.21 a.m.	6.36 a.m.
			Stafford	12.20 p.m.	11.11 a.m.
		142	Chester arr.	5.47 p.m.	4.16 p.m.
			.. dep.	8.0 a.m.	10.10 a.m.
			Stafford	1.27 p.m.	3.7 p.m.
			Lichfield (stop 30 m.)	3.21 p.m.	5.2 p.m.
			Hinckley	6.26 p.m.	7.45 p.m.
			Northampton (stop 20 m.)	10.31 p.m.	11.27 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.47 a.m.	6.37 a.m.
		Devonport Down, 23 h. 42 m. Up, 24 m. 45 m.	<i>Andover</i> <i>Salisbury</i> <i>Shaftesbury</i> <i>Ivy Bridge</i>	218 m.	London dep.
6 f.					
125	Yeovil (stop 30 m.)			8.56 a.m.	9.9 a.m.
	Exeter (stop 30 m.)			2.24 p.m.	2.28 p.m.
	Devonport				
(In 1836, 217 miles to Devon- port)	.. arr.			7.42 p.m.	7.44 p.m.
	.. dep.			6.15 a.m.	7.0 a.m.
	Exeter (stop 30 m.)	—	11.48 a.m.		
	Yeovil (stop 30 m.)	4.38 p.m.	4.55 p.m.		

Mail-Coach. From London to	By what Route.	Distance.	Some Points of Call.	Time of Arrival or Departure.	At the Queen's Accession.
Devonport (continued)		Miles.			
Dover Down, 9 h. 45 m. Up, 9 h. 45 m.	<i>Gravesend Canterbury</i>	73	Sarum dep. G.P.O. arr. London dep. Dover arr. Deal arr. Dover dep. Deal dep. G.P.O. arr.	9.58 p.m. 7.0 a.m. 8.0 p.m. 5.45 a.m. 7.0 a.m. 8.0 p.m. 7.0 p.m. 5.45 a.m.	9.50 p.m. 6.48 a.m. 8.0 p.m. 4.57 a.m. 6.30 a.m. 9.45 p.m. 6.30 p.m. 5.29 a.m.
Edinburgh (York coach) Down, 44 h. 43 m. Up, 46 h.	<i>Waltham Cross Tadcaster Darlington Morpeth* Berwick-on- Tweed</i>	399 m. 4 f. 59 72 108 122 196 278	London dep. Huntingdon Stilton Grantham (stop 40 m.) Newark arr. York (stop 40 m.) Newcastle Edinburgh arr. dep. Newcastle Stilton Huntingdon G.P.O. arr.	8.0 p.m. 2.44 a.m. 4.3 a.m. arr. 8.0 a.m. 10.10 a.m. 5.31 p.m. 2.37 a.m. 4.43 p.m. 8.0 a.m. 9.22 p.m. 9.34 p.m. 11.4 p.m. 6.0 a.m.	8.0 p.m. 2.30 a.m. 3.45 a.m. 7.23 a.m. 9.30 a.m. 4.54 p.m. 1.50 a.m. 2.23 p.m. 8.0 a.m. 9.22 p.m. 9.33 a.m. 10.53 a.m. 5.37 a.m.
Ditto (Wetherby coach) Down, 45 h. 14 m.	<i>Waltham Cross Hoddesdon Huntingdon Doncaster Darlington Durham Newcastle</i> <small>[Note.—Before 1832 the route north of Wetherby was diverted to Carlisle and Glasgow.]</small>	392	London dep. Stilton Grantham Wetherby arr. dep. Belford (stop 40 m.) Berwick-on- Tweed Edinburgh arr. dep. Belford (stop 30 m.) Newcastle Wetherby Ferry Bridge (stop 40 m.)	8.0 p.m. 4.13 a.m. 8.5 a.m. 5.6 p.m. 6.26 p.m. 8.37 a.m. 5.14 p.m. 8.0 a.m. 10.1 p.m. 7.13 a.m. 9.5 a.m.	8.0 p.m. 3.56 a.m. 7.40 a.m. 4.36 p.m. (Glasgow mail in 1836) 7.22 a.m. 9.36 a.m.

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Mall-Coach. From London to	By what Route.	Distance.	Some Points of Call.	Time of Arrival or Departure.	At the Queen's Accession.
		Miles.			
Edinburgh (Wetherby coach) ( <i>con- tinued</i> )			Grantham (stop 40 m.) G.P.O. arr.	5.9 p.m. Not known	5.6 p.m. 5.13 a.m.
Falmouth Down, 34 h. 44 m.	<i>Bagshot</i>	273	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Up, 35 h. 40 m.	<i>Basingstoke</i>	84	Sarum (Salis- bury)	6.12 a.m.	4.52 a.m.
	<i>Launceston</i>	123	Dorchester (stop 30 m.)	10.30 a.m.	8.57 a.m.
	<i>Bodmin</i>	176	Exeter arr. " dep.	4.2 p.m. 6.30 p.m.	2.69 p.m.
		(In 1836, 271 miles to Fal- mouth)	Falmouth arr. " dep.	6.44 a.m. 7.0 p.m.	5.55 a.m. 8.0 p.m.
			Exeter arr. " dep.	7.15 a.m. 10.0 a.m.	11.5 a.m.
			Dorchester (stop 30 m.)	4.9 p.m.	4.54 p.m.
			Sarum (stop 20 m.)	9.3 p.m.	9.24 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.40 a.m.	6.26 a.m.
Gloucester Down, 12 h. 45 m.	<i>Northleach</i>	112	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Up, 13 h. 11 m.	( <i>Note.</i> — Before 1836 coach ex- tended from Cheltenham (7.20 a.m.) to Aberystwith.)	61	Oxford	2.56 a.m.	2.38 a.m.
		102	Cheltenham Gloucester	7.38 a.m.	7.3 a.m.
			" arr.	8.45 a.m.	8.0 a.m.
			" dep.	5.45 p.m.	7.0 p.m.
			Cheltenham (stop 15 m.)	6.45 p.m.	7.57 p.m.
			Oxford (stop 28 m.)	11.32 p.m.	12.19 a.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.56 a.m.	6.57 a.m.
Hastings Down, 9 h. 0 m.	<i>Footscray</i>		London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Up, 9 h. 1 m.	<i>Sevenoaks</i>		Hastings arr.	5.0 a.m.	5.14 a.m.
	<i>Tunbridge</i>		" dep.	9.0 p.m.	9.0 p.m.
	<i>The Wells</i>		G.P.O. arr.	6.1 a.m.	6.1 a.m.
	<i>Lamber- hurst Battle</i>				
Holyhead Down, 29 h. 17 m.	<i>Barnet</i>	261	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Up, 30 h. 17 m.	<i>Coventry</i>	61	Towcester	2.36 a.m.	2.12 a.m.
	<i>Bangor</i>	110	Birmingham (stop 35 m.)	7.58 a.m.	7.8 a.m.
		154	Salop (stop 20 m.)	1.9 p.m.	noon
		195	Corwen (stop 30 m.)	5.43 p.m.	3.55 p.m.
			Holyhead arr.	1.17 a.m.	10.55 p.m.



