Philbrick (Frederick Adolphus)
[A folio volume containing newspaper
cuttings on Postal ~~matters~~ letters. 1897–1903]

SALE OF FOREIGN POSTAGE STAMPS.—The following are the principal prices realized at Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper's sale of British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps held at the St. Martin's Town-hall and concluded on Thursday evening:—Naples, ½ tornese blue "cross," £4 4s.; Basle, 2½ rappen, cut close, £3 6s.; Hong-kong, 18c. lilac, unused, £4; Gambia, 6d. blue, strip of five, £5 10s.; New Brunswick, 3d., unused, £3 12s. 6d.; ditto, 1s., mauve, damaged, £6; Newfoundland, 6½d., carmine, unused; £10 10s.; Nova Scotia, 1s., violet, cut close, £8 5s.; Dominica, 1s., violet, unused, £3 5s.; Nevis, 1s., blue-green, unused, £3 5s; St. Vincent, 4d., blue, unused, £3 15s.; Virgin Islands, 1s., carmine, unused, £3 10s.; ditto, 1s., crimson, an unused sheet, £15. 8.1.97

SALE OF FOREIGN POSTAGE STAMPS.—The following are the principal prices realized at Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper's sale of British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps held at the St. Martin's Town-hall and concluded on Thursday evening:—Naples, ½ tornese blue "cross," £4 4s.; Basle, 2½ rappen, cut close, £3 6s.; Hong-kong, 18c. lilac, unused, £4; Gambia, 6d. blue, strip of five, £5 10s.; New Brunswick, 3d., unused, £3 12s. 6d.; ditto, 1s., mauve, damaged, £6; Newfoundland, 6½d., carmine, unused; £10 10s.; Nova Scotia, 1s., violet, cut close, £8 5s.; Dominica, 1s., violet, unused, £3 5s.; Nevis, 1s., blue-green, unused, £3 5s; St. Vincent, 4d., blue, unused, £3 15s.; Virgin Islands, 1s., carmine, unused, £3 10s.; ditto, 1s., crimson, an unused sheet, £15. 1.1.97

SALE OF STAMPS.—The following were the principal prices realized by Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper at their sale of stamps held at the St. Martin's Town-hall, and concluded on Friday evening:—Great Britain, 2s. brown unused—£4; 1d. black, V.R., a pair—£20. Oldenburg, second issue, 1-3gr. black on green—£4; 1-3gr. moss green unused—£4 10s. Portugal, first issue, 50 reis unused—£6. Spain, 1851, 2 rls., damaged—£10; 1852, 2 rls.—£7 7s. Zürich, 4 rappen black cut close—£13; 6 rappen black unused—£3 5s. Ceylon, 8d. brown imperforate, cut close—£7 15s.; 9d. violet brown imperforate—£4 6s.; 2r. 50c. brown, an unused pair—£8. Mauritius, large fillet, 2d. blue, fair—£8. Oil Rivers, provisional, 1s. on 2d., inverted surcharge—£9 5s.; 10s. on 5d. unused—£8. Reunion, first issue, 30c. unused—£50; another specimen used—£50. New Brunswick, 1s. violet—£20. Newfoundland, 2d. carmine-red unused—£38; 4d. carmine-red unused—£13 10s.; 6½d. carmine-red unused—£11; 8d. carmine-red used—£3; 1s. carmine-red cut close—£10; 6d. orange unused—£12 10s.; another used—£5; 1s. orange—£17. United States, 1856, 90c. unused—£3 10s. Barbados, provisional, 1d. on half 5s., a pair—£16. British Guiana, 1851, 4c. blue creased—£3 7s. 6d. St. Vincent, 1s. brown unused—£3 17s. 6d.; 4d. ultramarine unused—£4 4s. Virgin Islands, 1s. pale brown used—£4. New South Wales, Sydney View, 2d. blue—£3 15s. Tasmania, 1d. blue, an unused strip of three—£20; a single specimen—£5 15s. Victoria, the "Too Late," unused—£5 10s. The total sum realized by the sale was £1,020. 1.2.97

SALE OF FOREIGN STAMPS.—The following is a list of the principal prices realized at the sale of foreign stamps held by Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper at the St. Martin's Town-hall, concluded on Saturday:—Naples—half-tornese "arms," £17; half-tornese "cross," £4 12s. 6d.; Spain—1851 2rls., £18; 1852, 2rls., £10; 1853, 2rls., £6 6s.; Switzerland—Geneve, the double stamp, £20 10s.; Zurich, 4 rappen, £9 9s.; Tuscany—2 soldi, a pair, £27; 3 lire, yellow, £42; Ceylon—watermark C. and C.C., unused, £9 5s.; 2 rupees 50 cents, unused, £4 15s.; Straits—5d. brown perf. 12½, 96c. slate, unused, £4 4s.; Lagos—2s. 6d., unused, £4 15s.; 5s., unused, £8; 10s., unused, £15; Mauritius—large fillet, 2d., blue, £7; British Columbia—$1, green, a pair, £6; perf. 14, 10s. violet, a pair, £18 18s.; Newfoundland—1s., orange, £10; British Guiana—1862, provisional, 4c. blue, £9; St. Lucia—1s., black and orange, £4 8s.; Victoria—1860, 6d., beaded oval, £7 5s.; Bergedorf—½sch. blue, used, £5; Lubeck—the error, used, £10; Oldenburg—1-3gr. black on green, £5 5s.; ½gr. yellow, used, £5 5s.; Saxony—3pf., red, unused, £8. 12.4.97

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—A sale of postage stamps took place at Messrs. Puttick and Simpson's on Thursday at which the following prices were realized:—Spain, 1853, two reales, £5; Switzerland, Geneva, the double stamp, £25 10s., and the small size envelope, £7; Zurich, four rappen, three copies, £20, £15, and £13; British East Africa, 1895, Provisionals, the set, £14; Cape, woodblock, 1d. red, £5; Mauritius, large fillet, 2d. blue, £20; Canada, 7½ green, unused, £10 10s.; Newfoundland, 6d. scarlet, £5 15s.; Nova Scotia, 1s., two copies, £16 10s. and £14 10s.; Barbados, 1d. on half of 5s., £10; Nevis, 1s., yellow green on laid, £45; and 6d. green, C. A., £7; British Guiana, 1862, 4 cents, unused, £15; South Australia, imperforate, 1d., strip of four unused £36. 20.6.97.

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson held a sale of postage stamps yesterday, at their rooms, 47, Leicester-square. The following were some of the best prices realized:—Cyprus, complete sheet of 6d., £15 10s.; and complete sheet of 1s., £26; Bavaria, 6kr., broken circle, unused, £17; Moldavia, 54 paras, £18 10s.; Saxony, 3 pfennig, £9 10s.; Switzerland, Vaud, 4c., £20 10s.; Zurich, 4 rappen, £19; Tuscany, 60 crazie, £10; Wurtemberg, first issue, 6kr., pair, unused, £11 10s.; and 70kr., strip of three, £10 15s.; Ceylon, 8d., imperforate, £23 10s.; Canada, 12d., black, £70; Nova Scotia, 1s., £16; New Brunswick, 1s., £23; Newfoundland, 1s., orange, £28; Buenos Ayres, 4 pesos, £15; Barbados, 1d. on ½ of 5s., £9 10s.; St. Vincent, 4d. on 1s., £14 5s.; and 5s., unused, £15; Turks Island, ½d. on 4d., strip of six, unused, £16 10s.; South Australia, 1s., violet, error, £23; West Australia, 6d., bronze, £7 10s.; St. Helena, perforated 12½, 1s, green, short line, unused pair, £17 10s. The total amount realized by the sale was £1,682 15s. 6d. 2.7.97

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Among the prices realized at Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper's sale of postage stamps, concluded at St. Martin's Town-hall on Friday, were the following:—Tuscany, 9 crazie, on white, unused, £7; Oldenburg, one-third groschen, black on green, £3; Mauritius, post paid, 1d., red, unused, £20; Mauritius, another, used, £7; Mauritius, another, later plate, £5; British Columbia 1 dollar, green, £2 10s.; New Brunswick 6d., yellow, £2 8s.; Newfoundland 6½d., vermilion, damaged, £2; Nova Scotia 6d., green, £2 10s.; United States, 1860, 90c., unused, £2 15s.; Barbados 1d. on half 5s., £4 10s.; British Guiana, 1856, 4c., magenta, £6; Tobago 1d. on half 6d., orange, £2 15s.; Brazil 300 reis, slanting figures, £2; New South Wales 3d., green, error watermark 2, £11; Queensland, imperfect 2d., strip of 3, £22 10s.; Queensland, imperfect, another strip of 3, £17; Queensland 1d., red, water-mark script, 3 unused, £11; Tasmania 1d., blue, strip of 4, £6 10s.; Western Australia 4d. blue, used, £3 5s. 5.7.97.

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson held a sale of postage stamps last evening. Amongst the best prices realized were the following:—Great Britain V. R. 1d. black, £7 15s.; Switzerland, Geneva, the double stamp, slightly cut into, £13; Ceylon, 2s., blue, imperforate, £8 5s.; Cape, 1d., woodblock, a pair, £7 15s.; Newfoundland, 1s., scarlet, £17; Nova Scotia, 1s., cold violet, £19 15s.; Barbados, 1d. on half of 5s., a pair, £25 10s.; Dominica, 1s., wmk. C. A., unused, block of 4, £8 2s. 6d.; Nevis, 6d., lithograph, unused, £7 10s.; St. Vincent, 4d., blue, no wmk., a pair, imperforate between, £6 6s.; British Guiana, 1862 provisionals 1 cent., £8 10s.; 2 cents., £9 15s.; and 4 cents., £13; and another, £10 10s.; Victoria, 6d., orange, £5 2s. 6d. The sale realized nearly £1,000. 23.10.97.

SALE OF FOREIGN POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper concluded last night a sale of foreign postage stamps at St. Martin's Town-hall, Charing-cross. The following were among the principal prices realized:—Great Britain—1s., pale mauve, imperforate and unused, £3 5s.; Denmark—1st issue 2rbs, blue, unused, £4 4s.; Naples—½t., blue, £3; Moldavia, 1st issue 27 paras, torn, £23; Saxony, 3 pfennige, red, £3 15s.; Spain, 1851, 2 reales, red, £12 12s.; Geneva, the double stamp, £17; ditto, 5c. envelope stamp used as adhesive, £6 12s. 6d.; Vaud, 4c., black and red, £19 10s.; Cape of Good Hope, woodblock, 1d., red, £3; ditto, 4d., blue, £2 10s.; New Brunswick, 6d., yellow, unused, £8 10s.; ditto, 1s., violet, £7; Newfoundland, 4d., carmine-vermilion, £16; ditto, 6d., orange, unused, £6 10s.; U.S. periodicals, set complete, 1894, £7 15s.; British Guiana, 24c. black on rose, £6 6s.; Trinidad, lithographed, 1d., blue, £2 6s.; Virgin Islands, 6d., rose carmine, unused, £6; Buenos Ayres, 5 pesos, orange, £11; Antioquia, first issue, 2½c., blue, unused, £4; ditto, 5c., green, postmarked, £5; ditto, 10c., lilac, postmarked, £10; Tasmania, 1d., blue, unused, £4 7s. 6d.; Western Australia, 2d., brown on red, unused, £6 5s.; ditto, 6d., black-bronze, £2 10s.; ditto, 6d., sage green, unused, £4 10s. 29.10.98.

SALE OF FOREIGN POSTAGE STAMPS.—The following are some of the principal prices realized at Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper's sale of foreign postage stamps, held at St. Martin's Town-hall, last week, and concluded on Friday evening:—Gibraltar, first issue, unused, £4 8s.; Portugal, collection of, £40; Spain, Madrid, 3 cuartos, unused, £14; Ceylon, 1s. 9d., green imperforate, £3 10s.; ditto, 1s. 9d., green perforated, £3 12s. 6d.; India Service stamp, 2 annas, unused, £2 11s.; ditto, 4 annas, unused, £4 7s. 6d.; ditto, 8 annas, unused, £13; Guine, first issue, 25r., rose, £5 5s.; Canada, 10d., blue, unused, £6 10s.; United States, 1851, 5c., brown, unused, £6; ditto, 1855, 90c., blue, an unused pair, £6 10s.; ditto, 1868, 90c., unused, with grille, £4 5s.; Bahamas, no watermark, 4d., rose, unused, £2 17s. 6d.; Cuba, an unused collection, £4 15s.; Dominican Republic, 1rl., black on green, £2 16s.; Nevis, 1s., blue green, unused, £2 17s. 6d.; St. Lucia, 1s., black and orange, unused, £3 15s.; St. Vincent, 1s., rose, unused, £2 17s. 6d.; Trinidad, litho. 1d. blue, on card, £5; Queensland, 2d., blue imperforate, £2 17s. 6d. 12.12.98.

RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson held a sale of stamps at their rooms in Leicester-square on Wednesday, and amongst the best prices obtained were :—Great Britain, 3d., plate 4, wmk spray, a block of eight, unused—£23, and 1s., no letters, block of nine, unused, £11 15s. ; Spain, 1851, 2 reales, two copies, £14 10s. each ; Switzerland, Vaud, 4c. (mended), £15 ; Ceylon, 8d., imperf., £14 ; Canada, 12d., black, unused, £67 ; New Brunswick, 1s., mauve, £19 15s., and 5 cents, Connell, £19 ; Newfoundland, 1s., carmine, £20 ; United States, periodicals, set complete (except 9 cents), £15 15s. The total of the sale amounted to £1,243. 8.1.97

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper held their 100th sale of foreign stamps at the St. Martin's Town Hall, Charing-cross, last week. The following were the principal prices realised :—Mecklenburg-Schwerin, ½sch., rouletted, unused, 7*l.* 10s.; Hanover 1ggr. blue, unused, 6*l.* 5s.; Oldenburg, 1-10th. black on yellow, unused, 6*l.* 6s.; ditto 1859, ⅓gr. black on green, unused, 5*l.* 10s.; Saxony, 3pf. red, unused, 11*l.*; ditto ⅓ngr. on blue, the error, 10*l.*; ditto 1851, 2ngr. blue, unused, 5*l.* 5s.; Wurtemberg, 1st issue 6kr. green, unused, 5*l.* 10s.; ditto 1859, 9kr. carmine, unused, 5*l.* 5s.; ditto, 2 marks yellow, unused 5*l.*; ditto, 2 marks vermilion, unused, 5*l.* 2s. 6d.; Bulgaria, 5st. red, error, unused, 11*l.*; Basle, 2½ rappen, unused, 5*l.*; Winterthur, 2½ rappen red, unused, 5*l.* 10s.; Naples, ½t. blue "Cross," used, 5*l.* 5s.; Spain, 1851, 2 reales red, unused, 27*l.* 15s.; ditto, 1853, 2 reales red, unused, 9*l.* 10s.; Servia, 1st issue 2 paras, error, unused, 10*l.* 10s. ; Levant, 20k. blue and red, unused, 8*l.*; Sweden, 30 ore red, error, unused, 16*l.* 10s.; Ceylon, 2 rupees 50 cents, unused, 5*l.* 5s.; Ditto, 2s. blue and unused pair Service, 6*l.* 10s; India, 1st issue, ½ anna red, unused, 6*l.* 15s.; India, Service, 2as. green and purple, unused, 5*l.* 15s.; Mauritius, post paid, 1d. red, unused (late State), 8*l.*; Mauritius, post paid, 2d. blue Pence, unused, 25*l.*; Mauritius, Greek border, 2d. blue, unused, 5*l.*; Cape of Good Hope, 1s. emerald, unused, 8*l.*; Gold Coast, 1d. blue, wmk. C. A., unused, 10*l.*; Lagos, 5s. blue, unused, 7*l.*; Sierra Leone, 4d. blue, wmk. C. A., unused, 16*l.*; Canada, 10d. blue, unused, 7*l.* 15s.; Canada, 12d. black, used and damaged, 26*l.*; Newfoundland, 4d. orange, unused, 11*l.*; Newfoundland, 1s. orange, unused, 27*l.*; Newfoundland, 6½d. carmine, unused, 10*l.* 15s.; Nova Scotia, 1s. violet, used, 22*l.* 5s.; United States, 24c. lilac, imperforate and unused, 10*l.*; United States, Justice, 90c. unused, 7*l.* 7s.; United States, State, 5 dollars, unused, 19*l.* 5s.; United States, State, 10 dollars, unused, 10*l.* 5s.; United States, State, 20 dollars, unused, 9*l.*; Nevis, lithographed, 4d. orange, unused, 8*l.* 8s.; Nevis, lithographed, 6d. grey, unused, 7*l.* 15s.; Tobago, 6d. bistre, wmk. C. A., unused, 8*l.*; St. Vincent, 5s. rose, unused; 15*l.* 10s.; St. Vincent, 1d. on half 6d., an unused pair, 18*l.*; British Guiana, 1862, 4c. blue on entire, 14*l.* 5s.; Buenos Ayres, 4 pesos red, unused, 22*l.* 5s.; Buenos Ayres, 5 pesos orange, unused, 27*l.* 17s. 6d.; New South Wales, Laureated, 8d. orange, used, 6*l.* 15s.; Victoria, 5s. blue on yellow, unused, 18*l.* 5s. 10.11.97

SALE OF FOREIGN STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom Bull, and Cooper concluded on Friday, at the St Martin's Town-hall, a sale of the collection of foreig postage stamps formed by the late Mr. Gilbert Lockyer The principal prices realized were as follows :—Naples ½ tornese blue "arms," £11 ; Tuscany, 2 soldi £6 12s. 6d. ; Tuscany, 60 crazie torn, £4 6s. ; Ceylon no watermark, 9d. brown unused, £4 ; Ceylon, wate mark C. and C.A. 16c. lilac unused, £4 4s. ; Britis Columbia, 2½d. imperforate, a pair, £42 ; Nevis, 1 on bluish unused, £4 ; Nevis, 6d. lithographed unused, £6 2s.6d. ; Nevis, 6d. green unused, £4 7s. 6d. ; Virgin Isles, 6d. rose unused, £4 5s. ; Barbados, ½d. green compound perforate unused, £3 2s. 6d. ; Barbados, 1d. on half 5s., rose-red, £5 15s. ; St. Vincent, 4d. on 1s. vermilion, £7 10s. ; St. Vincent, watermark star, 5s. rose unused, £11 15s. ; British Honduras, perforate 12½ per cent. 3c. on 3d. brown, £5 ; New South Wales, Sydney view, 2d. blue, £40 ; New South Wales, Sydney view, 3d. green unused, £40 ; New South Wales, laureated 1d. carmine unused, £16 ; South Australia, collection of departmentals, £10 ; Western Australia, first issue 2d. rouletted, £4 17s 6d. The total sale exceeded £1,000. 9.1.97

22.0.00

SALE OF MAFEKING RELICS.

Mr. Stevens held a sale of relics and curios at his rooms in King-street, Covent-garden, yesterday. Two complete sets of Mafeking besieged stamps, including the rare Bechuanaland 6d., realised £39 18s. each set ; Mafeking stamps, £27 16s. ; eighteen small and sixteen blue map "Baden-Powell" stamps, 15gs. ; a set of Mafeking siege money, consisting of a £1 note, a 10s. ditto, a 10s. ditto without the "D," a 5s., 2s., and 1s. notes, £20 : four "Baden-Powell" stamps, £5. Six envelopes with fourteen stamps found considerable competition, these bringing £13 2s. 6d. Much eagerness was evinced to obtain possession of two Vols. of the *Mafeking Mail*, printed on various coloured papers, which made £9 19s. 6d. Several lots of two 10s. Mafeking siege notes went for about 30s. each lot. Some Krüger money was also sold at sums above their intrinsic value, a complete set going for £5. A Queen's chocolate-box realised 30s. A bandolier and Mauser bullets, taken from a wounded Boer prisoner at Pieter's Hill, who died of wounds, was bought for 17s. The sale obtained additional interest by the introduction of an African ape, a lively and amusing creature, which had performed various offices in Mafeking, such as sounding a bell upon the approach of a Boer ; and, although out of catalogue, it was bought for 40gs.

THE HAROLD FREDERIC STAMP COLLECTION.—At the Arbitration Room, 63, Chancery-lane, last night, Mr. W. Hadlow commenced the sale by public auction of the late Mr. Harold Frederic's collection of stamps. There was a small attendance, and the prices realised were not very high. They included :—United States, 90c. blue, with red postmark, £2 17s. 6d. ; Shanghai, first issue, 12c., strip of six, unused, 10s. ; Shanghai, 20c. in frame on 100c. yellow, an unused pair, £1 8s. ; Switzerland, double Geneva, 5s. x 5c., £6 6s. ; British East Africa, on Zanzibar, a complete set, unused, £1 6s. ; Gold Coast, the rare 20s. red and green, unused, £1 18s. ; Great Britain, I.R. Official, 1s. green on 1884, 14s. ; Modena, Provisional Government, 40c., red, £1 1s. ; British Columbia, perf. 12½, 10c. blue on pink, unused, £1 16s. ; Zanzibar, surcharged 2½ in red on 4a., a block of six showing types, £1 6s. ; British East Africa, on Zanzibar, a complete set of six, unused, £1 4s. ; United States, 1869, a set of three, 24c., 30c., and 90c., £1 18s. ; United States, 90c. blue, black postmark, £2 10s. ; Virgin Islands, 1s., with single line frame, unused, £1 14s. ; Antigua, collection in Lallier, containing 742, £3 5s. ; Trinidad, a set of seven, surcharged one service ½d. to 5s., unused, £3 12s. 6d. ; British Honduras, 1s. grey, £1 16s. ; United States, the Columbus set complete, with duplicates, all the high values, unused, £3 ; Rumania, a collection of 244, £1 10s. ; Spain, a collection of 297, £2 4s. ; France, 30 early issues, 18s. The sale will be continued this evening. 7.2.97

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—The following are among the prices realized at an auction sale of postage stamps held by Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper at the St. Martin's Town-hall, Charing-cross, last week, and concluded on Friday evening :—Great Britain—1d. black, V.R., a pair, £15 10s. ; a single specimen, £7 7s. ; 10s. grey-green, unused, £15 10s. ; £1 brown-lilac, unused, £25. France—1f. orange, unused, £8 2s. 6d. ; a used specimen, £5 2s. 6d. Moldavia—first issue 54 paras green, £11 15s. Tuscany—2 soldi red, £6 15s. ; 60 crazie red, £6 ; 3 lire yellow, defective, £24. Spain—1851, 2 reales red, unused, £20 ; 1852, 2 reales red, £9 10s. ; 1853, 2 reales vermillion, £6 6s. ; Madrid, 3 cuartos bronze, £15 5s. Switzerland—the Basle, defective, £5 5s. ; the double Geneva, defective, £10 10s. ; the Neuchatel, defective, £6 2s. 6d. ; Zurich, 4 rappen black, £13 10s. India—Service, 8 annas, unused, £9. Labuan—provisional, $1 on 16c., blue, £5 10s. Cape of Good Hope—1d. error woodblock, damaged, £20 ; 4d. error woodblock, damaged, £13 ; 4d. light blue, £5 ; 4d. dark blue, £5 5s. Mauritius—post paid, 1d. red, £12 15s. ; post paid, 2d. blue, £9 2s. 6d. Transvaal—1s. green, red surcharge, £5 5s. Canada—6d. perforated, unused, £7 5s. New Brunswick—"The Connell," £18. Nova Scotia—1s. violet, £14. United States—$10 State, unused, £8 ; $20 State, unused, £7 7s. Barbados—1d. on half 5s., a pair, £17 ; a single specimen, £5 5s. British Guiana—first issue 12c. cut round, £7 10s. ; 1852, 4c. deep blue, £9 10s. ; 1856, 4c. black on magenta, £21 15s. ; provisional 2c. black on yellow, £5 2s. 6d. ; provisional 4c. black on blue, £5. St. Vincent—provisional 1d. on half 6d., an unused pair, £21 5s. ; a used pair of ditto, £13 13s. ; 4d. on 1s., unused, £15 10s. ; a used specimen, £9 9s. ; 5s. rose, unused, £14 10s. Trinidad—litho., 1d. blue, £4. Turks Island—1s. prune, unused, £39 ; a used specimen, £16. Buenos Ayres—3 pesos green, £4 17s. 6d. ; 4 pesos scarlet, defective, £12 10s. ; 5 pesos orange, defective, £7 12s. 6d. Colombia—1862, 20c. red, £4. Antioquia—first issue 5c. green, £5 10s. Dominican Republic—1rl. on yellow, £4 12s. 6d. Peru—error medio peso rose, £7 10s. Victoria—1862, 6d. orange, £3 12s. 6d. ; 5s. blue on yellow, unused, £7 10s. The total amount realised was £1,345 17s. 6d. 10.2.97

SALE OF FOREIGN STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper concluded their sale of foreign stamps at the St. Martin's Town-hall, Charing-cross, last evening. The principal prices realized were as follows :—Tuscany, two soldi red-brown, £4 ; Tuscany, 60 crazie brown, £10 ; Tuscany, another fair specimen, £6 15s. ; Newfoundland, 1s. orange, cut close, £5 ; United States, $5 State, unused, £14 ; St. Vincent, 1s. orange, an unused pair, £12 10s. ; St. Vincent, ½d. on half 6d., an unused strip of six, £10 ; St. Vincent 1d. on half 6d., an unused pair, £15 15s. ; St. Vincent, 1d. on 6d., yellow-green, unused, £3 5s. ; St. Vincent, 4d. on 1s., vermilion, unused, £10 15s. ; Buenos Ayres, first issue, set of eight, £69 ; Uruguay, first issue, 60c., the rare type, £23 ; Tasmania, watermark star, 2d. green, unused, £3. 4.2.97

NEW IDEA IN POSTAGE STAMPS.

When Lord Londonderry has quite finished lecturing the Conservative Party we hope he will turn his attention to his new duties as Postmaster-General. Amongst other things, he might take a hint from the United States, where "Leslie's Weekly" tells us it has been decided to issue stamps "in book form at so small an advance in cost that the public will gladly pay the difference."

As is well known, large numbers of postage stamps are wasted by the inhuman habit they acquire of sticking tightly together or to the pocket, so that a stamp book, containing 6, 12, 18, or 24 stamps, at a trifling addition to present cost, would be a genuine boon—and (Mr. Henniker Heaton please note) a source of additional profit to the Department. 24.4.00

RARE POSTAGE STAMPS.—The following were among the prices obtained at Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper's sale of rare postage stamps (which included a fine collection of Transvaals) held at the St. Martin's Town-hall and concluded on Friday :—British Guiana, 1852, 4c. blue, £5 17s. 6d. ; South Australia 4d, wmk. V. and Crown, unused, £16 10s. ; France, 1853, 1f. a tête-bêche pair, £22 10s. ; Reunion, first issue, 15c. black on bluish, £33 ; first issue 30c. black on bluish, £46 ; Cape of Good Hope, 1d. red woodblock, a defective pair, £8 ; 4d. deep blue, £6 15s. ; Gold Coast, 20s. green and red, unused, £5 5s. ; Lagos, 1875, 1s. orange, unused, £7 10s. ; Buluwayo, provisionals set of 4½d., 2d., 4d., and 8d., £7 ; Mauritius, post paid 1d. vermilion, £9 10s. ; another later state of plate, £7 10s. ; post paid 2d. blue, £7 7s. ; another, error Pence, £6 17s. 6d. ; large fillet, 2d. blue, a pair, £43 ; Swaziland 10s. brown, a pair, £7 7s. ; Orange Free State, 1881, three on 4d., a sheet, £15 5s. ; Natal, first issue, 9d. blue, £6 10s. ; Natal, first issue, 1s. buff, £10 5s. The Transvaal :—First Republic, 1870, 1d. carmine, an unused strip of three, £1 8s. ; 1875, 1d. orange, compound roulette, £1 14s. ; 1875, 1s. yellow-green, unused strip of three, £2 16s. ; British occupation (surcharged V.R. Transvaal), 1877, 3d. with red surcharge at back, £7 ; 6d. with red surcharge on face, £2 ; 1d. red with wide spacing of surcharge, £6 ; 1s. green with wide spacing of surcharge, £6 ; 3d. lilac, and unused block of six, £5 15s. ; 1877-79, 1d. error, surcharged "Transvaal," £29 ; 3d. lilac, surcharge inverted, £5 15s. ; 6d. blue on green ditto, £4 ; 3d. lilac on green, error, without surcharge, £15 10s. ; 6d. blue on blue, surcharge inverted, £7 ; 3d. lilac on green, wide roulette, £4 ; 1879, with Queen's head, 1d. on 6d. black, red surcharge, six types, £4 17s. 6d. ; ditto black surcharge, six types, £4 17s. 6d. ; second Republic, halfpenny on 6d. Queen's head, a sheet, £16 ; 1885, halfpenny on 1s. green, a tête-bêche block of four, £3 10s. ; 1893, 2½d. on 1s., error 2s. 0½d., £3. 30.10.99.

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper concluded, yesterday, their first sale of the season of rare postage stamps at the St. Martin's Town-hall. Among the prices realized were :—Ceylon, 4d., rose, imperf., £9 ; 1s. 9d., green, £3 3s. ; India, Service stamps, 8p., lilac, £5 5s. ; Cape of Good Hope, 1d., woodblock, £5 12s. 6d. ; Mauritius, 1d. and 2d., post paid, £24 10s., 1d., post paid, a pair, £14, 2d., blue, post paid, £12 ; New Brunswick, 1s., violet, £8 10s. and £11 11s. The Connell, £15 ; Newfoundland, 1s., carmine, cleaned, £8 10s. ; Nova Scotia, 1s., violet, £7 15s. ; Nevis, 6d., lithographed, £5, 1s., lithographed, a sheet, £15, 6d., green, £4 12s. 6d. ; St. Vincent, 1d., on half 6d., blue-green, £12, 5s., rose, £9, 4d. on 1s., vermilion, £9 ; Tobago, 6d., stone, unused, £5 7s. 6d. ; Turks Island, 1s. lilac, £15. The total of the sale was about £1,200. 22.9.00.

SALE OF WAR STAMPS.

11.10.00.

That the interest of the philatelist world in Mafeking and other war stamps remains unabated, was exemplified by the attendance and biddings at Mr. Steven's sale at his room in King-street yesterday. The highest prices realised were for the Mafeking besieged stamps, of which about twenty sets were put up, and knocked down for various prices between 14 to 25 guineas. Each set consists generally of 19 stamps, and some include rare British Bechuanaland, as well as other slight variations. Seven original envelopes with 15 Mafeking besieged stamps fetched 15 guineas. A poem composed at Mafeking during the siege, after the fight at Game Tree, was knocked down after some hesitancy for only 4s. A complete set of Bulawayo card money in seven amounts from 3d. to 10s. made only 14s. A complete set of stamps surcharged by the Boers during their occupation of Vryburg, consisting of ½d., 1d., 2½d., and 6d., all surcharged on Cape, signed and guaranteed by the Johannesburg Postmaster, fetched 9 guineas ; a blue 3d. Baden-Powell stamp, 22s. ; a number of used besieged Mafeking Baden-Powell large head stamps, 2 guineas each ; a good specimen of the rare 2s. on 1s. British Bechuanaland used stamp, £3 10s. ; twelve used Transvaal Fiscals, surcharged V.R.I., in mint condition, £10 ; a fine specimen of Transvaal V.R.I. £5 used, on piece of original envelope, £5 15s. A number of sets of used and unused Transvaal V.R.I., each set consisting of eleven stamps from ½d. to 10s., went for from 20s. to 40s. per set. The bulk of the small lots also excited spirited competition, and brought good prices.

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper concluded a sale of postage stamps at the St. Martin's Town-hall on Friday. The following were the principal prices realized :—Great Britain, 4d. water-mark, medium garter, an unused pair—£16 10s. ; Great Britain, 4d. sage green, an unused plate—£10 15s. ; Ceylon, 2d. emerald green, unused block of four—£5 2s. 6d. ; Mauritius, post paid, 1d. red, a made-up plate of 12—£110 ; Mauritius, post paid, 2d. blue, ditto—£245 ; Mauritius, large fillet, 2d. blue, ditto—£178 ; Mauritius, small fillet, 2d. blue, ditto—£18 ; Transvaal, 1s. green, block of seven, with inverted surcharges—£200 ; Transvaal, 1d. on 6d. Queen's head, an unused sheet—£155 ; Canada, 12d. black—£25 ; New Zealand, 1d. on pelure paper, unused—£6 10s. ; Victoria, 4d. rose rouletted on piece—£3 5s. The total of the sale was £1,600. 10.12.00

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson began yesterday the four days' sale of a very fine collection—it is said to be the finest ever sold by auction in this country—of British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps, the property of a well-known collector. Some very high prices were realized, the day's sale of 205 lots amounting to close on £1,000. The principal lots were the following :—Austria, 6kr. red, unused, very small mark on face and extreme right-hand top corner gone—£43 ; Austria, 30kr. rose, good margins—£10 ; Bergedorf, 1861, 3sch., black on rose, unused—£9 ; Bulgaria, 1884-85, 5 in black on 30 stotinki, blue and brown—£7 ; France, 1872-75, the error 15c. bistre on rose with 10c., *se tenant*, unused—£11 5s. ; Great Britain, 1840, 1d. black, V.R., unused—£7 15s. ; ditto, 1848, 10d. brown, octagonal, a pair—£9 ; Heligoland, 1875, 2pf., a pair, and three singles, used with a 20pf. on the rare shade on a 10pf.—£12 7s. 6d. ; Modena, 1852, 1 lire, black on white, used and very fine—£18 ; Naples, 1860, ½ tornese, blue, large margin—£14 ; Oldenburg, 1850, 2gros., black on rose, large margins—£8 10s. ; Prussia, 1857, 2sgr., dark blue, unused—£14 10s. ; Rumania, Moldavia, 1854, 27 paras, black on rose—£36 ; ditto, 54 paras, blue on green, large margins—£15 10s. ; ditto, 81 paras, blue on blue, a fine copy of this exceedingly rare stamp—£143 ; and ditto, 108 paras, blue on pink—£18 10s. 6.2.01

6.2.01.