Mail-Coach, From London to	By what Route.	Distance	Some Points of Call.	Time of Arrival or Departure.	At the Queen's Accession.			
Holyhead (continued)		Miles.	Holyhe'd dep.	12.0 mid- night	4.15 a.m.			
			Corwen (stop 30 m.)	7.6 a.m.	11.4 a.m.			
			Salop (stop 20 m.)	11.50 a.m.	3.1 p.m.			
			Birmingham (stop 38 m.)	4.57 p.m.	7.31 p.m.			
			Coventry	8.0 p.m.	9.46 p.m.			
			Towcester	11.30 p.m.	12.49 a.m.			
			G.P.O. arr.	6.17 a.m.	7.0 a.m.			
			London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.			
			Stilton	4.20 a.m.	—			
			Lincoln	11.22 a.m.	10.22 a.m.			
Hull Down, 20 h. 0 m.	Peter- borough Barton-on- Humber	170 to Barton (177 to Hull)	Brigg	2.5 p.m.	12.54 p.m.			
			Barton arr.	3.30 p.m.	2.0 p.m.			
			Hull arr.	4.0 p.m.	2.45 p.m.			
			„ dep.	10.0 a.m.	11.30 a.m.			
			Barton dep.	—	12.15 p.m.			
			Lincoln (stop 30 m.)	3.3 p.m.	3.43 p.m.			
			G.P.O. arr.	Not known	6.25 a.m.			
			London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.			
			Leeds Down, 23 h. 38 m. Up, 24 h. 0 m.	Barnet  [By this mail in 1836 the very short space of time of 1 h. 11 m. was allowed for the run (11 miles) to Barnet. The Glasgow mail in 1838 also served Leeds by means of a branch from Pontefract.]	196 m. 2 f. 106 125 164	Melton Mow- bray arr.	8.1 a.m.	6.57 a.m.
						Nottingham	10.43 a.m.	9.11 a.m.
Sheffield (stop 25 m.)	3.20 p.m.	1.19 p.m.						
Leeds arr.	7.38 p.m.	4.52 p.m.						
„ dep.	9.15 p.m.	9.15 p.m.						
Sheffield arr.	1.5 a.m.	12.33 a.m.						
Nottingham (stop 15 m.)	5.45 a.m.	4.44 a.m.						
Melton Mow- bray (stop 15 m.)	8.12 a.m.	6.51 a.m.						
Bedford (stop 30 m.)	2.55 p.m.	12.59 p.m.						
Welwyn	6.17 p.m.	3.47 p.m.						
Barnet	7.55 p.m.	5.10 p.m.						
G.P.O. arr.	9.15 p.m.	6.30 p.m.						
Liverpool Down, 22 h. 17 m. Up, 23 h. 0 m.	Barnet St. Albans The Potteries.	203	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.			
			Coventry (stop 30 m.)	6.0 a.m.	5.18 a.m.			
			Lichfield	9.20 a.m.	8.2 a.m.			
			Stone	11.40 a.m.	10.41 a.m.			

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Mall-Coach. From London to	By what Route.	Distance.	Some Points of Call.	Time of Arrival or Departure.	At the Queen's Accession.
		Miles.			
Liverpool (continued)			Newcastle	12.32 p.m.	11.33 a.m.
			Liverpool arr.	6.17 p.m.	4.50 p.m.
			" dep.	10.30 p.m.	9.45 p.m.
			Lichfield (stop 30 m.)	7.34 a.m.	6.3 a.m.
			Stoney Strat- ford(st.30 m.)	3.15 p.m.	1.9 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	9.30 p.m.	6.30 p.m.
Ditto (out of the Chester mail)	Woodside	206	London dep.	—	8.0 p.m.
			Liverpool arr.	—	6.23 p.m.
			" dep.	—	8.20 a.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	—	6.37 a.m.
Louth	Waltham	155	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 a.m.
Down, 19 h.	Cross	52	Cambridge	2.11 a.m.	"
46 m.	Stilton	77	Peterborough (stop 30 m.)	6.22 a.m.	4.24 a.m.
Up, 19 h.	(* In 1836 the Wells coach took the Cam- bridge mail.)	114	Boston (stop 20 m.)	10.56 a.m.	8.9 a.m.
56 m.			Louth arr.	3.46 p.m.	11.56 a.m.
			" dep.	11.0 a.m.	2.15 p.m.
			Boston (stop 30 m.)	3.30 p.m.	5.37 p.m.
			Peterborough (stop 30 m.)	8.4 p.m.	9.32 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.56 a.m.	6.11 a.m.
Ludlow	High Wy- combe	147	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Down, 17 h.	Moreton-in- the-Marsh	115	Oxford	2.30 a.m.	2.7 a.m.
42 m.			Worcester (stop 30 m.)	9.17 a.m.	8.20 a.m.
Up, 19 h.			Ludlow arr.	1.42 p.m.	12.24 p.m.
10 m.			" dep.	11.15 a.m.	1.45 p.m.
			Worcester arr.	3.10 p.m.	} 5.45 p.m.
			" dep.	4.45 p.m.	
			Oxford arr.	11.30 p.m.	
			" dep.	midnight	12.7 a.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.55 a.m.	6.25 a.m.
Manchester	Dunstable	187	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Down, 20 h.	Woburn	99	Leicester (stop 30 m.)	6.26 a.m.	6.3 a.m.
15 m.	Northamp- ton	127	Derby	9.30 a.m.	9.7 a.m.
Up, 21 h.	Leek		Manchester		
18 m.	Stockport		arr.	4.15 p.m.	3.0 p.m.
			" dep.	9.30 a.m.	10.0 a.m.
			Derby (stop 25 m.)	"	4.20 p.m.
			Leicester (stop 20 m.)	"	7.38 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.48 a.m.	6.26 a.m.

Mail-Coach. From London to	By what Route.	Distance.	Some Points of Call.	Time of Arrival or Departure.	At the Queen's Accession.
Norwich (Colchester coach)	<i>Chelmsford</i> <i>Colchester</i>	Miles. 113	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
		70	Ipswich	4.1 a.m.	8.12 a.m.
Down, 12 h. 57 m.			Norwich arr.	8.57 a.m.	7.38 a.m.
Up, 14 h. 0 m.			„ dep.	5.0 p.m.	5.0 p.m.
Ditto (New- market coach)	<i>Bishop's</i> <i>Stortford</i> <i>Bury St.</i> <i>Edmunds</i> <i>Thetford</i>	118	Ipswich (stop 30 m.)	10.0 p.m.	11.21 p.m.
		82	G.P.O. arr.	7.0 a.m.	6.43 a.m.
			London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
			Newmarket	—	2.54 a.m.
			Norwich arr.	9.0 a.m.	9.5 a.m.
			„ dep.	5.0 p.m.	5.0 p.m.
Down, 13 h. 0 m.			Bury (stop 15 m.)	9.33 p.m.	9.33 p.m.
Up, 13 h. 54 m.			G.P.O. arr.	6.54 a.m.	6.29 a.m.
Portsmouth Down, 9 h. 10 m.	<i>Cobham</i> <i>Guildford</i>	73	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
		13	Kingston	9.35 p.m.	9.35 p.m.
		55	Petersfield	2.55 a.m.	2.55 a.m.
			Portsmouth		
Up, 10 h. 0 m.			arr.	5.10 a.m.	5.10 a.m.
			„ dep.	8.30 p.m.	9.30 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	6.30 a.m.	6.30 a.m.
Southamp- ton and Poole	<i>Bagshot</i> <i>Farnham</i> <i>Winchester</i> <i>Ringwood</i> <i>Wimborne</i>	116	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
		80	Southampton	5.32 a.m.	4.30 a.m.
			(stop 28 m.)		
			Poole arr.	10.20 a.m.	9.18 a.m.
			„ dep.	4.30 p.m.	5.0 p.m.
			Southampton	8.50 p.m.	9.18 p.m.
Down, 14 h. 20 m.			(stop 25 m.)		
Up, 13 h. 52 m.			G.P.O. arr.	6.22 a.m.	6.25 p.m.
Stroud Down, 12 h. 0 m.	<i>Henley</i> <i>Dorchester</i> <i>(Oxon)</i> <i>Abingdon</i> <i>Cirencester</i>	105	London dep.	8.0 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
			Stroud arr.	8.0 a.m.	8.9 a.m.
			„ dep.	7.0 p.m.	6.50 p.m.
			G.P.O. arr.	7.0 a.m.	6.59 a.m.
Wells Down, 14 h. 43 m.	<i>Wadesmill</i> <i>Downham</i> <i>Hunstanton</i>	133	London dep.		8.0 p.m.
		52	Cambridge		1.36 a.m.
		69	Ely	Not	3.31 a.m.
		99	Lynn	running	6.33 a.m.
			Wells arr.		10.43 a.m.
Up, 14 h. 53 m.			„ dep.	3.15 p.m.	
Yarmouth Down, 16 h. 38 m.	<i>Wangford</i> <i>Lowestoft</i>	124	G.P.O. arr.		6.8 a.m.
		70	London dep.	6.30 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
			Ipswich (stop 15 m.)	4.0 a.m.	3.12 a.m.
Up, 16 h. 35 m.		82	Wickham Market	--	4.57 a.m.

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Mail-Coach. From London to	By what Route.	Distance.	Some Points of Call.	Times of Arrival or Departure.	At the Queen's Accession.	
Yarmouth (continued)		Miles.	Yarmouth			
				arr.	11.8 a.m.	9.30 a.m.
				dep.	3.15 p.m.	5.0 p.m.
			Wickham Market		—	9.41 p.m.
			Ipswich		10.8 p.m.	11.21 p.m.
			G. P. O. arr.	7.50 a.m.	6.43 a.m.	

SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL BRANCH MAIL-COACHES

Between	Some Points of Call.	Time-bill	
		At King William IV.'s Accession.	At the Queen's Accession.
BATH, EXETER, and DEVONPORT 136 miles, viâ Bridg- water and Ivy Bridge. Down, 16 h. 20 m. Up, 24 h. 15 m. <i>Note.</i> —In 1836 this coach ran on to Fal- mouth, 198 miles from Bath, 307 from London.	Bath dep.	8.5 a.m.	7.32 a.m.
	Taunton (st. 20 m.)	2.22 p.m.	1.15 p.m.
	Exeter arr.	6.15 p.m.	4.49 p.m.
	„ dep.	6.45 p.m.	—
	Devonport arr.	12.25 a.m.	10.30 p.m.
	„ dep.	—	7.0 a.m.
	Falmouth arr.	—	4.25 p.m.
	„ dep.	—	7.0 a.m.
	Devonport dep.	5.0 p.m.	5.0 p.m.
	Exeter arr.	10.54 p.m.	10.54 p.m.
BRISTOL, CARMARTHEN, and MILFORD 150 miles viâ New Passage (one hour allowed for Ferry), Cardiff, and Swan- sea. Down, 19 h. 38 m. Up, 20 h. 0 m.	„ dep.	8.15 a.m.	10.0 a.m.
	Taunton arr.	11.48 a.m.	1.14 p.m.
	Bath arr.	5.45 p.m.	7.5 p.m.
	Bristol dep.	9.49 a.m.	9.49 a.m.
	Newport	1.3 p.m.	1.4 p.m.
	Carmarthen (stop 15 m.)	11.29 p.m.	10.21 p.m.
DEVONPORT and FAL- MOUTH 66 miles, viâ Lis- keard, St. Austell, and Truro. Down, 9 h. 22 m. Up, h. 0 m.	Milford arr.	5.27 a.m.	3.21 a.m.
	„ dep.	7.30 p.m.	10.20 p.m.
	Carmarthen (stop 20 m.)	—	3.5 a.m.
	Bristol arr.	3.30 p.m.	6.15 p.m.
	Devonport dep.	7.0 a.m.	7.0 a.m.
	Falmouth arr.	4.22 p.m.	4.25 p.m.
	„ dep.	7.15 a.m.	7.0 a.m.
	Devonport arr.	4.15 p.m.	5.0 p.m.

SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL BRANCH MAIL-COACHES (*continued*)

Between	Some Points of Call.	Time-bill	
		At King William IV.'s Accession.	At the Queen's Accession.
GLOUCESTER and CARMARTHEN 111 miles, viâ Ross and Llandovery. Down, 13 h. 59 min. Up, 15 h. 15 m.	Gloucester dep.	9.30 a. m.	8.10 a. m.
	Abergavenny (stop 30 m.)	2.55 p. m.	12.58 p. m.
	Brecon	5.50 p. m.	3.26 p. m.
	Carmarthen arr.	11.29 p. m.	8.0 p. m.
	„ dep.	1.15 a. m.	7.10 a. m.
	Gloucester arr.	4.30 p. m.	7.0 p. m.
MANCHESTER, CARLISLE, and GLASGOW 213 miles, viâ Preston, Lancaster, Moffatt, and Hamilton. Down, 23 h. 46 m. Up, 25 h. 26 m.	Manchester dep.	5.0 p. m.	4.0 p. m.
	Carlisle arr.	6.21 a. m.	4.53 a. m.
	„ dep.	7.0 a. m.	5.0 a. m.
	Glasgow arr.	4.46 p. m.	2.0 p. m.
	„ dep.	7.45 a. m.	7.50 a. m.
	Carlisle arr.	5.30 p. m.	Not known
	„ dep.	7.0 p. m.	6.30 p. m.
Manchester arr.	8.31 a. m.	7.7 a. m.	

*Note.*—The greatest distances traversed by mail-coaches were those performed by the London and Portpatrick night mail (424 miles), viâ Derby, Manchester, Lancaster, Carlisle, and Dumfries; and the London and Thurso night mail (783 miles), viâ York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, and Inverness. In 1832 the former mail was due at Portpatrick at 9.47 p. m. on the third day from London (49 h. 47 m.) and in 1836 at 9.22 p. m. The latter mail in 1832 was due at Thurso on the fifth day at 8.50 p. m. (96 h. 50 m.) and in 1836 at 6 p. m.

APPENDIX F.

A LIST OF DAY COACHES RUNNING IN 1836, WHICH (BESIDES THE NIGHT MAIL-COACHES AND THE STAGES DESPATCHED IN THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING) LEFT LONDON NOT LATER THAN NOON.

Destination.	London Coach Office.	Down Journey.		Time occupied on Down Journey.	Up Journey.	
		Dep. a.m.	Arr. p.m.		Hours.	Dep. a.m.
Banbury	King's Arms	8.30	5.14	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	8.0	5.0
Ditto	Bell and Crown	8.45	5.30	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	8.0	5.0
Birmingham	Bull and Mouth	8.0	8.0	12	9.0	9.0
Ditto	Spread Eagle	8.15	9.23	13 $\frac{1}{2}$	p.m. 8.0	a.m. 6.17
Ditto	Golden Cross	7.0	7.0	12	a.m. 7.0	p.m. 7.0
Ditto	Bull and Mouth	7.0	8.0	13	7.45	9.0
Ditto	White Horse	7.0	8.0	13	8.0	9.0
Ditto	Golden Cross	7.30	8.0	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	7.30	8.0
Ditto	Swan with Two Necks	8.0	7.30	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	8.0	7.30
Bognor	Golden Cross	8.0	5.0	9	8.0	5.0
Boston	King's Arms	7.30	9.10	13 $\frac{3}{4}$	6.0	7.50
Brighton	Spread Eagle	8.0	2.45	6 $\frac{3}{4}$	p.m. 3.0	a.m. 8.45
Ditto	Ditto	10.0	4.15	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	10.0	4.15
Ditto	White Horse	8.0	5.0	9	8.0	5.0
Ditto	Golden Cross	10.0	4.0	6	10.0	4.0
Bridgwater	Bell and Crown	7.45	10.15	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	7.0	10.0
Bristol	Swan with Two Necks	7.0	8.45	13 $\frac{3}{4}$	7.45	7.45
Ditto	Spread Eagle	7.0	9.0	14	7.0	9.0
Ditto	Bull and Mouth	6.0	8.20	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	7.0	8.50
Bury	Golden Cross	8.30	5.30	9	8.30	5.30
Ditto	Spread Eagle	8.45	6.0	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	9.0	6.0
Cambridge	Golden Cross	10.0	4.0	6	10.0	4.0
Ditto	White Horse	10.0	4.0	6	10.0	4.0
Cheltenham	Cross Keys	7.45	6.30	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	8.0	7.0
Ditto	Spread Eagle	7.30	6.15	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	9.0	8.15
Chichester	Cross Keys	9.45	4.0	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	9.45	4.0
Colchester	Spread Eagle	9.0	3.15	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	9.0	3.15
Dorking	Golden Cross	8.30	noon.	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	p.m. 4.0	7.30

Destination.	London Coach Office.	Down Journey.		Time occupied on Down Journey.	Up Journey.	
		Dep. a.m.	Arr. p.m.	Hours.	Dep. a.m.	Arr. p.m.
Dover	Spread Eagle	8.0	5.15	9½	8.0	5.0
Ditto	Ditto	10.0	7.0	9	10.0	7.0
Ditto	Bell and Crown	9.0	5.0	8	9.0	5.0
Ditto	Ditto	11.0	7.0	8	11.0	7.0
Ditto	Golden Cross	8.0	5.30	9½	8.0	5.0
Ditto	Old Bell and Golden Cross	10.30	7.30	9	10.0	7.0
Eastbourne	George and Blue Bear	8.0	5.0	9	8.0	5.0
Exeter	Swan with Two Necks	9.0	6.9	21½	9.0	5.17
Ditto	Bull and Mouth	4.45	10.0	17½	5.0	10.0
Faversham	Spread Eagle	12.0	6.0	6	10.0	4.0
Gloucester	Bell and Crown	8.0	7.0	11	6.0	5.30
Ditto	Spread Eagle	7.45	8.0	12½	7.0	7.0
Gosport	Spread Eagle	7.30	5.0	9½	8.0	5.45
Hastings	Golden Cross	8.0	4.30	8½	9.0	4.30
Hereford	Bull and Mouth	8.0	10.0	16	5.45	9.45
Holt and Fakenham	White Horse	6.0	8.0	14	7.0	9.0
Horsham	Old Bell		No	record.		
Leamington	King's Arms	9.30	8.0	10½	9.0	7.15
Leeds	George and Blue Bear	5.15	4.0	10½	Not	known
Leicester	Bull and Mouth	7.45	7.0	11½	8.0	7.30
Lewes	Golden Cross	9.30	3.30	6	9.30	4.0
Lincoln	Spread Eagle	6.0	9.45	15¾	6.0	9.45
Little Hampton	Spread Eagle	7.15	4.0	8¾	7.0	5.0
Ditto	Golden Cross	8.0	5.0	9	8.0	5.0
Liverpool	Swan with Two Necks	10.30	12.0	25½	10.30	12.0
Ditto	Spread Eagle	8.15	8.0	23¾	8.0	8.0
Lynn	White Horse	7.30	6.0	10½	8.0	6.15
Ditto	Golden Cross	7.30	7.0	11½	7.30	7.0
Manchester	Swan with Two Necks	9.45	7.25	21¾	10.0	7.25
Ditto	Bull and Mouth	5.30	11.15	17¾	5.0	11.30
Newbury	Spread Eagle	10.0	7.0	9	11.0	8.0
Ditto	Ditto	10.30	4.0	5½	1.0	7.0