SALE OF RARE POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson continued on Wednesday and yesterday their four days' sale of a collection of British and foreign and colonial postage stamps. Some very high prices were again realized, of which the more important were the following :—Saxony, 1851, ⅓ngr., black on pale blue, error, unused in mint state, very rare—£55 ; Spain, 1853, 3c. bronze, a fine copy—£12 10s. ; ditto, 1851, 2 reales red—£17 10s. ; ditto, 1852, 2 reales red, used, with a block of fine 6 reales blue, and a 12c. lilac—£14 ; ditto, 1865, 12 cuartos rose and blue, the rare error, with inverted centre—£14 15s. ; Sweden, 1872, 20 ore vermilion, the error "Tretio," unused and fine—£14 ; Switzerland, Geneva, 1843, 5+5 yellow green—£20 5s. ; ditto, Vaud, 1849, 4c. black and red—£18 ; Tuscany, 1851-52, 60 crazie, red on blue—£10 5s. ; ditto, 1860, 3 lire yellow, rather heavily cancelled, extremely rare—£42 ; Wurtemberg, 1851-52, 9kr. rose, unused—£21 ; ditto, 18kr. violet, unused, torn—£13 ; Ceylon, 1857-59, 4d. rose—£19 ; ditto, 8d. brown, very lightly cancelled—£19 ; Philippine Islands, 1869-74, surcharged "Habilitado por la Nacion," the real blue of 1854—£9 ; Portuguese India, collection of 102, mostly unused and including a fine lot of the rare early issues—£29 ; Shanghai, collection of 72, all unused—£19 ; Cape of Good Hope, 1861, 1d. blue, error—£39 ; ditto, 4d. red, error—£31 10s. ; purple brown—£12 10s. The day's sale of 200 lots realized £1,100.—The more important of yesterday's portion were the following :—Reunion, 1852, 15c. black on bluish, repaired at left—£17 10s. ; ditto, 30c. black on bluish—£22 10s. ; Transvaal, 1877, V.R. Transvaal in red, 3d. mauve—£8 10s. ; ditto, 6d. blue—£16 ; Canada, 1851, 12d. black, a great rarity, but with a minute tear at top—£57 ; New Brunswick, 1851, 1s. mauve, large margins—£17 ; Nova Scotia, 1851-57, 1s. purple, unused—£24 10s. ; United States, Brattleboro, 1846, 5c. black on buff, small hole in the centre skilfully repaired—£40 ; ditto, St. Louis, 1847, 10c. black on bluish grey—£14 10s. ; ditto, 1869, 15c. brown and blue, the error with inverted centre—£19 ; ditto, 24c. green and purple, with inverted flags, centre—£24 ; ditto, 30c. with inverted flags—£54. The day's sale realized upwards of £1,000.

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded on Friday the four days' sale of a collection of British, colonial, and foreign postage stamps. High prices (more especially for the earlier issues of British colonial stamps) were again realized ; the more important lots being as follows :—Turks Island, 1873-79, 1s. lilac, fine and lightly cancelled—£13 10s. ; Antioquia, 1863, 2½c. blue—£11 ; British Guiana, 1850, 4c. yellow, pelure paper, cut round and mounted, extremely rare—£48 ; ditto, 8c. green, cut round—£17 ; ditto, 12c. blue, cut square—£44 ; British Guiana, 1856, 4c., magenta, very fine—£16 5s. ; ditto, 4c. blue, a very fine bright copy, but with corners cut, extremely rare—£58 ; British Guiana, 1862, 4c. blue, roulettes on three sides—£13 13s. ; Buenos Ayres, 1858, cuato pesos scarlet, unused—£13 15s. ; ditto, cinco pesos orange, unused—£13 15s. ; Colombian Republic, 1863, 50c. red, error—£16 15s. ; Guatemala, 1881, Mexico, Guadalajara, 1867-68, a rare lot of 24—£23 ; Peru, 1858, medio peso rose, error, used, with a one peseta rose—£14 10s. ; Hawaii, 1851, 5c. blue, outer line very slightly torn into at one place, and cancellation rather heavy—£72 ; ditto, 13c. blue (first type), slightly damaged and rather heavy cancellation—£46 ; Queensland, 1868-74, 1s. olive brown, unused, in mint state, fine and very scarce—£16 5s. ; Western Australia, 1879, 2d. mauve, error, very fine and scarce—£15. The day's sale realized £1,130, the gross total of the four days' sale amounting to about £4,200. 11.2.01

SALE OF FOREIGN STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper yesterday concluded, at St. Martin's Town-hall, Charing-cross, a sale of foreign postage stamps, at which the following prices were realized :—British Columbia 2½d., imperforate, £15 ; Canada 12d., black, £66 ; Newfoundland 1s., carmine, £10 ; Newfoundland 1s., orange, £12 10s. ; United States St. Louis 5c., black, £11 10s. ; United States St. Louis 10c., black, £13 10s. ; British Guiana, 1856, 4c., on magenta, £15 ; British Guiana, 1862, 1c., black on rose, £11 10s. ; British Guiana, 1862, 2c., black on yellow, £10 10s. ; British Guiana, 1862, 4c., black on blue, £15 ; another of the same, unused, £11 11s. ; St. Vincent, 1880, 1d. on half 6d., a pair, £15 ; St. Vincent 5s., rose, unused, £10 ; Turks Island 1s., lilac, defective, £13 ; Turks Island provisional 2½d. on 1s., blue, £10. A collection containing 8,232 stamps realized £275. The total sale realized £1,300. 2.3.01

SALE OF FOREIGN STAMPS.

7.3.01.

Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper last evening concluded a sale of foreign postage stamps at St. Martin's Town Hall. The following were the principal prices realised:—Gold Coast—20s. green and red, unused, £6 10s. British Columbia—2½d. imperforate, £15. Canada—12d. black, £66. New Brunswick—1s. violet, £7 15s. Newfoundland—4d. carmine, £5; 6½d. carmine, £5; 1s. carmine, £10 10s.; 1s. orange, £12 10s. Nova Scotia—1s. violet, £8. Buenos Ayres—4 pesos vermilion, damaged, £5 17s. 6d. United States—St. Louis, 5c. black, £11 10s.; St. Louis, 10c. black, £13 10s. Barbados—1d. on half 5s. rose, £7 10s. British Guiana—First issue, 12c. blue, £8; 1856, 4c. on Magenta, £15; 1862, 1c. black on rose, £11 10s.; another, defective, £8 10s.; 2c. black on yellow, £10 10s.; 4c. black on blue, £15; another, unused, £11 11s. St. Vincent—1880, 1d. on half 6d., a pair, £15; 4d. on 1s. vermilion, £7 5s.; 5s. rose, unused, £10. Tobago—6d. stone, unused, £6. Trinidad—The Lady M'Leod, damaged, £5 5s. Turks Islands—1s. lilac, defective, £13; Provisional, 2½d. on 1s. blue, £10; Provisional. 2½d. on 1d. red, £8. Antioquia—First issue, 2½c. blue, £9; first issue, 5c. green, £7. A collection containing 8232 stamps fetched £275; the total sale, £1300.

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper held a sale of rare postage stamps, at the Hôtel Cecil, on Friday. There was a fine collection, including many varieties, of which the following are a few:—Naples, ½ tornese, blue, "Cross," unused, £11 10s.; Tuscany, 1860, 3 lire, yellow, with a tiny tear in top left-hand corner, £30; a vertical strip of five 2 soldi, brick red, used on entire envelope, £21. Ceylon, 4d. rose, imperforate, £7. British Central Africa, first issue. £2 rose red, £5 sage green, £10 brown, and large oblong £25 blue, imperf., all unused in Mint state, £6 10s., £6, £10, and £8 respectively; 1895 £10 vermilion, unused, £12; and £25 blue-green, unused, £25. The same amount was paid for a 1d. vermilion and a 2d. blue post paid Mauritius, both early impressions, used together on large piece. A vertical pair of similar 1d. vermilion, £10; and a horizontal pair of ditto with large margins, £10 10s. A 2d. blue, error Pense, £12 15s. Buenos Ayres, 4 pesos vermilion, unused, £17 10s.; another specimen, similar, but without margins, £7. West Indies, British Guiana, 1856, 4c. black on magenta, clipped at corners and used on entire, £5 15s. St. Vincent, Provl. 4d. on 1s. vermilion, £8 12s. 6d.; and another specimen, but with the surcharge off the centre, £8. North America, Nova Scotia 1s. violet, £7 5s. United States, 1869 24c. green and purple, with centre inverted, £22; and a 30c. blue and carmine, with centre inverted, a fine specimen of this rarity, £82. The sale realised a total of close upon £1000. 16.4.01.

At their rooms, in Leicester-square, yesterday, Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded a sale of stamps, in which, exceptionally, the highest priced item was an old collection which realised £110. Another parcel of sheets of duplicates and some postcards sold for £40. Of the single specimens were an 1861 St. Vincent 4d. on 1s. vermilion, £9 10s.; an imperfect 8d. brown Ceylon, a lightly cancelled copy with a fine 1s. violet and a 1d. blue on piece of original, 12 guineas. A 3-lire yellow Tuscany of 1860, slightly cut, £34. 13.6.01

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.

7.10.01

At their rooms, in Leicester-square, Messrs. Puttick and Simpson yesterday disposed of the first of a four days' sale of stamps. The collection is one of exceptional value, and the first portion, consisting of 233 lots, realised about £1025. Notable among the items were:—Roumania: Moldavia, 1854, 81 paras, blue on blue, unused, with nearly full gum and large margins, £220; ditto, 27 paras, black on rose, £29; ditto, 54 paras, blue on green, unused, with large margins, £25; ditto, another used and slightly thinned, £10; ditto, 108 paras, blue on pink, unused, £50; ditto, another used, £28. Russia: 1858 mark, numerals, 10 kopecs, brown and blue, unused, £3: ditto 20 kopecs, blue on orange, unused, £3 10s.; ditto 30 kopecs, crimson and green, £4 12s. 6d. Levant: 6 kopecs, dark blue. £3 5s. each: ditto 20 kopecs, blue and red. £3 7s. 6d. Austria: Newspaper stamp, 1851-1856, head of Mercury, 6kr. yellow, unused, £9; ditto, 30kr. rose, £8 10s., slightly cut. Austrian Italy, 1850, 15c. red, on laid paper, a pair, £8 15s. Bremen, 1867, 7 grote, black and yellow, £5 15s. Bulgaria: 1882, 5 stotinki rose, error, unused, £9; ditto, another used, with a 10 stotinki rose, on piece of original, £8. Finland: 1866, 10 penni purple-brown, error, unused, £5 5s.; 1867-70, 8 penni, black on green, perf., 10½, £16; 1897, 3½ roubles, black and yellow, error, £30. France: 1849, 1 franc, orange, unused, but no gum, £8 15s.; 1872-75, 15c. bistre on rose, error, with a 10c. se tenant, unused, £13. Great Britain: 1840, 1d., black, V.R., unused, but no gum, £5 15s. Mecklenburgh Schwerin: 1864, rouletted 4-4 Sch., red dotted background, a vertical pair on small piece of original, but with no roulettes at left, £7. Parma: 1854, 5c., orange-yellow, unused, £5 15s. Naples: 1860, ½ tornese, Cross, unused, but no gum, £7 5s.; and ditto ½ tornese, blue, Arms with large margins, £10.

SALE OF STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson began on Tuesday the four days' sale of an exceptionally fine collection of rare British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps, the property of a well-known foreign collector. The first two days' sale of 465 lots produced a total of about £1,800; and among the chief purchasers yesterday of Cape of Good Hope stamps was the British South Africa Company. The rarer or more interesting of the stamps sold on Tuesday and yesterday were the following:—Finland, 1867-70, 8 penni, black on green, scarce—£16; ditto, 1897, 3½ roubles, black and yellow, error, extremely scarce—£30; France, 1872-75, 15c. bistre on rose, error, with 10c.—£10; Naples, 1860, half tornese blue, large margins—£10; Rumania, Moldavia, 1854, 27 paras, black on rose—£29; ditto, 54 paras, blue on green ground, unused, large margins—£25; ditto, 81 paras, blue on blue, unused, a fine specimen of this great rarity—£220; ditto, 108 paras, blue on pink—£50; and ditto, another of the same, used—£28; Spain, Madrid, 1853, 3 cuartos, bronze, unused—£12 10s.; ditto, 1851, 2 reales, red, unused, very fine—£13 10s.; Sweden, 1872, 20 ore, vermilion, the error "Tretio," unused—£11 15s.; Switzerland, Vaud, 1849, 4c., black and red—£17; Tuscany, 1851-52, 60 crazie, red on blue, unused—£15; ditto, 1840, 3 lire, yellow, unused—£40; another of the same, used—£33; Ceylon, 1857-59, 4d., rose, unused, £10 10s.; ditto, 8d., brown, used—£11 5s.; and Cape of Good Hope, 1861, 1d., blue, error, no margin at left—£37. 3.10.01.

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded last evening the four days' sale of a collection of postage stamps, the property of a foreign collector. The two concluding days produced a total of £1,820, which brings the amount of the whole sale up to about £3,600. The sales on Thursday and yesterday included the following:—Mauritius, 1848, post paid 1d., early impression, unused, and very fine—£18; ditto, 1849, large fillet, 2d. dark blue, two fine copies on original envelope—£27 10s.; Sierra Leone, 1883, 4d. blue, unused—£7; Canada, 1851, 12d. black, unused, fine copy of this rarity—£61; ditto, 1852-57, 7½d. green, unused—£7; New Brunswick, 1851, 1s. mauve, unused—£36; another of the same, used—£9; Newfoundland, 1857, 2d. scarlet, unused—£45; ditto, 6½d. scarlet, unused, £7 5s.; another of the same, used—£10 10s.; ditto, 1s. scarlet, unused, very scarce—£28 10s.; another, used, lightly cancelled, £14 10s.; ditto, 1s. orange, fine, lightly cancelled—£15; Nova Scotia, 1851-57, 6d. dark green, unused, £10 5s.; ditto, 1s. purple, unused and very fine—£36; ditto, 1s. dark purple, used—£15; ditto, 1s. violet, used, £16 5s.; Barbados, 1870, large star, 1d. blue, unused, in mint state—£16; ditto, 1875-78, 4d. carmine, a pair, unused—£14; Grenada, 1888-90, 4d. on 2s., scarce—£7; Nevis, 1867, 1s. yellow-green, unused—£13; ditto, 1878, 1s. deep green, an entire sheet of 12—£14; St. Vincent, 1880, 5s. rose-red, unused—£9; ditto, 1880-81, 4d. on 1s. vermilion, unused, £15 7s.; Trinidad, 1859-63, 1s. bright mauve—£13; Virgin Islands, 1888, 4d. on 1s. crimson, an entire sheet of 20—£16; British Guiana, 1850, 4c. orange-yellow—£35; ditto, 12c.—£10; ditto, 1856, 4c. magenta, unsoiled copy—£9; ditto, 1862, 4c. blue—£10; Hawaii, 1851, 5c. blue—£50; New South Wales, 1855, 8d. yellow, unused—£15; Queensland, 1860, 2d. blue, strip of three—£16; South Australia, 1856-57, 2d. emerald green—£14 10s.; and Western Australia, 1861-62, 2d. blue—£10. 5.10.01.

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.

15.11.01.

In the continuation of this sale by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson on Wednesday, the most interesting items consisted of a fine series of Swiss stamps, which realised high prices. Some of these were:—Geneva, 1845, the double stamp, 5 x 5c. yellow green, unused, £22; another, used, couple £12; another, used and repaired, £7; Basle, 1845, 2½ rappen, red and blue, unused, £5; another, used on entire original, £5 10s.; Neuchâtel, 1851, 5c. black and red, unused, £5; Vaud, 1849, two 4c. black and red, £12 and £12 10s.; another, pen-cancelled and cleaned, £8 5s.; Winterthur, 1850, a vertical pair of 2½ rappen on entire original, £5 5s.; Zurich, 1843, 4 rappen, black and red, vertical lines, type 2, unused, £15 5s.; another, horizontal lines, £13 15s.; another, type 3, £15 5s. There were several others of various types which fetched from £7 to £8 8s. each:—1850 Poste Locale, 2½ rappen, black and red, without frame to cross, penmarked, £6 15s. Other notable lots were Russia, Levant 1865, a pair of 2 kopecs, brown and blue, unused, £6 5s.; another pair, used, £6; Spain: 1852, 2 reales, red, unused, £11; 1853, 2 reales, scarlet, unused, £6; Tuscany, 1851-52, 2 soldi, red on blue, £8; 60 crazie, red on blue, small cut, £6 5s.; 1860, 3 lire, yellow, heavily cancelled, £30. Asia: Ceylon, 1857-59, imperf., 4d. rose, £5 15s.; 8d. brown, £10 10s.; another, slightly torn, £6 5s.; 1s. lilac, unused, £11. Africa: British Central Africa, 1891-93, £10 brown, unused, fetched its face value; and Cape of Good Hope, 1861, 4d. red, error, a slightly repaired copy, made £25.

The third day's sale yesterday was similarly interesting, though not quite so many single rarities occurred. Chief of them were:—Reunion: 1852, 30c. black on bluish, £9. Transvaal: 1876, 1s. green, fine roulette, soft porous paper, unused, £10; 1879, V.R. Transvaal, 1d. red on yellow and 3d. mauve on green, the former unused, £7 15s. North America: British Columbia, 1861, imperf. 2½ pink, unused, £12. New Brunswick: 1851, 1s. mauve, £10; another, £11. Newfoundland: 1860, 1s. orange, £12 5s. Nova Scotia: 1851-57, 1s. violet, £13 5s.; ditto, 1s. dark purple, £14. United States: 24 periodical stamps, 1875-79, 1c. to $60, complete except 90c., all unused, £10. British West Indies: St. Vincent, 1880-81, provisional 4d. on 1s. vermilion, £8 5s.

Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, yesterday, commenced, at their rooms in Leicester-square, the sale of a fine collection of stamps, which will occupy four consecutive days. Notable among the lots offered was a series of Moldavian stamps, which, with two exceptions, realised good prices. The exceptions were 1854, 81 paras, blue on blue, bought in at £160; and a series of four all used together on entire original: 27 paras black on rose, 81 paras blue on blue, and two 108 paras blue on rose, withdrawn at £100. Two 27 paras, black on rose, fetched £20 and £27. Several 54 paras, blue on green, realised from £7 10s. to £11 each. A 108 paras, blue on rose, unused, £38: a strip of three 5 paras, black, 1859, white paper, £17; 1876-78, a 5 bani, blue, error with 10c. se tenant, £9; and two collections of Roumanian stamps, one all used, the other unused, made £24 and £35 respectively. Other items of this sale were: Austria, newspaper stamp, 6 kr., red, unused, £40: Bavaria, a pair of unpaid, 1895, two in red on 3 pf. grey, on entire original envelope, £22; Belgium, 1849, 10c., grey-brown, unused, £6; Bergedorf, 1861, ½ sch., black on lilac, £4 10s.; Naples, 1860, ½ tornese blue, cross, £12; Oldenburg, 1-10th black on yellow, £4; Portugal, 1855, 5 reis, red brown, £4; Prussia, 1861-65, two 2 sgr. Prussian blue, £6; and two ditto, dark blue, a fine unused vertical pair, £25 10s. 13.11.01

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded last night a four days' sale of a fine collection of rare British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps, formed by a well-known collector. The total amounted to about £3,000, and among the principal lots were:—Austria, 1851-56, 6kr., red, unused, very fine and rare—£40; Bavaria, "unpaid," 1895, two in red on 3pf. grey, on entire envelope, of great rarity—£22; Prussia, 1857, 2sgr., dark blue, vertical pair—£25 10s.; Rumania, Moldavia, 1854, 27 paras, black on rose, 81 paras, blue on blue, 108 paras, blue on rose, and another, the four used together—£100; ditto, 27 paras, black on rose—£27; ditto, 81 paras, blue on blue, a fine copy—£160; ditto, 108 paras, blue on blue, unused, £38; Switzerland, Geneva, 1845, 5×5c., yellow-green, the double stamp—£22; ditto, Vaud, 1849, 4c.—£12 10s.; ditto, Zurich, 1843, 4 rappen, black and red, vertical lines, unused—£15 5s.; another of the same with horizontal lines—£15 5s.; Tuscany, 1860, 3 lire, yellow—£30; Ceylon, 1857-59, 8d., brown—£10 10s.; ditto, 1s., lilac, unused—£11; Cape of Good Hope, 1861, 4d., red, error—£25; British Columbia, 1861, imperfect, 2½d., pink, unused—£12; New Brunswick, 1851, 1s., mauve, lightly cancelled—£11 5s.; Newfoundland, 1860, 1s., orange—£12 5s.; Nova Scotia, 1851-57, 1s., cold violet—£13 5s.; ditto, 1s., dark purple—£14; and Queensland, 1860, imperfect, 2d., blue, a strip of three—£17 17s. 16.11.01.

SALE OF STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded last evening the two days' sale of the collection of British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps formed by Herr Gustave Bornefeld, of Bonn. The sale realized upwards of £1,200 and included the following:—Austria, newspaper stamp, 1851-56, 6kr., red, unused, very fine—£18; Great Britain, 1840, 1d., black, V.R., unused, very fine—£7; Rumania, Moldavia, 1854, 27 paras, black on rose—£18 10s.; ditto, 54 paras, blue on green—£10 5s.; ditto, 108 paras, blue on rose—£11 10s.; Switzerland, Geneva, 1843, 5×5c., yellow green—£11; ditto, Vaud, 1849, 4c., black and red—£11; Cape of Good Hope, 1861, 4d., red, error, skilfully repaired—£11; Lagos, 1874, 10s., purple brown, unused—£11; Antioquia, 1868, 10c., lilac—£8 10s.; British Guiana, 1850, 8c., green—£15 5s.; and Buenos Ayres, 1858, cinco pesos—£9 15s. 28.11.01.

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Plumridge and Co. concluded yesterday, at 63, Chancery-lane, W.C., a three days' sale of the fine general collection of British, colonial, and foreign stamps formed by Mr. H. P. Lowe. The auctioneers tried, in connexion with this sale, the experiment of placing the stamps on view to Continental collectors at the Hôtel Terminus, Paris, for three days before the sale in London. The more important stamps included the following:—Buenos Ayres, first issue, 4 pesos vermilion, unused—£12; Ceylon, first issue 4d., a very fine light postmarked copy—£12; ditto, 8d. brown—£13; Ceylon, CA. 14, 24c. purple-brown—£17; Reunion, 30c., fine copy, with large margins, on original letter, but uncancelled—£38; another, fine copy, used—£28; Mauritius, postpaid, 1d. and 2d., fine copies, with large margins—£19; Newfoundland, 1s. orange, very fine, fair margin—£11 17s. 6d.; Niger Coast, 10s. in vermilion on 5d.—£11; St. Vincent, 6d. yellow-green, very scarce—£17 10s.; Tobago, CC. 14, £1 mauve—£12 10s.; and United States, 1869, 24c. green and purple, centre inverted—£21. The total amount realized was close on £2,000. 27.7.02

The sale of a collection of unused English and Colonial stamps was, on Wednesday evening, concluded by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, at their Rooms in Leicester-square. Among the more interesting lots were:—India—1854, a corner block of four annas, blue and red, £40; a block of four half anna red, and a corner pair of ditto, £23 5s.; Great Britain—1840 imperforated 1d. black V.R., £8; 1855-7, 4d. carmine, watermark small garter, £7; 1867-82 £1 brown-lilac, Maltese cross, £16 10s.; 1884 £1 brown-purple, watermark orbs, £12 15s. Ceylon—1857-9 8d. brown, used, £9 15s.; 9d. lilac-brown, £15 10s.; and 1863-4 watermark C.A., 24c. purple-brown, £3 10s. Mauritius—1848 post paid 2d. blue, the error "Pence," £10 10s. Orange River Colony—1900 surcharged V.R.I. 1d. violet, the error without "d," £9 15s. New Brunswick—1851 1s. mauve, used, but the cancellation barely perceptible, £6 15s. Newfoundland, 1860 1s. orange, used, £9 10s., and Nova Scotia, 1851-57 1s. purple, with good margins, 20 guineas. 4.7.02

In the Blenheim Room of the Hotel Cecil, Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper last week concluded the sale of one of the finest collections of European stamps that has been offered for competition under the hammer. The collection was a private one, having been the property of Mr. J. F. Ebner. With a very few exceptions, all the stamps were unused, and every item was guaranteed genuine. The catalogue was embellished with beautiful photographic reproductions of some of the gems, of which the following were typical:—For a horizontal pair of British 1d., 1840, black with V.R. in the upper corners, £15 was realised. This price was also obtained for each of a Spanish 1851, red, 2 reales, and the Saxony Error, ½ ngr., black on pale blue. This was a used copy, and was sold with Expert Committee's opinion of its genuineness. There were also—Great Britain: 1840, a block of eight 1d. black, in mint state, 8gs.; and a block of six 2d. blue, without white lines, £5; 1873-80, a horizontal pair of 8d. brown-lilac, £7 5s.; and seven 2½d. lilac-rose, £8. Austria: 1851-68, a 6 kr. dull yellow newspaper stamp, with head of Mercury, £7 15s. Mecklenburg-Schwerin: 1864, a rouletted ½-4 sch. red, £6 10s. Naples: 1860, a ½ tornese blue, "Arms," £8 10s. Russia: 1858, wmk. 2, a 20 kr. deep blue and orange, £8; and wmk. 3, a 30 kr. crimson and green, 7gs. The Levant: 1865, 20 kr. blue and red on price, but uncancelled, £6 12s. 6d. Finland: a used tête-bêche pair of 1858, 5 kr. blue, 8gs. The same sum was given for a Spanish, 1853, 2 reales vermilion; and Madrid, 3 cuartos bronze, £11. Sweden: 1872, the error "Tretio" instead of "Tjugo" ore, vermilion, £10. The collection, though choice, was not extensive, and the total realised was about £1500. 17.8.02.

Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, at their rooms, in Leicester-square, last evening, concluded a two-days' sale of a fine private collection of stamps. Among the notable items were:—Labuan, 1883, MS. provisional, 1 dollar in red on 16c., unused, £7 15s.; and 1885, 2 cents on 16c. blue, also unused, £6 10s.; Lagos, 1882, 10s. purple-brown, unused, £11 5s.; Sierra Leone, 1897, 2½d. on 2s., lilac, type C, £8; another, type D, £6 15s.; Transvaal, 1877, 6d., blue, with inverted surcharge, £6 5s; 1878, 6d., blue on blue, £7 10s; and 6d., blue on green, also with inverted surcharge, 11gs.; New Brunswick, 1851, 1s. mauve, £9 15s.; Nova Scotia, 1851-57, 1s., purple, £11; and 1s., cold violet, 7gs.; St. Vincent, 1880, star, 5s., rose-red, £8 10s.; 1881, provisional 4d. on 1s., vermilion, £7 5s.; Turks Islands, 1873-9 watermark, star, 1s., lilac, £8 10s.; and 1881 provisionals, 2½d. on 1s. lilac, type 10, £6; British Guiana, 1850, 4c. yellow, £22; 8c. green, £9; 12s. pale blue, £18; 12c. blue, £9; 12c. indigo, £9 10s.; 1856, 4c. magenta, £10; 1862 provisionals, 1c. rose (No. 16), £6 10s.; another (No. 23), £12 15s.; Barbados, 1878, 1d. on half of 5s. rose, a pair, £10 5s.; and United States, Department of Justice, 1873, 90c. purple, a fine block of 4, 20gs. 10.4.02

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper, of 35, Old Jewry, E.C., began yesterday, at the Hotel Cecil, a two days' sale of a fine collection of British, foreign, and colonial stamps, the more important lots including the following:—Afghanistan, 1298, six shahi purple, three fine specimens, used together on piece of original, very rare—£15; another very fine single specimen—£5; and another—£5; ditto, one rupee purple, fine and very rare—£5 10s.; 1298, abasi black, fine and rare—£4 10s.; ditto, samar purple, fine—£5; and Ceylon, provisional, 5c. on 48c. carmine, unused with gum—£4 10s.; and another specimen of a darker shade—£4 15s. 26.9.02.

SALE OF STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper concluded yesterday, at the Hotel Cecil, a two days' sale of British, foreign, and Colonial postage stamps, the chief lot consisting of four Cape of Good Hope stamps to which reference has already been made. This lot consisted of a fine unsevered block of four wood-blocks, 1861, 1d. scarlet, with the 4d. red error, used on entire letter, and unique in this condition. The set realized £350. It may be mentioned that the average price at present of the 1d. scarlet is from £3 to £5, whilst a fine specimen of the 4d. red error would realize about £100. Other Cape of Good Hope stamps in the sale included a block of four 1d. scarlet, wood-blocks, used on entire letter—£50; wood-block, 4d. blue, a very fine pair of used—£11; and a remarkably fine uncancelled specimen on entire letter, margins all round, extremely rare—£30. Two collections of postage stamps in Lallier's albums, one consisting of 5,322 stamps and the other of 4,156 stamps, realized £60 and £42 respectively. 27.9.02.

SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson began yesterday the three days' sale of the very fine collection of British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps formed by Mr. F. W. Neild. The most important stamp in yesterday's portion was the Rumanian stamp, Moldavia, 1854, 81 paras, blue on blue, unused, with gum, and very large margins—"the finest copy of this rarity which has ever been offered for sale by auction"; this did not reach the reserve, and was bought in at £200; it cost the present owner £220 last year. The sale included the following:—Gibraltar, 1889, 10c. carmine, the very rare error with value omitted, £14; Great Britain, 1840, 1d. black V.R., unused, in mint state, £10 5s.; ditto, 1867-82, £1 purple-brown, unused and fine, but very slightly soiled, £14; Naples, 1860, ½ tornese blue, £11 10s.; British Bechuanaland, 1888, 10s. green, unused, £11; British Central Africa, 1891, £10 brown, unused, £11 5s.; ditto, 1895, £10 vermilion, unused, £11 11s.; and ditto, £25 blue-green, unused, £24. The total of the evening's sale amounted to upwards of £800. 12.11.02.

PENNY BLACK STAMP.—Mr. W. Hadlow included in his sale of British and foreign stamps, held last evening at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, a remarkable mint block of penny black English stamps, unused, issued in 1840. The block is the lower half of plate 1, and contains 119 stamps (one stamp is missing), all in excellent condition and with full margin. The set was purchased by Mr. Peckitt at £112, or a fraction under £1 per single penny stamp. The marginal printed information and instructions have a very quaint reading at this time of the day. "Price 1d. per label, 1s. per row of 12, £1 per sheet. Place the labels above the address and towards the right-hand side of the letter. In wetting the back be careful not to remove the cement." 11.11.02

At sales of engravings and stamps by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, at their rooms in Leicester-square, yesterday, two entire sheets of rose-red penny stamps of Great Britain, etc., sold £14 17s. 6d.—one was Plate 69 of 1857, and the other Plate 71 of 1858-64. A mezzotint of Mrs. Crew by T. Watson, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, £14 10s.; and Un Minuet à l'Anglaise, in colours, £11. 22.10.02

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper's 188th sale of stamps, concluded at the Hotel Cecil on Friday night, included the following rarities:—Cyprus, 1889, the carmine stamp with value omitted, unused—£16; British Central Africa, first issue, £10 brown, unused—£10 10s.; Cape of Good Hope, wood blocks, 4d. blue, unused—£16; Lagos, 1884-86, 10s. lilac-brown, unused—£11; New Brunswick, the Connell, 5c. brown, unused—£37; St. Vincent, provisionals, 1d. on half 6d., blue green, an unsevered pair—£11; and ditto, 4d. on 1s., vermilion, unused—£14 15s. 9.12.02

SALE OF STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper concluded on Friday, at the Hotel Cecil, a two days' sale of a collection of British, foreign, and Colonial postage stamps, including a very fine lot of South African examples. The more important of the lots which realized upwards of £5 included the following:—Cape of Good Hope, wood-blocks, 4d. deep blue—£5 7s. 6d.; ditto, 1874-80, provisional, "three-pence," in red on 4d. blue, an unused block of four, one stamp being the error "Three Pence," possibly unique—£30; a set of the 11 Mafeking siege stamps—£14; Gold Coast, 1891-94, 20s. green on red, error, imperforate—£6 15s.; Natal, 1st issue, 1s. buff—£12 15s.; Transvaal, surcharged "V.R. Transvaal," in red, 3d. mauve, £5; another, fine specimen—£12 5s.; ditto, 6d. blue on rose, error, surcharge omitted—£25; ditto, 6d. blue on green, with inverted surcharge—£8 5s.; and 1887-90, provisionals 2½d. on 1s., with error "2½," a very fine unused specimen—£10 10s.; Zanzibar, on Indian, 13 anna sepia, error "Zanzidar"—£7 5s.; a very fine collection in four volumes, 8,712 stamps—£84; and another in two volumes, 6,081 stamps—£48. The two days' sale realized about £1,300. 22.12.02

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—At the sale of stamps held by Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper at the Hotel Cecil, and concluded yesterday, the following were some of the principal prices realized:—Ceylon, 4d., rose, imperforate, £10; Ceylon, 8d., brown, imperforate, defective, £6; Ceylon, 8d., lilac-brown, imperforate, £3; Ceylon, 2s., blue, imperforate, £4 10s.; Griqualand, 5s., orange, a pair, unused, £11 5s.; Lagos, 2s. 6d., olive-black, £3 3s.; Lagos, 5s., blue, £4 5s.; Lagos, 10s., lilac-brown, £8 10s.; Mauritius, 2d., blue, large fillet, £8; Mauritius, 1d., red, Greek border, £3; Natal, first issue, 1s., buff, £5 17s. 6d.; Natal, provisional, 2½d. on 4d. inverted surcharge, £4 4s.; Transvaal, 3d., mauve, red surcharge, £4 12s. 6d.; Transvaal, 6d., blue, red surcharge, £4 15s.; Transvaal, 1878, 1d., red on orange, unused, £4 4s.; Newfoundland, 6½d., carmine, £7 15s.; Newfoundland, 1s., carmine, £6 10s.; Nova Scotia, 1s., violet, £8 5s.; British Guiana, 1852, 4c., black on blue, £4 4s.; British Guiana, 1856, 4c., black on magenta, £8 10s.; British Guiana, 1862, 4c., black on blue, £7; Brazil, 1844, 300 reis, black, £3; Brazil, 1844, 600 reis, black, £3 17s. 6d. The total amount realized was £1,036. 10.1.03

At their rooms in Leicester-square, yesterday, Messrs. Puttick and Simpson commenced a two evenings' sale of a very fine collection of unused British, foreign, and Colonial stamps. Some of the high prices realised were:—For Great Britain: 1867-82, 10s. grey, 12gs.; and 20s. purple-brown, 17gs. Ceylon: 1857-59, two 8d. brown, lightly cancelled, £25 12s., and a 2s. blue, £22; and 1862, 1s. violet, £8 15s. Mauritius: Two post-paid, 1848, 1d. deep orange, used together on piece of original, £18. Canada: 1852-57, 7½d. green, £10; and 1857, 6d. purple-brown, £10 10s. 21.1.03

Last evening Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded their two days' sale of a fine collection of British, foreign, and Colonial unused stamps, realising a total of about £1200. Yesterday's moiety included Grenada, 1883, a strip of six "postage," diagonally in small capitals on half of 1d. orange, £22; St. Lucia, 1880, a block of six 4d. blue and a block of six 6d. green, £21 and £26 respectively; 1883-84, four 1s. orange, 10gs.; St. Vincent, 1880, a 5s. rose red, £8 10s.; British Guiana, 1856, a used 4c. magenta, £18 10s.; Victoria, 1863-81, 5s. blue on yellow, £10 5s.; and Western Australia, 1860, a 6d. sage-green, £7. 22.1.03