316 FORTY YEARS AT THE POST-OFFICE

Destination.	London Coach Office.	Down Journey.		Time occupied on Down Journey.	Up Journey.	
		Dep. noon.	Arr. p.m.	Hours.	Dep. a.m.	Arr. p.m.
Northampton	Bull and Mouth	12.0 a.m.	7.45	7 $\frac{1}{4}$	9.0	4.45
Norwich	Spread Eagle	6.30	7.45	13 $\frac{1}{4}$	7.0	8.0
Ditto	Golden Cross	7.0	7.0	12	7.0	7.0
Nottingham	Swan with Two Necks	6.45	9.30	14 $\frac{1}{4}$	7.45	10.0
Oundle	George and Blue Boar	7.0	6.0	11	7.0	6.30
Oxford	Cross Keys	9.45	4.0	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	9.45	4.0
Portsmouth	Golden Cross	9.30 noon.	5.30	8	10.0 noon.	7.0
Ditto	King's Arms	12.0 a.m.	8.0	8	12.0 a.m.	8.0
Ditto	Spread Eagle	9.0	5.15	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	11.0	7.0
Ditto	Bull and Mouth	8.0	5.0	9	9.0	6.0
Salisbury	White Horse	7.45	6.0	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	8.0	6.30
Shrewsbury	Golden Cross	5.45	9.30	15 $\frac{1}{4}$	5.45	9.30
Ditto	Bull and Mouth	6.30	10.30	16	5.45	9.45
Ditto	Ditto	6.0	10.45	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.30	10.15
Southampton	Spread Eagle	11.15	8.0	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	11.15	8.0
Ditto	Ditto	7.0	4.15	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	9.0	6.0
Ditto	Bell and Crown	11.0 noon.	7.0	8	11.0 noon.	7.0
Ditto	Ditto	12.0 a.m.	8.0	8	12.0 a.m.	8.0
Ditto	Cross Keys	7.45	4.0	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	7.45	4.0
Stamford	George and Blue Boar	7.45	7.0	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	7.0	6.30
Ditto	White Horse	7.30	6.0	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	7.30	6.0
Ditto	Bell and Crown	8.30	6.30	10	8.0	6.30
Stroudwater	Old Bell		No	record.	Not known	
Tunbridge Wells	George and Blue Boar	9.30	1.45	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	3.30 p.m.	8.0
Uppingham	Ditto	8.0	7.0	11	8.0 a.m.	6.30
Wells, Norfolk	Golden Cross	5.45	9.0	15 $\frac{1}{4}$	5.45	9.0
Wellingboro'	George and Blue Boar	9.30	6.0	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	6.30	3.0
Wisbeach	Golden Cross	7.15	7.0	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	7.15	6.30
Woodstock	Bull and Mouth	10.0	6.15	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	8.0	4.45
Worcester	Bull and Mouth	5.30	9.0	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.45	8.15
Worthing	White Horse	8.30	4.0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	9.0	4.30
Ditto	Golden Horse	8.45	3.30	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	8.45	3.30
Yarmouth	Spread Eagle	6.30	9.0	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	6.30	9.0
York	White Horse	8.30	7.10	22 $\frac{1}{4}$	6.0 a.m.	3.47 a.m.



APPENDIX G.

FOUR SPECIMENS OF PARCEL MAIL-COACH TIME-BILLS IN USE AT THE PRESENT DAY.

Parcel Coach Time-bill.

GENERAL POST-OFFICE.



The Right Hon. ARNOLD MORLEY, M.P., Postmaster-General.

London to Brighton—Night Mail Down.

Guard's Remarks as to Delays, etc.	To be despatched from the <b>London Bridge Parcel</b> Depot the day of	Proper Times.		Actual Times by Post-Office Watch.	This Column to be left blank.
		H. M.	H. M.		
<b>LONDON TO BRIGHTON,</b> 52 miles.	189 .....at			P. M. 9 45	
	<b>Croydon</b> ..... { arr.			10 55	
	..... { dep.			11 0	
				A. M.	
	<b>Bedhill</b> ..... { arr.			12 27	
	..... { dep.			12 32	
	<b>Morley</b> ..... { arr.			1 5	
	..... { dep.			1 15	
	<b>Crawley</b> ..... { arr.			1 55	
	..... { dep.			2 0	
	<b>Cuckfield</b> ..... { arr.			2 55	
	..... { dep.			3 0	
	<b>Hassocks</b> ..... { arr.			3 40	
	..... { dep.			3 45	
<b>Brighton</b> .....arr.			4 45		

London and Bedford Road Parcel Service—

Night Mail Down.

Guard's Remarks as to Delays, etc.	To be despatched from the <b>Mount Pleasant Parcel Office,</b> London, the day of	Proper Times.		Actual Times by Post-Office Watch.	This Column to be left blank.
		H. M.	H. M.		
<b>LONDON TO BEDFORD,</b> 52 miles.	189 .....at			P. M. 9 45	
	<b>Barnet</b> ..... { arr.			11 8	
	..... { dep.			11 10	
				A. M.	
	<b>Hatfield</b> ..... { arr.			12 14	
	..... { dep.			12 16	
	<b>Welwyn</b> ..... { arr.			12 58	
	..... { dep.			1 0	
	<b>Stevenage</b> ..... { arr.			1 49	
	..... { dep.			1 51	
	<b>Hitchin</b> ..... { arr.			2 25	
	..... { dep.			2 35	
<b>Henlow Station</b> ..... { arr.			3 10		
..... { dep.			3 12		
<b>Bedford</b> .....arr.			4 40		





## Special Night Mail—Week-day Working.

## GENERAL POST-OFFICE.



The Right Honourable HENRY CECIL RAIKES, M.P., Postmaster-General.

## Carlisle and Perth Railway TIME BILL.

Remarks as to Delays, etc.	Proper Times.	Actual Times by Post- Office Watch.		Actual Times by Rail- way Clock.		P.O. work com- pleted at (by P.O. Watch).		This Column to be left blank.		
		H.	M.	H.	M.	H.	M.		H.	M.
Caledonian Railway.	Despatched from the Railway Station, Carlisle, the day of 1891, at	A. M.								
	Mail from London arrived.....at	3	28							
	{ Watch, No.									
	{ Received safe by									
	Gretna (Apparatus).....(3 38)									
	Ecclefechan (Apparatus).....(3 51)									
	Lockerbie (Apparatus).....(3 58)									
	Beattock (Apparatus).....(4 14)									
	Abington (Apparatus).....(4 39)									
	Lamington (Apparatus).....(4 45)									
	Symington (Apparatus).....(4 49)									
	Thankerton (Apparatus).....(4 51)									
	To arrive at Carstairs Junc....at	4	55							
	Carlisle (Apparatus).....(5 9)									
	Wishaw (Apparatus).....(5 17)									
	Mossend (Apparatus).....(5 32)									
	Coatbridge (Apparatus).....(5 37)									
	Larbert (Apparatus).....(5 56)									
	To arrive at Stirling.....at	6	7							
	Off at	6	12							
Bridge of Allan (Apparatus) (6 16)										
Dunblane (Apparatus).....(6 18)										
Greenloaning (Apparatus) ... (6 26)										
Blackford (Apparatus).....(6 31)										
Crieff Junction (Apparatus) (6 33)										
Auchterarder (Apparatus) ... (6 36)										
To arrive at the Railway Station, Perth.....at	6	55								
	A. M.									
{ Watch, No.										
{ safe to										

F. E. BAINES, Inspector-General of Mails.

The Sorter in charge of this Time Bill must not omit to report on it:—1st. The cause of any Delay. 2nd. The failure of any Junction. 3rd. The discontinuance of any Stops included in the Bill, or the commencement of any additional Stops; any alteration in the Time allowed between the Stations, or in any Stations at which Bags are exchanged by Apparatus. He must enter all Remarks in the proper Column, and opposite or between the Stations to which they refer. If the Sorter in charge of the Time Bill is changed at any point on the Line, the Sorter who hands over the Bill must sign his Name at the point at which he ceases to have charge of it.

The Edinburgh Mail branches off at Carstairs, and the run between the two stations occupies forty minutes.

The Glasgow, Paisley, and Greenock Mail vans are also detached from the main train at Carstairs on the down journey, but regain it on the up journey at Holytown, under the subjoined time-bills.

## GLASGOW, PAISLEY, AND GREENOCK MAILS.

## GLASGOW TRAIN (DOWN).

	Proper Times.	Actual Times by Post-Office Watch.
	H. M.	H. M.
Special Mail from London arrived at <b>Carstairs</b> .....	A.M. 4 55	
Train despatched from <b>Carstairs</b> .....	5 10	
Train arrived at <b>Motherwell</b> .....	5 31	
Train despatched from <b>Motherwell</b> .....	5 32	
To arrive at the Railway Station, <b>Glasgow</b> ...	5 52	
And arrive at Post-Office, <b>Glasgow</b> .....	6 2	

## PAISLEY AND GREENOCK TRAIN (DOWN).

Down Special Mail to arrive .....	A.M. 5 52
Off at .....	6 0
To arrive at <b>Paisley</b> .....	6 13
„ <b>Port-Glasgow</b> .....	6 32
To arrive at the Railway Station, <b>Greenock</b> ...	6 40
<i>Two minutes allowed.</i> Off at .....	6 42
To arrive at the Post-Office, <b>Greenock</b> .....	6 47

## Special Night Mail—Week-day Working.

## GENERAL POST-OFFICE.



The Right Hon. SIR JAMES FERGUSSON, Bart., M.P., Postmaster-General.

## Perth and Aberdeen Railway TIME BILL.

Guard's Re- marks as to Delays, etc.	Proper Times.	Actual Times by Post- Office Watch.	Actual Times by Rail- way Clock.	P.O. work com- pleted at (by P.O. Watch).	This Column to be left blank.
Caledonian Railway.	To be despatched from the Post-Office, Perth, the				
	of 1892, at				
	To arrive at Railway Stn. ....at				
	The Mail from London arrived...at 6 55				
	{ Watch, No.				
	} Received safe by				
	Last Bag placed in Train .....at				
	Off at 7 0				
	Coupar-Angus (Apparatus)...(7 19)				
	Alyth Junction (Apparatus) ..(7 24)				
	Kirriemuir (Apparatus) .....(7 34)				
	To arrive at Forfar .....at 7 37				
	Off at 7 40				
	Guthrie Junction (Apparatus) (7 51)				
	Bridge of Dun (Apparatus)...(8 2)				
	[Now calls at 8 1.]				
	Dubton (Apparatus).....(8 6)				
	Laurencekirk (Apparatus) ... (8 18)				
Fordoun (Apparatus) .....(8 23)					
Stonehaven (Apparatus) .....(8 36)					
[Now calls at 8 36.]					
To arrive at the Railway Station, Aberdeen .....at 9 0					
To arrive at the Post-Office, Aberdeen, the					
of 189 , at 9 10					
A.M.					
{ Watch, No.					
} safe to					