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—The following are some of the prices realized at a sale of postage stamps held by Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper, at the Hotel Cecil, and concluded last evening:—Newfoundland, 4d., carmine, unused, £32; Newfoundland, 6½d., carmine, unused, £5 10s.; Newfoundland, 1s., carmine, unused, £62; Nova Scotia, 1s., violet, £13; Victoria, 1863-67, 6d., lilac, unused, £4 2s. 6d. 24.1.03

At their rooms in Leicester-square, Messrs. Puttick and Simpson last evening concluded a sale of unused British and Colonial postage stamps, which realised a total of about £1650. Some of the more important lots were:—Great Britain: 1840, a block of 20 1d. black, £12 5s.; a block of ten 2d. deep blue, £32; 1847-54, a block of six 6d. purple, £17; and a block of four 10d. brown, die 3, £15; 1856-57, watermark small garter, a pair of 4d. carmine, £12; and watermark medium garter, a 4d. carmine on blue, £12; 1867-78, watermark Maltese cross, 10s. grey, 12gs.; and a £1 brown-lilac, £17; 1888, watermark orbs, £1 brown-lilac, 10gs.; and 1882-83, watermark anchor, a 10s. grey on bluish, made £48. Gibraltar: 1889 (Nov.), 10c. carmine, the rare error with figure of value omitted, £10. A collection of 50 Morocco Agencies, including a set with the inverted "A," £16. British Bechuanaland: 1888, 10s. green, £9 15s. British Central Africa: 1895, 10s. vermilion, £10 5s. Cape of Good Hope: 1855-58, a block of four 1s. dark green, £13; 1863-64, a block of four triangular 1s. emerald, £18. Lagos: 1884-86, watermark C. A., 10s. lilac-brown, 11gs. Sierra Leone: 1879 provisionals, three 2½d. on 2s. lilacs, one being the rare type b, £36. Bahamas: West Indies, 1863-75, watermark C.C., 1s. green, £5. Nevis: 1867, 1s. yellow-green, £9 5s.; 1883, provisional "Nevis ½d." on half of 1d. lilac, £7. St. Christopher: 1885-88, one penny on 2½d. blue, the rare small surcharge, £19. St. Vincent: 1880, 1s. vermilion, £6 17s. 6d.; 5s. rose, £8 15s.; another, £8 10s.; 1880-81 provisionals, 1d. in red on half of 6d. blue-green, a pair, £12; and 4d. on 1s. vermilion, £13. Tobago: 1879, £1 mauve, £10. Turk's Islands: 1881, provisionals, 2½d. on 1s. dull blue, type 10, £10; and British Guiana: 1862 provisional, 1c. black on rose, No. 17 on plate, £22 10s. 26.2.03

SALE OF RARE STAMPS.—Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded, on Wednesday, the two days' sale of the collection of unused British and colonial postage stamps formed by Mr. G. L. Edwards, of the London Philatelic Society, the total of the 590 lots amounting to £1,647. The following were the more important:—Gibraltar, 1889 (Nov.), 10c. carmine, the rare error in figure of value omitted—£10; Great Britain, 1840, 2d. deep blue, a block of ten—£32; 1847-51, octagonals, 6d. purple, a block of six—£17; ditto, 10d. brown, die 3, a block of four—£15; 1855-7, 4d. carmine, a pair—£12; another, 4d. carmine on blue, very fine—£12; 1867-78, 10s. grey—£12 12s.; £1 brown-lilac—£17; 1882-83, 10s. grey on bluish—£48; and 1858, £1 brown-lilac—£10 10s.; British Central Africa, 1895, £10 vermilion—£10 5s.; Cape of Good Hope, 1863-4, 1s. emerald, a block of four—£18; Lagos, 1884-6, 10s. lilac-brown—£11 11s.; Sierra Leone, 1897, 2½d. on 2s. lilac, three types—£36; St. Christopher, 1885-8, 1d. on 2½d. blue, the very rare small surcharge—£19; St. Vincent, 1880-81 1d. in red on half of 6d. blue-green, a fine pair—£12; 4d. on 1s. vermilion—£13; Tobago, 1879, £1 mauve—£10; Turks Island, 1881, 2½d. on 1s. dull blue—£10; and British Guiana, 1862, provisionals, 1c. black on rose, extremely rare—£22 10s. 27.2.03

Yesterday, at their Rooms in Leicester-square, Messrs. Puttick and Simpson concluded a sale of stamps, at which good prices were realised. Some of the items were:—British Central Africa, 1891, £10 brown, unused, £7 10s.; Cape of Good Hope, a pair of triangular 1s., dark green, £6; Mauritius, post paid 2d. blue, and with large fillet, a 2d. deep blue, £10 12s. 6d.; Transvaal 1900, V.R.I., a set of inverted surcharges, from ½d. to 1s., £11; 1878-79, Queen's head, 1d. in red on 6d. black, type 14, £12 10s.; 1877, V.R., red surcharge 6d. blue, £7 5s.; Zanzibar, 1895, a block of nine 2½d., in black on 1a plum, £9 10s. 11.6.03

Messrs. Glendining and Co. concluded, yesterday, a sale of stamps at their rooms in Argyll-street, Regent-street, and some high prices were realised. Fiji, 1874-5, 6c. on 3d., deep green, unused, £4; 12c. on 6d., £4 15s.; 2d. in black on 3d., 4gs.; and 2d. in red on 3d., £4 10s. New South Wales, 1850, a pair of 1d. red, £9 2s. 6d., and 1d. red without clouds, £4; 1855, 8d. orange, £6 5s.; New Zealand, 1856, 2d. blue rouletted, £4 5s., and 1878, water-mark star and N.Z., 2d. rose, £9. 13.6.03

A POST OFFICE EXPERIENCE.

16.11.96

One

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The Post Office, the centre of my second grumble, is in very deed an inscrutable machine. I am thankful to see that one of your correspondents took my railway grumble seriously. I must, therefore, take care what I say about the Post Office. Let me begin; and if I fall into parable pray do what you can for me. I posted a letter in Portland-place, W., at 9 15 a.m., and it was delivered at Highgate, N., at 5 p.m. That is to say, that if the letter and I had started at the same time I would have been in Lancashire some hours before the letter got to Highgate, from which it is clear that one of us could have been in no dangerous hurry. This, however, is about the pace of the Postmaster-General. I write him a complaint on Monday, and on Friday I get a printed acknowledgment that my letter has been received and will be attended to. The printing of the note (as it would be printed specially for me) probably accounted for the delay. Certainly it was a long interval, especially as some people do say, and say it on Sundays, that the heavens and the earth were fashioned and set agoing in about six days. Think, then, what must have been done between Monday and Friday! Yet it took the Postmaster-General all that time practically to nod to me. Long after I have forgotten the thing complained of—probably nothing more serious than the abstraction of a £10 note from an unregistered letter, an item to be remembered only by sordid minds—a man wearing a white hat and a gold-headed cane calls upon me and says "Serious notice has been taken of the matter." I exclaim, being in the middle of a great discourse on the Day of Judgment, intended to blanch the face and knock the knees of some unknown Felix, "What matter?" And the man says he does not know, and that, like a lawyer, he is simply talking down or up to the level of his instructions. The week following he calls again to say that last week he should have called, not on me, but on the man next door, and he hands me the following or some other printed inquiries:—What is your occupation? What was your age last birthday? What was the colour of the envelope which contained the note alleged to have been stolen? Who posted it? Where? When? At what point did the barometer stand? What had been the weather during the fortnight immediately preceding? Are you a member of any secret society? I could, Sir, make remarks here, but I hold my tongue as with several bridles.

But this is mere child's play to the postal order business. It is at this exciting point that British idiocy takes the bun. Think of a payer, and a payee, and a stamp, and a date beyond which the order cannot be cashed without some sort of tax or fine. If you told an agricultural labourer that he was a payee the result would depend upon his natural temper. Personally, I would not take the risk. We have no such trouble with a £5 note as with a postal order. We can keep a £5 note (how I wish we could!) 12 months or 12 years, and it will be as negotiable as ever. Not so the postal order, as I can show you. Being exceedingly and even passionately fond of botany, I arrange to settle down at the North Pole to collect evidence that will enable me to destroy the vicious theory of Martius that the milky sap of euphorbia phosphorea is luminous. I will be away two years. I take out 104 postal orders for half-a-crown each to enable my mother-in-law to keep the wolf from the door. I put them one by one in 104 envelopes, stamped and addressed. I tell my groom to post the envelopes week by week as regularly as Thursday comes. All goes well until the 14th week; then the mischief begins. The defined date is past! The order is challenged. The groom knows nothing about it, and, going to the local post office, he is told that the payee must do so and so. Who the payee is he knows no more than the cob in the stable; but he is too proud to say so, and he actually broods over the term until it has upon him the effect of a nettle. Indeed, it gets such a hold upon him that neighbouring coachmen are sure I should be made aware of the facts, but happily there is no post office at the North Pole. Why should not a postal order be as negotiable as a £5 note?

Take another illustration. I am, say, the publisher of a magazine which has a weekly circulation of two millions. They are all sent out from my office and distributed by post. As I cannot write two million addresses every week and leave sufficient time for food and sleep, I get the addresses neatly printed on perforated sheets like postage stamps and beautifully gummed on the back after the manner of ditto. So far so good. The Post Office is with me to this point. But in the course of my business I have to send a special notice to my customers and I print it on a postcard. All is well. But how about the addresses? I instruct my 14 young clerks to gum the aforesaid addresses on the cards and to post them promptly. What happens? All the cards are returned to my office marked "Irregular." My two million stamps, my two million cards, my two million expectations! The ruin of it! "Irregular!"

I have kept the big strawberry for the top of the pottle, which is only human and metropolitan. Not until you have applied for an immediate annuity on two lives do you really see the inside of the Post Office. I want to buy an immediate annuity for self and mother-in-law, bringing in, say, 10s. a week. The price is £500. I have the money in the bank. I write to my energetic friend, the Postmaster-General, and get the aforesaid or some similar printed form. Then I get quite a little sheaf of documents. We have to state our ages; we have to produce our respective marriage certificates; we have to refer to two respectable householders who are called upon to say how old we looked when they last saw us, and how long it is since they saw us, and whether they met us "by moonlight alone" or under circumstances likely to affect our age either up or down. There is a printed instruction to the effect that if we do not understand the papers our local postmaster, or one of his assistants, will explain them to us and slowly read them over to us until "daylight doth appear." We did not understand the papers, though we can read and write a little; but even here the thoughtfulness of the Post Office is most maternal, for a special note tells us that if we cannot write we may make our "mark" in the presence of an official witness. Off we go to the village postmaster, my mother-in-law and myself, happy in the thought that we have, considering our simple tastes, "much goods laid up for many years." A shy maiden under ten said, in reply to my inquiry, that her father was at home, and at once he appeared, civil and willing, and inclined to be cheerful, though painfully freckled and ill-trimmed about the shirt collar. He looked the papers carefully over, he sighed, he rested his forehead in the bowl of his left hand, he looked at me over the rim of his spectacles, and at length the village postmaster spake with his tongue, "I have never seen any of those here blessed papers before, never, I do declare; what is it you want? Is there anything wrong with this little office?" We assured him there was not. "Oh," said he, "there it is! If you and your good lady" (in terms so poetic did he describe my mother-in-law!) "will make your mark I will witness it—put your mark anywhere on that yaller paper, there seems to be most room on it, and I will send it up to London, and they can square it up there as tight as a trivet." I had no idea what the village postmaster meant, but I said we would let the matter stand over a while until the fever of our bewilderment cooled down, on which he remarked, without any evident connexion, "and a good job too."

If any of your readers, too literal and serious for this world, should regard this as an exaggeration, let him apply for a Post Office annuity on two lives, and on the life of the survivor, and let him ask for the half-yearly warrant to be collected by his bankers under a power of attorney. Let him.

I am faithfully yours,

The City Temple. JOSEPH PARKER.

INTERNATIONAL SUBMARINE TELEGRAPH MEMORIAL.

26.11.96

The Marquis of Tweeddale presided yesterday at Winchester-house over a meeting of the full committee formed for establishing an international submarine telegraph memorial. Among those present were Sir George Young, Mr. J. C. Lamb, C.B., Mr. J. Wolfe Barry, Mr. J. A. Fleming, Mr. Underdown, Q.C., Mr. Charles Bright, Mr. J. W. Swan, Mr. W. H. Baines, Mr. Alexander Muirhead, Mr. John Newton, Mr. W. G. Bond, Mr. H. C. Fischer, Mr. G. Draper, Mr. F. E. Hesse, Mr. W. T. Ansell, Mr. H. Saunders, Mr. T. Finnis, Mr. G. Moll, and Mr. G. R. Neilson (the hon. secretary).

The CHAIRMAN said that their business was to receive the report of the executive committee, which stated that at their meetings on the 17th and the 24th inst. it was resolved, subject to confirmation, "(1) That a bust of the late Sir John Pender, at a cost not to exceed £500, be erected in the Imperial Institute or other suitable place; (2) that a sum of not less than £5,000 be placed in trust with the council of University College, London, to form an endowment fund for the maintenance of the electrical laboratory in that college, on the condition that the council name the laboratory the 'Pender Laboratory,' and the existing chair of electrical engineering the 'Pender Chair of Electrical Engineering'; (3) to endow a scholarship in connexion with electricity at Glasgow." They had received 33 replies approving these resolutions, among others from Lord Wolseley, Lord Kelvin, Sir J. Vogel, and Sir A. Wilson. One gentleman had written approving resolutions No. 1 and No. 3, but not No. 2, although he gave no reason for

disapproving it. They had also received a letter from the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, who would like the word "Edinburgh" substituted for the word "Glasgow" in the third resolution. If the funds they received were pretty substantial, the claims of Edinburgh would probably be considered by the committee. He had also received a letter from Lord Kelvin approving the resolutions 1 and 2, but suggesting the insertion in the third resolution of the words "or a scholarship and medal" after the word "scholarship." The object of this suggestion was to continue the medal which had been given to Glasgow by Sir John Pender.

On the motion of Mr. UNDERDOWN, seconded by Mr. CHARLES BRIGHT, a resolution was passed making the suggested addition.

The resolutions passed by the executive committee were unanimously adopted.

The CHAIRMAN stated that Mr. Lamb and Mr. Von Chauvin had taken considerable trouble in working out the proposal mentioned in the second resolution.

LORD TWEEDDALE added that a draft letter, which would bear his signature as chairman of the Eastern, Eastern Extension, and Anglo-American Telegraph Companies, had been prepared for issue, inviting subscription for the memorial to be inaugurated next year to the late Sir John Pender. The three resolutions would form part of the letter, which concluded as follows:—"Although submarine telegraphy has remained from the first almost exclusively a British enterprise and industry, it has always been international in its character and benefits; and I do not doubt that you will consider well worthy of your support this proposed commemoration in connexion with so wide-reaching an agency for the progress and drawing together of the nations, and especially of Great Britain and her colonies. All donations will be publicly acknowledged." Several of the companies had been approached, and some of them had responded with handsome subscriptions, while sums had also been received from shareholders, members of the committee, and others. The least they hoped to receive was £10,000. After the Pender memorial had been completed, gentlemen might be invited to join them with a view to carrying out the proposed jubilee memorial in 1901.

SIR GEORGE YOUNG said that he desired to state that the council of University College, at their meeting on the previous day, had had before them the matter referred to in the second resolution, and had been much pleased at what was proposed. He had been desired to state, merely by way of information, that in the case of recent endowments of professorships in the college the amount fixed on as a satisfactory endowment for a professorial chair was a *minimum* of £500 a year. He also desired to point out that an endowment to University College was in fact an endowment to the University which was about to be established for London; it was not merely a single college, but the teaching University, which was to be constituted by a union of the existing University of London and of the teaching institutions.

A vote of thanks to the chairman brought the meeting to a close.

THE POST OFFICE AND NEWSPAPERS.

4.12.96

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The last report of the Postmaster-General stated that there had been a decrease as compared with the previous year in the number of newspapers passing through the post. Upon this point the Postmaster-General delivered himself as follows:—"For the decrease in late years in the number of newspapers passing by post I am unable to account, but I presume that it is due to increased energy and improved system on the part of the great newsagents. From a revenue point of view the tendency to relieve the Post Office of the duty of distributing newspapers is no matter for regret, for, as has been often stated in public, the State loses much money by the work."

As was well pointed out in *The Times* when the report was issued, this statement amounts to nothing less than a confession of failure, a humiliating admission that the Post Office, notwithstanding all the genius for organization which we know to be at its disposal, notwithstanding all the privileges and facilities which it enjoys, is unable to compete with private enterprise in this important department of its work. Attention has also been drawn to the inconvenience experienced by subscribers owing to the sluggishness of the Post Office in delivering newspapers intrusted to its care.

In view of these facts I venture to think that the following paragraph from Mr. William Harbutt Dawson's well-informed and interesting book entitled "Germany and the Germans," published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall in 1894, may be interesting to your readers. "The most real token of recognition received by the Press from the State in Germany consists of an arrangement by which the State, through the Postal Department, acts as newsagent on a large scale. Orders for any publication registered on the Official List are received at every post-office, and the numbers are delivered by the postman as early as, and often earlier than, they can be procured from other sources. The Department in this way distributes at least 500 million newspapers in the course of the year, made up of some seven million single subscriptions, and thereby earns a very considerable income." (Vol. 1, p. 301.)

Yours obediently,

London, Nov. 30. H. B.

POSTAL ANOMALY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As "one of your readers," I beg to inform "Old Square" that a "book packet" may not contain "paper money." See page 4, def. 1, (a). "Paper money" is defined on page 6 to include (c) unobliterated postage stamps. I presume the "Post Office Guide," from which these rules are taken, follows the words of the Act of Parliament, or can make rules having the force of law.

Generally speaking, I think the Post Office winks pretty hard, and that the public raging round all the rules "asks for an inch and takes an ell." The other day a postcard for somebody who was supposed to be stopping at my house had the words "Please forward" added to the address, against rule 2 under "Postcards"; nothing was said. The next time it will be "Please forward if you think proper."

December 4. 4.12.96 NON-OFFICIAL.

ANOTHER POSTAL ANOMALY.

4.12.96

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Can any of your readers inform me by what process of reasoning a postage-stamp can be construed into a letter? The other day I had occasion to send a manuscript through the post to a certain editor. It cost me one halfpenny, and so far was all right. For its return in case of rejection—a proceeding to which editors are occasionally prone, without any sufficient reason, of course, so far as my own case is concerned—I enclosed a penny stamp. This morning my friend the editor sent me back my original envelope. It was stamped on the back with an elaborate seal and a profusion of red wax, and these words were on the front:—"Contains a postage-stamp. Letter rate. Ns 1d." It is for this reason that I ask if some one gifted with higher reasoning powers than myself, or possessed of a finer sense of humour, can kindly inform me how a postage-stamp can be called a letter.

The pathetic part of the thing, for me, is that I have for a considerable time past unwittingly offended in this way, and have frequently enclosed a return stamp even when my relations with the editors concerned have rendered it almost if not quite superfluous to do so; and (as I cannot afford to buy all the papers for which I write, to say nothing of those for which I would write if only the recalcitrant editors had discrimination enough to recognize my merits) I have sometimes wondered how it happened that some of my manuscripts never came back to me, or that I never received cheques in lieu thereof. Perhaps I speak feelingly, but this particular anomaly of which I complain strikes me as being singularly idiotic. There may be some regulation bearing on the point in the Post Office Guide, but if there is I contend that it ought to be expunged, because it reflects on the sanity of the Department.

If you will be so good as to insert this complaint of mine, apart from whether there be good reason in it or not, it will at least have the effect of putting others on their guard against committing the offence for which, I am afraid, not a few of my editor friends have had to suffer. I would offer them a collective apology in your columns, only if I were to sign my name (and you were to put the letter in) it might be thought that I was endeavouring to give myself a little free advertisement. So I will just enclose my card, and sign myself,

Your obedient servant,

OLD SQUARE.

INSUFFICIENT PROTECTION OF PACKETS FOR TRANSMISSION BY POST.—The following notice has been issued from the General Post Office:—Attention is called to the fact that large numbers of postal packets sustain injury in transmission owing to the insufficient protection provided by the senders. The packets most liable to become damaged are bulky newspapers and books, secured merely by means of thin weak wrappers which give way on handling; also packets containing wedding-cake, flowers, &c., sent in fragile cardboard and chip boxes, many of them of unsuitable shape. As, in addition to possible loss of contents, broken packets are subject to delay in transmission, owing to their having to be specially dealt with, it is to the interest of the public to see that all articles sent through the post are made as secure as possible against injury before posting. 18.11.96

THE HALFPENNY ADVERTISEMENT POST.

17.11.96.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The quantity of prospectuses and other rubbish delivered by the halfpenny post is a burden to the householder, and, it appears, is a loss rather than a gain to the Post Office. Would it not pay that department to provide and supply at some nominal figure a rubber stamp, "Declined," wherewith those who do not care to collect waste paper might return these missives to the sender, and thus gradually check the growing nuisance?

Yours truly,

O. J. LODGE.

THE HALFPENNY ADVERTISEMENT POST.

21.11.96

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—If, as your correspondent, Professor O. J. Lodge, suggests, circulars stamped "Declined" could be returned to the senders, how would this system check the nuisance or benefit the Post Office? The recipient of the circulars would have the trouble of rubber-stamping, readdressing, and reposting them, and the Post Office would again have to convey them, this time apparently without payment, to the senders, who would be saved perhaps half the cost of printing by the return of at least half their advertisements, unopened and ready folded for fresh victims. That is supposing the recipients took the trouble and could ascertain the senders' addresses. If, instead of this, the word "Declined" left the missive in the hands of the Post Office, that Department might profitably sell wholesale the vast quantity of paper which now in small portions fills the waste-paper baskets of individuals. Editors even could use this stamp "Declined" for useless suggestions, such as Professor Lodge's or mine, or for other manuscripts.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. DEVEY BROWNE.

THE POSTMEN'S PARK.

16.11.96

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—You were good enough to permit me on the 28th ult. to draw attention in your columns to the appeal I am making on the part of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association for £6,000 for the preservation from injury and the enlargement of the "Postmen's Park," Aldersgate-street, E.C. May I now be allowed to briefly report progress?

In another column will be found a list of the contributions with which up to the present I have been favoured, amounting to about £1,200, leaving a balance of about £4,800 still needed.

It is not unreasonable to hope that the Corporation, the City companies, and other bodies will respond liberally to the appeal for help that has been made to them by the parochial authorities of Aldersgate, and that this amount will thus be materially reduced.

At the same time it is evident that I need further contributions, both large and small, from the general public, if the Postmen's Park is to be made safe, before the termination of the strictly limited period granted by the vendors, one-half of which has now expired. About two weeks still remain, but I should esteem it a favour if would-be subscribers will, if possible, kindly send me their contributions on or before the 21st inst., so that by that date we may know how we stand.

I am deeply grateful to houses of business in the City and elsewhere (to whom the object specially commends itself) and to other subscribers for the support they have so kindly rendered, and I earnestly hope that in the short remaining period many others will follow their good example.

City people are constantly asked to assist in good work outside the City, but an opportunity like the present for the promotion of the welfare of the public by securing an open space within the City itself has very rarely occurred in the past, and is scarcely likely to happen again. I trust, therefore, that it may not be lost.

Your obedient servant,

MEATH, Chairman.

Metropolitan Public Gardens Association,
83, Lancaster-gate, W., Nov. 14.

"THE POSTMEN'S PARK."—The purchase of the vacant space in Little Britain, adjoining the Aldersgate-garden, better known as the "Postmen's Park," is practically a certainty. The London County Council has not yet approved of the payment to the fund of £500, as has been recommended by the Open Spaces Committee of that body, but there is every reason to believe that the Council will support the committee. When that sum is paid the £12,000 purchase money will have been fully subscribed. The Fishmongers' Company has generously forwarded 100 guineas; the Mercers', Skinners', and Merchant Taylors' Companies have subscribed 50 guineas each; the Goldsmiths', Grocers', and Drapers' Companies £50 each; the Cooks' Company ten guineas, and the Joiners' Company £5. It is hoped that the total amount subscribed will defray the cost of laying out the additional space and railing it.

23.12.96

POST OFFICE IMPROVEMENTS IN 1896.

2/1/97.

The Post Office record of the year 1896 will be chiefly memorable for the reason that it chronicles the acquisition by the State of the trunk wires of the telephone system. In this matter the Department has not been allowed to have quite its own way. It desired to purchase the telephone system, as in 1870 it purchased the telegraph system, but Parliament in its wisdom has sanctioned only the taking over of the trunk wires which connect the metropolis with nearly every centre of population in the United Kingdom. This transfer has been made by the National Telephone Company, and under the agreement embodied in the Act of Parliament that company will retain entire control over the whole of its local exchange areas. At the present time there are 247 trunk telephone wires existing in the kingdom. Parliament has delegated to the Postmaster-General the duty of developing the telephone system, and for this purpose has placed at his disposal at the outset a sum of £300,000, which will, no doubt, be supplemented from time to time as public necessity may require. The use of the telephone, although a comparatively modern adjunct to the resources of civilization, has become essential to the expeditious pursuit of commercial life. Its extended adoption in this country when under the almost exclusive control of private capitalists has been remarkable, and, in view of the undoubted success which has followed the acquisition of the telegraphs by the State, it is not in the least surprising that a demand should have arisen in favour of its control, or participation in control, over telephones.

The transference of the trunk telephone lines to the Post Office began on the 4th of April last, the first wires to be acquired being those which, to speak broadly, exist south of the Thames. Since that time the work has steadily proceeded, until at the present moment the only lines which have not actually come into the possession of the Department are those connected with the extensive systems of Liverpool and Manchester, and these, it is expected, will be practically taken over early next month. This work of transference has involved an amount of labour of which the public can form but an inadequate conception. It represents a greater mileage than that of the telegraph lines acquired by the State over a quarter of a century ago. Nearly 30,000 miles of wires have been obtained from the National Telephone Company, and the Post Office has, in addition, constructed 20,000 miles of new telephone trunk wires. But even this vast mileage does not represent the full scope of the addition made to the work for which the Postmaster-General is responsible to the nation. Beyond providing new wires wherever they may be required upon existing trunk routes, the Department is engaged in carrying the system, by means of a new submarine cable, to the Isle of Wight, where local telephone exchanges are already in operation. In Scotland the system is being extended from Aberdeen to Inverness; in Ireland it will be carried, this year in all probability, to Limerick and to Cork; and in Wales it will soon go from Llandudno to Bangor and Carnarvon.

It will be seen that material progress has already been made in giving effect to the Act of Parliament authorizing this great transfer. Throughout the operation there has been an evident desire, on the part of the Post Office on the one side and of the National Telephone Company on the other, to achieve the best result in the most amicable manner possible. The arrangement sanctioned by Parliament inevitably involves a dual control. Less 5 per cent. which is to be paid to the National Telephone Company for undertaking the duty of collection, the whole of the charges derived from the public for the use of the trunk telephone lines will be added to the revenue of the Post Office; but, as already stated, the company will still exercise sole control over the whole of the local exchange areas in the country, save those in the Newcastle and South Wales districts, over which the Department already exercises authority. This new branch of work will at once involve an addition of 500 persons of different grades to the permanent staff of the Post Office. The leading officials, acting by direction of the Postmaster-General—notably Mr. Lamb and Mr. Ardron in the secretarial department and Mr. Preece as well as Mr. Gavey in the engineering department—have thrown themselves with great earnestness and zeal into the labour incidental to the introduction of the arrangement. New apparatus of improved form has been designed, and the constructive operations alone have been enormous, in addition to which a large number of men have been trained for the service. In this, as, indeed, in many other matters, the National Telephone Company has rendered valuable assistance to the Post Office authorities, who have readily availed themselves of the aid of many of the operators formerly employed by the company. Henceforth the headquarters of the telephone section of the Post Office will be found within the large building known as "G.P.O. West," standing at the junction of Newgate-street and Aldersgate, where an extensive suite of rooms has become vacant by the removal of the secretarial staff to the new structure more recently completed in Aldersgate-street and officially known as "G.P.O. North."

One of the first advantages of the acquisition by the State of the trunk telephone lines will shortly be seen in connexion with the Express Service in London. Under the provisions of the agreement with the National Telephone Company the public will by telephone be able to secure a messenger for the purpose of the express delivery of letter or parcel. It is obviously convenient that the telephonic exchanges should be connected with the nearest post offices, and when such communication has been established generally any subscriber to the National Telephone Company will be able to send a message to any post office in London and to arrange for any of the services performed under the express delivery rules.

Although there is no other change to be mentioned approaching in magnitude that of the telephone trunk wire transfer, the Post Office history of the past year has been one of modest but continuous improvement, more especially in relation to the development of the parcel post and money order systems. The first alteration made in the parcel post arrangements came into operation on February 11 last, when the rates to the Argentine Republic were reduced and the limit of weight extended from 7lb. to 11lb. At the end of June, the parcel post system was carried to Paraguay, in South America; and on the same date the weight allowed for parcels addressed to Malta was increased to 11lb., bringing the limit into harmony with that prevailing for inland purposes, while the rates were simultaneously reduced. Early in July the parcel rate to the Seychelles and Hawaii was reduced, and at the end of that month the weight allowed for parcels going by the sea route to Portugal, Madeira, and the Azores was increased, the rate reduced, and the system of insurance introduced. On October 1 the route for parcels to Japan via the Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver was opened. On November 1 the parcel post was established to the Cape Verd Islands, Portuguese West Africa, and a few days later the parcel rates to Natal were revised.

On the first day of the new year, as already announced in *The Times*, revised parcel rates for Australasia came into operation; the limit weight was extended in the case of parcels going to Sweden; a service by direct steamer to Chile was inaugurated; and the system of the exportation of bonded goods was brought into force generally for the first time. Dutiable articles can in future be taken from a bonded warehouse and sent abroad by parcel post without the payment of duty. Parcels so dealt with will, in the first place, be sealed by the Customs officers, and then taken with an official form to the nearest post office, the duty of whose officers it will be to make sure that the seal is intact, as showing that nothing has been extracted from the consignment. The parcels will then be forwarded as directed, and the form retained by the Customs, as proof that the goods named therein have been liberated from bond. This new arrangement is likely to be attended with important results, and it is one for which the commercial community will be grateful to the Post Office.

The money order system was on March 3 last extended to a number of places in Asia Minor and the Levant—namely, the Dardanelles, Dédéagatch, Gallipoli, Kavala, Inéboli, Lagos, and Vathy-Samos. At the beginning of April the same system was extended to Servia, and in November to the Fiji Islands. In connexion with these several extensions, the hours ap-

pointed for the transaction in post-offices of inland telegraphic money order business were on June 16 made uniform throughout the country—namely, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The expansion which has been witnessed in the system of transmitting money orders by telegraph is so marked that the latest official figures on the point are interesting. During the June quarter of the past year—that is, prior to the alteration mentioned—the number of telegraphic money orders issued in the United Kingdom was 40,011, representing a total amount of £129,845; while during the September quarter, after greater facilities of issue had been afforded, the number of such orders issued increased to 47,596, representing a total amount of £151,953.

During the year the system of delivering telegrams, express letters, and parcels by cycle has been much extended, concurrently with a reduction in the porterage charge for distances exceeding three miles. These advantages have been chiefly confined to rural districts, and post-office servants are expressly forbidden to use cycles in the busy thoroughfares of the metropolis. Formerly, the charge made for such services by a post-office cyclist was 6d. per mile; but henceforth, where the distance covered is more than three miles, the charge will be reduced to 4d. per mile. It is not proposed that the Post Office shall establish an army of cyclists in rural districts, but local postmasters are at liberty to secure the services of cyclists upon whom they can rely, and to those persons the fee named will be handed over, without any deduction by the Post Office. In cases where it is impossible to employ a cyclist, owing to the long distance to be undertaken, the present arrangement of delivery by mounted horse messenger will be continued.

The express service, which was introduced on March 26, 1891, has proved a great convenience, more particularly in London. The number of such services performed during the first complete month after that date was 4,904, while in the corresponding month of this year the total number of the services was 21,306. The highest record in any one month was reached in July last, when 28,000 services were undertaken, the total number of articles delivered by the express messengers being 41,882. During the last financial year the total number of express services rendered throughout the United Kingdom was 363,971, and of this number no fewer than 243,751 were performed in London, notwithstanding the fact that the work is carried on side by side, and therefore in competition with, the undertakings of private companies. The cases in which parcels intrusted to the express messengers have been lost are practically *nil*; and, although the public are not yet fully acquainted with the fact, it may be added that this corps of messengers render useful service as guides in the crowded streets of the metropolis. Without going into detail, it may be stated that the services of the boys as guides can be obtained at a large number of post-offices on payment of the fee of 3d. per mile, and the experience gained shows that they perform their duty with alacrity and care.

No enumeration of the progressive steps made by the Post Office in the course of the past year could justly be concluded without an acknowledgment on the part of the public to the Duke of Norfolk as Postmaster-General, to Mr. Spencer Walpole, the Secretary of the Post Office, and to their many able departmental chiefs for the work which has been performed. The columns of *The Times* frequently bear witness to the fact that the public expect a great deal from the Post Office, and, without any pretence that all is perfect in the numerous branches of the establishment, a tribute of praise to its staff as a whole is certainly due at this season of the year.

THE TRANSIT OF MAILS VIA BRINDISI.—A Reuter telegram from Brindisi, dated yesterday, says:—"The Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and the Minister of Public Works were present yesterday evening at the transshipment of the Indian mails, consisting of about 1,800 sacks, and from this experience were convinced of the necessity of prompt measures being taken to expedite the transit of the mails. This morning the Ministers made arrangements with the object of improving the existing system. They will return to Rome to-day." 28.1.97

CHANGES IN THE POSTAL AND MONEY ORDER RULES OF THE POST OFFICE.

15.1.97.

The public will observe from a warrant and regulations notified in to-day's *Gazette* that, on and from February 1, various changes will be made in the postal and money order rules. These changes are all designed to promote simplicity and uniformity.

For instance—private post cards for inland transmission, if posted unpaid, will in future be charged only twice the postage of a post card, or 1d. instead of 2d., twice the postage of a letter.

Newspaper packets found to contain enclosures admissible by book post will no longer in all cases be charged double the book rate, but will be sent forward and charged as parcels, *plus* a fee of one penny, if this involves a lower charge than the unpaid book rate.

Parcels marked "registered," but dropped like ordinary letters into a letter box, and packets containing coin, watches, or jewelry, which are posted unregistered, will be charged twice the usual registration fee, or 4d. instead of 8d., as hitherto.

The *maximum* dimensions of inland letters and book packets will be raised to 2ft. by 1ft. by 1ft., the dimensions now in force for letters in the postal union. As, however, large packets cannot safely be transferred to or from trains in motion by the mail-bag apparatus, the Postmaster-General reserves to himself the right of keeping back such packets for despatch by a subsequent mail.

The *maximum* weight of a newspaper packet will be reduced to 5lb., the present *maximum* for a book packet.

A registration fee of 2d. will be charged upon packets found open in the post or opened in the returned letter office if they contain a postal order in which the name of the payee has not been inserted, an uncrossed cheque or dividend warrant, a bank note, postage stamps, or any other article (other than coin, watches, or jewelry) of value above 1s.