F. E. BAINES, Inspector-General of Mails.

## THE RETURN JOURNEY.

## ABERDEEN AND PERTH SECTION.

	Proper Times.	Actual Times by Post-Office Watch.
	H. M.	H. M.
To be despatched from the Post-Office, <b>Aberdeen</b> .....at	P. M.	
To arrive at <b>Railway Station</b> .....at		
Last Bag placed in Train .....at		
Off at	3 40	
Stonehaven (Apparatus) .....(4 4)		
Dubton (Apparatus).....(4 33)		
Bridge of Dun (Apparatus).....(4 37)		
Guthrie (Apparatus).....(4 48)		
To arrive at <b>Forfar</b> .....at	4 57	
Off at	4 59	
To arrive at the Central Station, <b>Perth</b> .....at	5 39	

## PERTH AND CARLISLE SECTION.

	Proper Times.	Actual Times by Post-Office Watch.
	H. M.	H. M.
Despatched from the Railway Station, <b>Perth</b> , at	P. M.	
Mail from Aberdeen arrived .....at	5 47	
Crieff Junction (Apparatus) .....(6 5)	5 40	
Dunblane (Apparatus).....(6 17)		
Bridge of Allan (Apparatus) .....(6 20)		
To arrive at <b>Stirling</b> .....at	6 25	
Off at	6 27	
Greenhill (Apparatus) .....(6 41)		
Coatbridge (Apparatus) .....(7 0)		
To arrive at <b>Holytown</b> .....at	7 5	
Off at	7 22	
Wi-haw (Apparatus) .....(7 27)		
Carlisle (Apparatus).....(7 34)		
To arrive at <b>Carstairs Junc.</b> .....at	7 47	
Off at	7 49	
Lamington (Apparatus) .....(8 2)		
Arrived at the Railway Station, <b>Carlisle</b> .....at	9 14	
	P. M.	

## GLASGOW, PAISLEY, AND GREENOCK MAILS.

## GREENOCK AND PAISLEY TRAIN (UP).

	Proper Times.	Actual Times by Post-Office Watch.
	H. M.	H. M.
To be despatched from the Post-Office, <b>Greenock</b> .....at	P.M. 5 45	
To arrive at <b>Railway Station</b> .....at	5 50	
Off at	5 57	
To leave <b>Port-Glasgow</b> .....at	6 3	
„ <b>Paisley</b> .....at	6 22	
To arrive at the Central Railway Station, <b>Glasgow</b> .....at	6 38	
Off at	6 40	
To arrive at the Post-Office, <b>Glasgow</b> .....at	6 45	

## GLASGOW TRAIN (UP).

Despatched from the Post-Office, <b>Glasgow</b> ...at	P.M. 6 43	
Arrived at <b>Railway Station</b> .....at	6 48	
Last Bag placed in train.....at	6 52	
Off at	6 55	
{ Watch, No. { Received safe by		
Arrived at <b>Holytown</b> .....at	7 15	
Train from the North arrived .....at	7 5	
Train for London to leave .....at	7 22	

*Note.*—The Sunday working in some cases differs slightly from the week-day working.



## CARLISLE, PRESTON AND LONDON SECTION.

	Proper Times.		Actual Times by Post-Office Watch.	
	H.	M.	H.	M.
	P.M.			
Aberdeen Mail arrived .....	9	14		
Last Bag in Train .....				
To be despatched from the Railway Station, <b>Carlisle</b> ..	9	22		
Penrith (Apparatus).....(9 49)				
Oxenholme (Apparatus) (Sunday only)... (10 23)				
To arrive at <b>Carnforth</b> .....	10	44		
Off at .....	10	47		
Lancaster (Apparatus) .....				
(10 57)				
To arrive at <b>Preston</b> .....	11	21		
Off at .....	11	25		
„ <b>Wigan</b> .....	11	46		
Off at .....	11	49		
	A.M.			
To arrive at <b>Crewe</b> .....	12	34		
Off at .....	12	41		
„ <b>Stafford</b> .....	1	13		
Off at .....	1	19		
Lichfield (Apparatus) .....				
(1 39)				
To arrive at <b>Tamworth</b> .....	1	48		
Off at .....	1	52		
Atherstone (Apparatus) .....				
(2 1)				
Nuneaton (Apparatus) .....				
(2 7)				
To arrive at <b>Rugby</b> .....	2	26		
Off at .....	2	30		
Weedon (Apparatus) .....				
(2 45)				
Bliwirth (Apparatus).....				
(2 53)				
Wolverton (Apparatus) .....				
(3 7)				
To arrive at <b>Bletchley</b> .....	3	15		
Off at .....	3	18		
Leighton Buzzard (Apparatus) ..				
(3 26)				
Tring (Apparatus) .....				
(3 37)				
Berkhamsted (Apparatus) .....				
(3 42)				
Boxmoor (Apparatus) .....				
(3 46)				
King's Langley (Apparatus) .....				
(3 51)				
Watford (Apparatus) .....				
(3 55)				
Harrow (Apparatus).....				
(4 2)				
To arrive at the Railway Station, <b>Euston</b> <b>Square</b> .....	4	16		

The Bags to be transferred to the Vans as quickly as possible, and each Van to start the moment it is loaded. The time occupied by each Van in reaching the General Post-Office not to exceed eighteen minutes from the time of starting.

## APPENDIX I.

H.M.S. *Himalaya* AND THE CONTRACT MAIL-PACKET *Campania*.

Since writing at page 233 on the subject of the troopship *Himalaya*, the following paragraph has appeared in the *Standard* of September 7, 1894 :

'An order was received at Devonport yesterday to pay off the troopship *Himalaya*, and place her in the E Division of the dockyard reserve, thus practically removing her from the effective list of the navy. The *Himalaya* is by far the oldest vessel on the effective list. She was built in 1853 by Messrs. Mare and Co., of Blackwall, for the Peninsula and Oriental Steamship Company ; but in July, 1854, the Admiralty, being anxious to secure a suitable vessel for the conveyance of troops to the Crimea, purchased her for £130,000. Since then she has been continuously employed as an imperial troopship.'

The following paragraph referring to the arrival of the *Campania* on August 1, 1894, has also appeared in the public press :

'The Cunard liner *Campania*, which arrived at Queenstown at 5.34 a.m. on Friday, has made a record eastward passage of 5 days 10 h. 47 min. She lost nearly three hours by having to slow down in fogs.'

This passage eclipsed the *Lucania's* homeward run (p. 183, ii.) of 5 d. 13½ h. and the *Campania's* own performance (p. 187, ii.) of 5 d. 12 h. 7 m. on an outward voyage.