No postal packet will be transmitted by post if anything is so written, printed, or impressed upon the address side as to embarrass the officers of the Department in dealing with it, but, subject to this rule, the regulation which has hitherto restricted writing or printing on the address side of a post card or other postal packet will no longer be enforced.

The scale of commission on ordinary inland money orders will be recast, and the charges, on the whole, largely reduced. They will be:—

For an order not exceeding £3	3d.
,, exceeding £3 but not exceeding £10	4d.

The commission on foreign and colonial money orders of the higher values will also be reduced. The new rates will be:—

For an order not exceeding £2	6d.
,, exceeding £2 but not exceeding £6	1s.
,, ,, £6 ,, ,, £10	1s. 6d.

The charges for telegraph money orders, apart from the cost of the telegram, will be reduced from a scale going up to one shilling to the following rates:—

For sums not exceeding £3	4d.
,, exceeding £3 but not exceeding £10	6d.

The charge for correcting or altering the name of the remitter or payee of an inland order will be reduced from a sum equal to the original commission to a fixed sum of one penny.

The charge for stopping payment of an inland order—formerly equal to the original commission—will be fixed at 4d., and this fee will cover the issue of a new order, if the request for a new order is made at the time of stopping payment.

The charge of 1s. or 2s. now made according to the amount of the orders for issuing duplicate orders or renewing void orders will be reduced to 6d.

The remitter of a telegraph money order will be able to direct that it shall be delivered at the payee's residence, and he will also be able to direct that it shall be crossed for payment through a bank. The only extra charge will be for the addition of the necessary instructions to the telegram of advice.

A penny stamp will no longer be required to be affixed to a money order when payment is deferred, and payment may be deferred for any period not exceeding 10 days. Formerly the postponement of payment could only be for the exact period of ten days.

THE INLAND REVENUE AND REPRODUCTION OF STAMPS.

8.1.97.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have undertaken to publish a work on postage stamps, discussing the subject from the collector's point of view. The book is to be included in an illustrated series, and accordingly I proposed to reproduce some of the rare and obsolete stamps which are of interest to the philatelic student. Suddenly I was warned that the authorities at Somerset-house were likely to raise some objection to my plan. I lost no time in approaching the Board of Inland Revenue with a full explanation of my scheme, asking for information as to the legal objection, if any, and in due course received the following reply :—

"Inland Revenue, Somerset-house, London, W.C., Dec. 24, 1896.

"Sir,—I have laid your letter of the 25th ult., before the Board of Inland Revenue, and I am directed to state that they regret they are unable to accede to the application made therein. They must decline to give any sanction to the imitation of stamps in any form.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"W. H. COUSINS, Secretary.

"George Redway, Esq."

I must confess that I am thoroughly puzzled. I cannot suppose that there is anything illegal in reproducing obsolete stamps, for I see in circulation not only books, but newspapers, catalogues, and albums—the latter, of course, made in Germany—containing illustrations of the kind which the Inland Revenue people "decline to sanction." The shop windows of dealers are filled with them.

As the collecting of stamps is now so general, I am sure that a large number of your readers will feel an interest in the matter, and possibly one of them who has a seat in Parliament will think it his duty to inquire into the action of the Board of Inland Revenue in the interests of stamp collectors and publishers.

Your obedient servant,

GEORGE REDWAY.

9, Hart-street, Bloomsbury, London, Jan. 6.

THE INLAND REVENUE AND REPRODUCTION OF STAMPS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Permit us, as printers of philatelic literature, and therefore having some knowledge of the subject, to add our protest to that of Mr. Redway in your issue of to-day. The only effect, we believe, of section 7 of the Act of 1884 has been to take work away from the British workman and give it to his German *confrère*, for while illustrations of stamps are not allowed to be printed in England, albums containing them are freely admitted by the Customs from abroad.

Illustrations of stamps are generally from woodcuts, "process" blocks, or "autotype" or other photographs, and printed in black, and consequently cannot be mistaken for the finely-engraved and coloured originals. We think, therefore, that the Revenue would be sufficiently protected if respectable firms of printers were granted licences or permits to make, have in their possession, and print from such blocks or negatives on their producing satisfactory evidence of the purpose for which the illustrations were to be used, and submitting the blocks, &c., for inspection, giving also such guarantees as might be considered necessary. If this were done much work could be executed in England that is now sent abroad.

Your obedient servants,

PERKINS, BACON, AND CO. (LIMITED).

JAMES D. HEATH, Managing Director.

No. 69, Fleet-street, E.C., Jan. 8. 1897.

THE POST OFFICE AND RETURNED NEWSPAPERS.—Mr. E. J. Kibblewhite, a director of the Strand Newspaper Company (Limited), writes from the office of the *Weekly Times and Echo*, January 23 :—"Twice in 34 years I have asked and had the invaluable aid of *The Times* in successfully resisting the encroachment of the Post Office on the convenience of the newspaper-reading public. May I ask your indulgence again? All letters which cannot be delivered on account of removal, insufficient address, &c., are very properly returned by the Post Office to the senders, without charge. Till lately, all newspapers, book packets, &c., were also returned free. The Post Office is now trying to levy a charge on returned newspapers, which I am refusing to pay, and I trust every newspaper publisher will do the same. The idea is a preposterous one, and unfair to subscribers to papers. I have, further, reason to believe that the foreign mailing of newspapers is most irregularly attended to. I have never had so many complaints as lately from American and foreign subscribers, complaining that they receive newspapers of successive dates by the same mail delivery. Any treatment of newspapers is good enough at St. Martin's-le-Grand—for the never-tiring agents that bring the Post Office three-parts of its most profitable business."

STAMPING OF PRIVATE ENVELOPES.—Mr. F. Green writes from Thornfield, Tunbridge Wells :—"Last October you were good enough to insert in *The Times* a letter from me containing a complaint of the embossed envelopes bearing stamps for foreign postage issued by the Post Office, and an account of the steps taken in Parliament and elsewhere to have the complaint attended to. In the letter I alluded to a memorandum which was furnished by the Department to Mr. Griffith-Boscawen, M.P. for the Tonbridge Division, and which he showed to me. The memorandum, while admitting the justice of the complaint, stated that new envelopes without the defect complained of would not be issued till the old ones were all sold, or in ten years' time. The memorandum went on to call attention to a remedy which the public had in their own hands; they could avail themselves of the facilities afforded by the Inland Revenue Department for stamping any envelopes they preferred. I have recently ascertained what those facilities are, and with your permission will impart my knowledge. Wishing to have about a hundred perfectly opaque, light envelopes stamped for foreign postage, and thinking that all I had to do was to send them to the proper authority with a postal order for the value of the stamps and the cost of sending the parcel back to me, I wrote to London for the necessary particulars. In answer I received a memorandum from the Controller of Stamps and Stores, Inland Revenue, Somerset-house, to which was attached a copy of the regulations having reference to the subject. By the first regulation I must pay a fee of 2s., by the second, paper to be stamped must be sent unfolded and uncreased; and by the seventh, persons in the country must not send through the post, but must employ a London agent. Those are the facilities afforded by the Inland Revenue Department. In my case they are insuperable obstacles."

PROPOSED NEW POSTAL REGULATIONS.

30.1.97.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I beg you will permit me space in your columns to draw the attention of the public to one of the alterations proposed to be adopted by the Post Office authorities on February 1 ensuing—namely, the imposition of a charge of 3d. as commission for money orders for all sums under £3 instead of the present charge of 2d. for sums under £1 and 3d. under £2.

It will be evident that any advantage accruing to remitters will only be to those who purchase orders for the larger amounts and will impinge adversely and, I submit, inequitably on the remitters of the smaller sums.

I would further add that the operation of the contemplated change will be largely felt by friendly societies and kindred benefit institutions.

In the case of my own society, numbering with the juvenile branch 220,000 members throughout the United Kingdom, payments are made by and to its members (as such) through the medium of postal and money orders to the number approximately of 930,000 per annum, 630,000 of which are money orders, and of these 500,000, at least, are for sums under £1, and were the proposal in question to be enforced there would be an additional charge on the members, *in cumulo*, of over £2,000 per annum; and surely the Post Office authorities would not wittingly frame and enforce any measure which would in any wise discourage the growth of friendly and benefit societies, which are such growing and powerful factors in the conservation and fostering of the habits of thrift among the people.

I would submit that the proposal will prove disadvantageous to the majority of remitters through the medium of money orders, and I take this opportunity of suggesting that it be modified by the reduction of commission on money orders for sums under £1 from 2d. to 1d. I am convinced that were the Postmaster-General to adopt such reduced scale the public benefit would be materially consulted, and a further addition to the already magnificent revenue derived from the Post Office secured.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THOS. W. GALLOWAY, Secretary Hearts of Oak Benefit Society.

17, Charlotte-street, Fitzroy-square, W., Jan. 28.

INSUFFICIENTLY-STAMPED LETTERS FROM ABROAD.—Mr. T. Russell Endean wrote recently to the Postmaster-General directing attention to the "penalizing of foreign correspondence on its delivery in Great Britain when overweighted for the value of the stamps affixed," and asking that the present regulations should be modified. He pointed out that upon all underpaid letters received from abroad the British Post Office charged 2½d. per ½oz., and then doubled this charge upon the addressee. "The addressor," he said, "is the culpable party; he is hundreds, often thousands of miles distant from the place of delivery, yet he escapes scot free, whilst the addressee, who has had no knowledge of, nor power over, the transmission, by your system is made the victim. . . . If all such correspondence were made liable to be charged for the overweight the same postal cost of an ordinary letter posted in Great Britain—that is to say, a charge of 1d. per oz. made upon such foreign letter upon its overweight, whatever it might be—this would be a just arrangement and one with which no one would have a just cause of quarrel." In reply Mr. Endean received the following letter :—"Sir,—In reply to your letter of the 18th inst. I am directed by the Postmaster-General to state that the principle of charging double the deficient postage upon the delivery of unpaid or insufficiently-paid letters is one which it is not con-

sidered safe to abandon or to interfere with in any way. It is the principle accepted virtually throughout the whole world as the best practicable means of securing that correspondence shall be properly prepaid. There is, of course, the possible alternative of detaining insufficiently-prepaid correspondance or of returning it to the sender for the deficiency to be made good, but it is thought better, and more satisfactory to the public, to deliver the correspondence in the usual course, charged, rather than to subject it to delay. As a rule the addressee of a letter charged in this way, it is believed, may safely be relied on to bring to the knowledge of the sender his neglect to prepay the proper postage on it. Your suggestion that insufficiently-paid correspondence from foreign countries should be charged here at the ordinary inland rate only is open to the objection that to pursue such a course would be to offer such correspondence, when unpaid, the privilege of passing at a much lower rate than when properly prepaid. This would be a manifest encouragement to the senders to post their letters unpaid and so to deprive foreign post-offices of the postage properly due to them. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, H. BUXTON FORMAN." Mr. Endean then wrote again to say that "if foreign letters were sent into this country wholly unpaid there would then be just grounds for holding that the senders sought to defraud the revenue of their own country, but in 99 cases out of every 100 of letters sent in which the weight exceeded the value of the stamps affixed there can be no doubt that the senders were totally unaware of such excess and had no thought of fraud. I trust some member of the House of Commons will move for a return of the numbers of foreign letters and parcels that were surcharged and fined in Great Britain in 1896, and the same with or upon all purely British correspondence and parcels; and the amount thus received by the Post Office, I venture to think, will very greatly surprise the British public." 1.2.97

POST OFFICE IDIOSYNCRACIES.—In spite of the useful reforms that have just come into operation, it is clear that there yet exists plenty of room for improvement on the part of the postal authorities. The following complaints, for instance, have reached us during the past day or two. "Vox Clamantis in Deserto" has two grievances to expose. "Not long ago," he says, "I addressed a letter to a well-known politician and former member of Parliament residing in London. The letter was correctly addressed in every respect save that instead of 'W.' I had inadvertently written 'E.C.' The letter was returned to me after a short delay with the information that the house referred to was pulled down. In the dark ages of the Post Office, which I am old enough to remember, the officials were absurd enough occasionally to recommend the postman to 'try' another address. Such antiquated methods are, of course, out of date now we are on the eve of the 20th century. About four years ago I moved, leaving my former address at the post office of my former place of residence. A year had scarcely elapsed when I received from a friend an envelope sent to my former address and returned to him with the endorsement, 'Gone, left no address.' I inquired about this strange misstatement, and was informed that the Post Office did not undertake to forward letters after a year had elapsed. This is, perhaps, a little hard upon a person who, like myself, holds a public position and carries on a large correspondence. But it is not precisely the fact. A short time ago I received a letter from an American correspondent, who had not written to me for some 12 years, and was not quite certain whether I was yet alive. Courtesy to the distinguished foreigner apparently stimulated the Post Office to unusual exertions. It actually forwarded the letter, although I had left my address behind, to a cathedral where I hold an honorary appointment, but where I do not reside, and thence the letter was duly forwarded to me." "Perplexed" writes:—"In, I believe, every European country except England it is permissible to send an ordinary inland postcard out of the country by making up the stamp to the proper amount—*e.g.*, a halfpenny German card can be sent to England by putting an extra halfpenny on it. Here it is otherwise; and if an inland card be sent abroad even with the extra halfpenny stamp the recipient in France, for instance, is mulcted in a tax of 3d. Why is this so?" Attention is called by a third correspondent—Mr. F. Green, of Thornfield, Tunbridge Wells—to the fact that, while the "Postal Guide" declares mails to be due from Egypt every Thursday and in most weeks on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays as well, the "Daily List" issued by the Post Office only gives the dates on which mails conveyed by the British packet service are due. "Why the Department," says Mr. Green, "continues to publish incorrect and, therefore, misleading information it is not easy to guess. Whether the similar information as to other places is faulty I know not, but in all probability it is." 3.2.97

POST OFFICE SAGACITY.—Messrs. W. Barns and Son write from Christopher Works, Chalton-street, N.W., enclosing an envelope which they intended for a correspondent at Durban, Natal, but which was in error addressed to Durham:—"We do not know," they say, "by what process of reasoning other than speculative theory the post-office people were governed, but it duly reached Durban without any intervention of ours, the only guide apparently being the 2½d. stamp. This incident, paralleled by many others, doubtless shows with what a splendid contempt for red tape this important department is worked, and we think it would be an act of injustice to let it pass unnoticed." 7.2.97

THE POST OFFICE AND NEWSPAPERS.—"G" writes under date, Feb. 2:—As contributing to the correspondence on the question of newspapers and the muddleheaded state of affairs daily brought to light at the Post Office, I shall be glad if you will allow me to relate my past week's experience. Having discovered an error of an important word during the time an issue was being wrappered to send to the post, I inserted an erratum slip, about the size of half a sheet of note paper, in the remaining copies. All the copies containing the slip were surcharged one halfpenny. Had I printed on the top "Supplement to ——" (naming the paper), said the sapient official I interviewed on the matter, it would have passed through at the ordinary rate. I suppose, too, the copies would have been surcharged had I taken the trouble to alter the word in ink, as then the paper would have contained "written matter." Newspapers, therefore, cannot send out a correcting slip (weighing probably a hundredth part of an ounce), but they can send out sheets of advertisements or other matter to an apparently unlimited extent at the ordinary newspaper rate of one halfpenny, provided they are headed "Supplement to" the particular paper issuing them.

POST OFFICE PERVERSITY.—Messrs. Clarke, Nickolls, and Coombs write from Hackney-wick to complain of "vexatious restriction upon the transmission of commercial correspondence" which has recently been put into force by the Post Office. "For many years," they say, "we have issued two circular forms for acknowledging the receipt of remittances and orders respectively. These were originally passed by the G.P.O. and have never been questioned as admissible at the book rate of postage. Within the last few weeks we have had several forms returned to us, as refused owing to a surcharge of 1d. On asking an explanation from the Post Office, we are favoured with an official pronouncement that 'the documents in question cannot be regarded either as advice notes or receipts within the meaning of paragraph F. page 4, of the Postal Guide.' To the average commercial man no difference of definition is apparent, but Government officials are as fearfully and wonderfully made as their own ordinances. We think perhaps the explanation of this sudden access of zeal may be found in the concessions in one or two directions which have been recently made to the public, as we have observed in other instances a disposition to 'make good' any possible loss of revenue through concessions forced on the Post Office by the pressure of public opinion. One would almost imagine this Department run on the lines of inland revenue rather than being primarily intended for the convenience of the general public." The forms in question are printed as follows, spaces being merely left for the dates and amounts to be written in:—"Your esteemed order of —— has duly reached us and shall receive our earliest attention"; and "we beg to acknowledge your favour of —— with a remittance —— which we have placed to the credit of your account with thanks." 18.2.97

BOW-STREET.

Henry Bishop was charged before Mr. Lushington with stealing postage stamps.—Mr. M'Intyre prosecuted on behalf of the Postmaster General. He stated that numerous complaints had been received as to the removal of foreign stamps from letters and parcels arriving from abroad. In consequence of this two test letters were made up on Friday night. One was addressed to Messrs. Cook and Sons, Ludgate-circus. On this two Russian stamps were placed. The second was addressed to the P. and O. Company, Leadenhall-street. When posted it bore two Japanese stamps. Both letters passed through Prisoner's hands in the ordinary way, but when they were delivered it was found that the stamps had been removed. The Prisoner was arrested, and admitted having taken the stamps. He produced them from his pocket, and they proved to bear a private mark placed on them by the Post Office authorities. Mr. M'Intyre added that the offence was a most mischievous one, as the persons to whom the letters were addressed were called upon to pay postage when the stamps had been removed.—Evidence in support of the statement having been given, Prisoner was remanded. 6.3.97.