## APPENDIX J.

Opinion of the Corporation of the City of Liverpool concerning the results of penny postage, after fifty-four years' experience of its operation, as conveyed in an address to their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York, on the occasion of the royal visit, September 10th and 11th, 1894, to lay the first stone of the new post-office :

'The presentation of the Corporation address was the first item in the programme. The address, which was read by the Recorder, Mr. Hopwood, Q.C., expressed the gratification of the Council that the presence of their royal guests should be connected with the laying of the foundation-stone of a new post-office, the erection of which was destined to supply a great and growing want in the city. The earlier part of the Queen's reign was signalized by a reform of surpassing importance, resulting in an extension of the facilities of postal intercourse, which, by uniting in peaceful and powerful bonds the nations of the world, had enlarged the scope of that commercial enterprise upon which the prosperity and well-being of all communities so largely depended.'—*Standard*.

## APPENDIX K.

## COAST COMMUNICATION.

There can hardly be a better illustration of the uses which the scheme set forth at pp. 310-314 was designed to meet than is given in the subjoined paragraph taken from the columns of the *Bournemouth and East Dorset Advertiser* of September 29, 1894 :

'AN ATLANTIC LINER ASHORE.—The Hamburg-American Steamship Company's steamer *Steinhöft* went ashore on the coast of Devon early on Saturday morning. The *Steinhöft* is a vessel of 1,800 tons register, and carried 107 passengers, 42 crew, and a general cargo, and ran ashore on a sandy beach half a mile eastward of Torcross. Had the vessel gone on the rocks her fate would have been sealed. The coast-guard promptly sighted her. Unfortunately, the Torcross and other coastguard stations are not connected by wire with Plymouth, or any other telegraph station which is always open, and thus a horse had to be procured and a messenger despatched to gallop ten miles in the darkness to Dartmouth, whence a steam-tug was despatched. The *Steinhöft* was, with the aid of the tug, got off about 10 o'clock, having been fast about seven hours.'

## APPENDIX L.

## ERRATA.

## VOLUME I.

Page 3, line 10,	for	'thirties'	read	'twenties.'
" 20, " 30, "		'St. John's Street'	read	'St. John Street.'
" 72, " 1, "		'has'	"	'had.'
" 94, " 3,	after	'by'	insert	'a.'
" 99, " 12,	for	'Georgemass'	read	'Georgemas.'
" 113, " 17, "		'very'	"	'was.'
" 146, " 28, "		'William'	"	'Thomas.'
" 186, " 27, "		'the'	"	'thy.'
" 225, " 7, "		'of'	"	'for.'
" 261, " 18, "		'sixties'	"	'thirties.'
" 313, " 14, "		'Maberley'	"	'F. H. Maberly.'
" " 15, "		'nephew'	"	'cousin.'
" 320, " 19, "		'are'	"	'is.'
" " 20, "		'multiplied'	"	'increased.'

## VOLUME II.

Page 23, line 22,	for	'London'	read	'London and.'
" 84, " 29, "		'distributer'	"	'distributor.'
" 120, lines 3 and 4,	read	'mails between Inverness and the south had to be,' etc.		
" 141, line 28,	for	'Cresswell'	read	'Creswell.'
" 174, " 22, "		'F.H.'	"	'F.M.'
" 257, footnote, "		'Hillyers'	"	'Hillyars.'
" 273, line 15, "		'She'	"	'It.'

#### NOTE AS TO THE AMERICAN MAILS.

WHILE it is, perhaps, yet too early to expect that under any new plan for accelerating the night-mail to Dublin the forecast ventured upon in these pages of an express service westward of Crewe will be realized, it is highly interesting to learn that such a service will actually be brought into play with the American mail despatched from London on Saturday. In lieu of a despatch from London at 8 p.m., the mail (Saturday being a half-holiday, and business ceasing earlier than on other days) will be sent off at 4 o'clock, and on reaching Chester will be conveyed by express—i.e., by special means—thence to Queenstown, where it will be due to arrive at about 7 a.m., instead of about 11 o'clock. This will admit of the Cunard mail steamer being despatched from Queenstown to New York soon after 8 a.m. The improvement is of great importance, as it will proportionately influence the time of arrival in New York, and frequently secure the despatch thence of correspondence for the interior by an earlier inland mail than would otherwise be practicable.

#### NOTE AS TO THE INDIAN MAILS.

THERE is yet another rapid passage to record of the homeward Indian mail. The correspondence which left Bombay at 1 p.m. on Saturday, November 3, 1894, by the contract packet *Caledonia*, the latest addition to the Peninsular and Oriental Company's fleet, reached the General Post-Office at 3.45 a.m. on Friday, the 16th, thus accomplishing the transit in 12 days 14½ hours, and so eclipsing even the wonderful performances of the *Himalaya*. The letters were distributed all over London by the first morning delivery, so that the Metropolis and its suburbs had practically the whole day for the preparation of replies for the outgoing Indian mail of the same night.

## APPENDIX M.

### UNIFORMS IN THE SIXTIES.

THIRTY or forty years ago, when photography, especially in the hands of amateurs, had but a limited range, and when one well-known photographic enterprise in the City was receiving its first impetus from a talented postal official, a sorter of the Inland branch, Mr. Hawkins, tried his 'prentice hand on uniforms as then worn by mail-guards, postmen, and other members of the minor establishment.

The result of his effort, which now begins to have a historical value, is shown in the annexed illustration, taken from the Jubilee Book of 1890. It may be worth mentioning that, whatever the cause—restricted size of the sensitive plates or technical difficulties insuperable to a tyro—each photograph had to be taken in two parts.

Regarding the figures in succession from left to right, No. 1 represents a postman of the period of my entering the Post-Office—1855—bearing the stalwart name of Redoubt. A cloud of uncertainty, however, enshrouds the nether garments of Postman Collins (No. 2) and Postman Pike (No. 5); unofficial trousers are believed to have taken the place of those of the orthodox pattern of 1861. In No. 6 Mr. Pike reappears, this time faultlessly equipped. In fact, he seems ubiquitous, posing as a postman also in Nos. 8 and 11. Litchfield, the porter, shows himself in two attires—Nos. 3 and 4; while the hall-keeper, Partington (No. 7), the hall-messenger, Cowan (No. 10), and the mail-guard (No. 9), whose name I cannot trace, complete the group.



POST-OFFICE UNIFORMS, 1855 TO 1861.

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POST-OFFICE UNIFORMS, 1855 TO 1861.



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