At BOW-STREET, before Mr. Lushington, WILLIAM HENRY BISHOP, a second-class sorter in the General Post Office, was charged with felony. Mr. M'Intyre, who prosecuted on behalf of the Postmaster-General, stated that, in consequence of numerous complaints received by the authorities of the removal of stamps from foreign letters and parcels arriving in this country, suspicion fell upon the accused. Two test letters were accordingly made up, which passed through his hands in the ordinary course of his duties on Friday night. One of these, addressed to Messrs. Cook and Son, Ludgate-circus, bore Russian stamps; and the other, addressed to the P. and O. Company, Leadenhall-street, had Japanese stamps upon it. In both cases the stamps were removed in transit through the sorting office, and the accused when spoken to by a detective officer admitted having taken them. Mr. M'Intyre added that, though the value of the stamps taken was very small, the offence of which the accused had been guilty was a most mischievous one, as persons to whom letters were addressed, from which the stamps had been removed, were called upon to pay additional postage on delivery. Formal evidence of arrest having been given, the accused was remanded. 6.3.97.

At BOW-STREET, yesterday, before Mr. Vaughan, the STRAND NEWSPAPER COMPANY (LIMITED) was summoned for the payment of 4½d., due to the postal authorities for the return of nine newspaper packets to the senders. Mr. Edwin Winter supported the summons on behalf of the Postmaster-General; Mr. E. J. Kibblewhite, director of the defendant company, conducted his case in person. Mr. Winter said that these proceedings were taken under section 43 of the Post Office Act, 1 Vic., cap. 36, which provided for the recovery of the costs of postage not exceeding £20 in any Court of summary jurisdiction. The claim now made was for the return of the postage of ½d. on nine newspapers, copies of the *Weekly Times and Echo*, posted by the defendant company to various persons in London and the country, which, for various reasons, were undeliverable, and, in accordance with the request printed on the wrapper, were returned to the company. This demand was made in accordance with a Treasury warrant dated November 13, 1894, issued under the authority granted by the Post Office Act, 1875. By that Act the Treasury was authorized to fix the rates of postage and the circumstances under which charges were to be levied. This warrant, after giving the public, in an earlier clause, the right to the free redirection of any postal packet except a parcel, provided that with regard to any postal packet with a postage not exceeding ½d., when a request for the return of such packet to the sender appeared on the outside, the packet should be charged with a new, distinct rate of postage equal to that originally charged. Until their attention was called to it, the defendant company did not endorse their wrappers with a request for the return of undelivered packets, but such a request now appeared on their wrappers, and counsel submitted that this request was a consent to the charge. Mr. Vaughan asked if the charge was contested? Mr. Kibblewhite replied that the defence contended that the Act of Parliament referred to did not authorize the Treasury to issue any such warrant for a charge on undelivered papers, and that the Post Office had no legal or moral right to make such a charge. Mr. Winter called Mr. James Swainson, principal clerk in the secretary's office of the G.P.O., who produced the nine newspaper packets in question, the copy of a letter sent from his office to the defendant company, and Mr. Kibblewhite's reply, which was as follows:—"We refuse to pay the 4½d. We are of opinion, in common with other newspaper publishers, that you have no right to make such a charge, and that it is ridiculously unfair that newspapers should be so surcharged or confiscated, while other communications which cannot be delivered are returned free. The interests of the taxpayers of the country' are in no way served by such exceptional unfairness. The Department does little enough for newspapers, who bring it most of its business, and the Postmaster-General would be much better employed in extending to us the facilities which are granted in other civilized countries than in devising useless and vexatious restrictions from time to time. Many of these during the past 14 years I have had to compel the Department to abandon. I shall have to take similar action again, but it is thankless work." Other formal evidence having been given, Mr. Kibblewhite maintained that the Act referred to only authorized the issue of a warrant dealing with the matters mentioned in the Act—viz., outgoing postage. There was not one word in the Act as to any charge to be made for the return of undelivered postal packets. Mr. Winter said that there was no obligation on the part of the Postmaster-General to return undelivered letters at all. Mr. Kibblewhite submitted that custom conferred such an obligation upon him. Mr. Vaughan said that he would consider the point, and he adjourned the case for a week for that purpose. 11. 3. 97

10.3.97 CHRISTMAS-BOXES TO POSTMEN.

In reply to Mr. MASSEY-MAINWARING (Finsbury, Central) and Mr. WOODS (Essex, Walthamstow),

Mr. HANBURY said,—The Postmaster-General's attention has been drawn to a statement in the newspapers to the effect that at a recent meeting of postmen a telegram from Lord Tweedmouth to the following effect was read:—"That the committee's report clearly indicates that the effective prohibition of Christmas-boxes must necessarily be accompanied by the granting of a higher scale of wages to postmen." The Postmaster-General has not seen the actual text of that telegram; but the recommendation of the committee over which Lord Tweedmouth presided was the adoption of a general rule for all postmen against solicitation of Christmas-boxes. A rule somewhat similar to that recommended by the committee is already in force throughout the whole of the United Kingdom except the metropolis. The committee go on to say:—"Had we seen our way to recommend total prohibition we might have suggested somewhat higher scales of wages for postmen; but the payment which we have proposed is, we believe, in itself, under the conditions contemplated in this report, an adequate remuneration for a postman's labour." The Postmaster-General does not, therefore, intend to make any payment in lieu of Christmas-boxes. The new rule will be acted upon next Christmas. The committee's report, as the hon. member is aware, has already been laid upon the table of the House.

BOW-STREET.

The adjourned case of the Strand Newspaper Company (Limited), who were summoned for refusing to pay 4½d., alleged to be due as return postage on nine newspapers it had been found impossible to deliver, came on for decision before Mr. Vaughan.—Mr. Edwin Winter appeared for the Postmaster General; Mr. E. J. Kibblewhite appeared for the Company, of which he is manager.—In giving his decision, Mr. Vaughan said it was admitted that the Defendant Company had sent nine newspapers through the post which from various causes it had been found impossible to deliver, and were consequently returned to the senders, in accordance with a request printed on the wrappers. For the defence, it was contended that there was no power under the Statute for making a demand for payment of services in returning these papers to the senders. Mr. Vaughan pointed out that a Treasury warrant was issued in November, 1894, which provided, among other things, that with regard to any postal packet chargeable by law with a postage not exceeding one halfpenny, and with regard to any newspapers which from any cause could not be delivered, the following conditions should apply:—"Where a request for the return of such postal packet to the sender thereof appears on the outside of such packet, such packet shall be charged with a new and distinct rate of postage equal in amount to the prepaid rate of postage originally chargeable upon the packet, and such rate of postage shall be paid by the sender of such package." The Magistrate proceeded to say: It seems to me to be most clear that the original postage on that paper was a postage which was exhausted by the attempt to deliver the paper to the recipient, and in complying with the request of the Defendant Company for the return of the paper to them there was a new state of circumstances arising. There were fresh duties imposed upon the Postmaster General; fresh services were rendered; and for those fresh services it is perfectly clear that the claim of one halfpenny for each paper is one in regard to which there can be no possibility of refusal without an infringement of the law. Therefore, I must make an order for the payment of this sum of 4½d., and the costs of the summons. 11. 3. 97

At BOW-STREET, Mr. Edwin Winter applied to Mr. Vaughan on behalf of the Postmaster-General for a summons against the Strand Newspaper Company (Limited) for the payment of 4½d. due to the postal authorities for postage. He said that this company sent copies of the *Weekly Times and Echo* to persons in various parts of the country and on the wrappers was a printed request that the papers might be returned to the senders if not delivered. Several copies were so returned, and ½d. was demanded on each paper, but the company refused to pay the money. This demand was a matter of principle with the postal authorities, and possibly the refusal was a similar matter of principle with the company, but, at any rate, it was a point which ought to be cleared up. The summons was granted. 9. 3. 97

THE TELEGRAPHIC SERVICE. 13 3 97

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether, with the view of simplifying the departmental accounts and facilitating the introduction of reforms in the telegraphic service, he would recommend that the balance still outstanding of the debt originally incurred for the acquisition of the inland telegraphs should be no longer charged exclusively against telegraph revenue, but capitalized and paid off by means of a sinking fund.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—If the hon. member will refer to Parliamentary Paper No. 49 of this Session he will see that the debt originally incurred for the acquisition of the telegraphs consists of capital stock (Consols) created under Acts of Parliament, and forms part of the Funded Debt of the country. In the same paper the hon. member will see that, in addition to the capital stock raised, there is a further sum for accumulated annual deficiencies of no less than £6,186,546. In these circumstances the hon. member will also see that, as there is no surplus of telegraph revenue, the charge of the debt created for the purchase of the telegraphs cannot be paid out of that revenue.

10.3.97. JUBILEE POSTAGE STAMPS.

In answer to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury),

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—It was not suggested that any particular difficulties prevented the issue of a special imperial stamp or postage stamps. In the opinion of her Majesty's Government the issue of a special Imperial stamp or postage stamps is not the proper way to commemorate the jubilee of her Majesty the Queen, and, apart from the fact that it would now be too late to do so, the designs for coins and stamps do not seem to improve as time goes on. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON asked whether it was not the fact that a new series of postage stamps was now in course of preparation.

Mr. HANBURY.—That is a separate question, which I am not at this moment prepared to answer. (Hear.)

BICYCLES FOR POSTMEN.

In answer to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury).

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—For many years it has been the practice to establish cycle posts in rural districts where the conditions are suitable, but no special advance in this direction has been made since the last Session of Parliament. It must be recollected that only those rural posts are adapted for cycles where the roads are tolerably flat and in good order, and where the postman has not to cross fields and follow bye-roads. In those cases where cycles are used by postmen in the service of the Department, the Department does not itself provide the cycles, but grants an allowance of 4s. a week in each case, the postman making his own arrangements as to purchase and maintenance. As regards telegraph messengers, arrangements have been made since last Session to supply bicycles, which will remain the property of the Department, to 22 provincial towns as an experiment. The result of this concurrent trial of the two systems will enable the Department to decide which will be preferable as a permanent arrangement. In the suburban districts of London some bicycles, the property of the Department, are about to be used experimentally with the same object. It would not be expedient to state the price paid for the bicycles.

6.3.97 THE TELEPHONE SERVICE.

In answer to Mr. BARTLEY (Islington, N.),

Mr. HANBURY said,—The attention of the Postmaster-General has not recently been called to any inefficiency in the telephone service in London and Westminster, and he has no knowledge of the inability of the Telephone Company to supply persons with telephones. He understands that the company are making every effort to place the service on a satisfactory basis, and that the work of reconstructing the system on the metallic circuit principle is now nearly completed. The company state that they hope to be able to make arrangements for largely putting the lines underground, and that they will then be enabled to effect still further improvements.

Mr. BARTLEY gave notice that on the Post Office Estimates he should draw attention to the unsatisfactory condition of the telephone service.

DELIVERY OF BUSINESS LETTERS AT PRIVATE ADDRESSES.

6.3.97.

In answer to Mr. GRANT LAWSON (York, N.R., Thirsk).

Mr. HANBURY said,—There is no rule which precludes postmasters from delivering letters bearing a business or professional description at the private address of the person for whom they are obviously intended. If such letters, besides bearing a business description, are actually addressed to a place of business, it is the postmaster's duty to deliver them there in accordance with the general rule which requires that all letters should be delivered at the place of their address; but even in such cases arrangements can be made for a special delivery at the addressee's private residence on payment of an annual fee of one guinea.

THE NEW RULES OF THE LAND COMMISSION.

Mr. DILLON (Mayo, E.) asked the Attorney-General for Ireland whether the new rules of the Land Commission had been yet laid upon the table.

At BOW-STREET, yesterday, before Mr. Vaughan, Mr. E. J. KIBBLEWHITE, director of the Strand Newspaper Company (Limited), appeared to an adjourned summons requiring him to pay 4½d. due to the postal authorities for the return of nine undelivered postal packets, being copies of the *Weekly Times and Echo*. Mr. E. Winter supported the summons on behalf of the Postmaster-General. The case had been adjourned by Mr. Vaughan that he might consider his decision. Mr. Vaughan now said it appeared on the last occasion that this summons was taken out by the Postmaster-General to require the defendant company to pay 4½d. in respect of postage upon nine newspapers which had been sent through the post, but, for various causes, could not be delivered, and so were returned to the senders, in accordance with a request printed upon the wrappers. For the defence it was contended that there was no power under the statute of making a demand for the payment of services rendered in returning these papers to the senders. The Act of Parliament under which the proceedings were taken was the Post Office Act of 1875, the first section of which enacted that the Treasury might from time to time by warrant fix the rates of postage and other sums to be charged by them under the authority of the Postmaster-General. The rate of postage on a newspaper was fixed at ½d., but it was further provided, under section 4, that "all postal packets shall be subject to such regulations . . . respecting the payment of rates of postage and other sums chargeable under this Act, or any warrant made under this Act." That being the case, it followed that any warrant made by the Commissioners of the Treasury had the force of an Act of Parliament. A warrant was issued on November 13, 1894, which provided, amongst other things, that with regard to any postal packet chargeable by law with a postage not exceeding ½d., and with regard to any newspaper, which in any case could not be delivered, the following condition should apply:—"When a request for the return of such postal packet to the sender thereof appears on the outside of such packet, such packet shall be charged with a new and distinct rate of postage equal in amount to the prepaid rate of postage originally chargeable upon the packet, and such rate and postage shall be paid by the sender of such package." Mr. Vaughan concluded:—"It appears to me to be most clear that the original postage upon the paper was a postage which was exhausted by the attempt to deliver the paper to the recipient; that, in complying with the request of the defendant for the return of the paper to him, there was a new state of circumstances arising; there were fresh duties imposed upon the Postmaster-General; there was a fresh service rendered; and for that fresh service it is perfectly clear that the claim of ½d. is one in regard to which there can be no possibility of refusal without an infringement of the law. Therefore I must make an order for the payment of this sum—4½d.—and the costs of the summons." Mr. Winter asked if the magistrate would increase the order for costs. Mr. Vaughan replied that he had considered that point, and, as this was in the nature of a test case, he did not think it would be just to require the defendant to pay any larger costs. An order for the payment of 2s. 4½d. was made accordingly. 16.3.97.

POSTMEN'S CHRISTMAS-BOXES.——A largely-attended meeting of London postmen, convened by the Postmen's Federation, was held last evening at the Memorial-hall, Farringdon-street, to consider the recent report of Lord Tweedmouth's Committee, and more particularly that portion dealing with the proposed abolition of Christmas-boxes without equivalent compensation. Mr. J. Stuart, M.P., who presided, said that, while the postmen were amongst the most hard-worked, efficient, and honourable members of the public service, they were certainly not the best paid. There might be very great differences of opinion as to whether the Christmas gratuity was the best system which could be adopted, but it ought not to be practically abolished without a proper and suitable recompense. Sympathetic telegrams had been received from all quarters. Mr. C. Churchfield (secretary of the Postmen's Federation) moved a resolution to the effect that the meeting viewed with intense dissatisfaction the committee's report, strongly protested against the decisions given, as being entirely at variance with the evidence put forward on their behalf, and deprecated the scant consideration bestowed upon their moderate claims, which intensified the existing discontent. They would pledge themselves to persist in agitating for adequate recompense for the loss which the committee's recommendation entailed, and use every legitimate endeavour to secure a just recognition of their claims by the appointment of a Royal Commission to rehear the whole case. The resolution was seconded, and carried with acclamation. Mr. Wilkins moved a further resolution, which was adopted, dealing with the question of postmen's wages, and said that what the Postmen's Federation would ever agitate for was a *minimum* wage of 20s. per week, rising to 40s. a week. Other resolutions were adopted expressing surprise and indignation at the fact of this committee's having failed to deal fairly and impartially with the points on which convincing evidence was given by the postmen, including promotion, holidays, casual and special leave, exemption from parcel work, recognition of the federation, the London floating staff, and the hours of duty. One speaker, a postman, declared that the proposal to deprive letter-carriers of their Christmas-boxes was nothing less than a robbery, for the men would lose nearly the whole of the £139,000 per annum which the public at present subscribed in the shape of the yearly gratuity. 16.3.97

We understand that the report of Lord Tweedmouth's Committee on Post Office Establishments, which was laid upon the table of the House of Commons by Mr. Hanbury yesterday, contains no recommendation concerning pensions, it being pointed out that the question is one affecting the Civil Service as a whole and that the work of the Post Office should not be such as to necessitate exceptional treatment for its servants. With regard to "split" duties, which involve the attendance of a man at his office on more than one occasion within 24 hours, the committee recommend that the duties should be so arranged as to allow him to have nine clear hours in his own home each day. They further recommend the adoption of a uniform system of payment for overtime at a rate and a quarter (seven hours' night duty to count as eight hours, and duty on Sunday, Christmas Day, and Good Friday to be paid at a rate and a half); the reduction of the probationary period prior to appointment on the establishment from two years to one, with two instead of three medical examinations; a rearrangement of the annual leave scheme so that sorters, telegraphists, and countermen telegraphists in London, and certain clerks and telegraphists in the provinces during their first five years of service shall have 14 week days and afterwards 21 week days; while postmen and lower classes on the establishment shall have 14 days, Bank holidays and absence through illness being excluded from the calculation; the abolition of the present classification in the case of officers not performing work of supervision, with the proviso that officers shall proceed by annual increments from the *minimum* wage of their class to the *maximum*, no compensation being allowed where the change may prejudicially affect existing officers; and the continuance of the present system of fines, a list being posted in every office. 11.3.97.

Other recommendations are that before proceeding to the *maximum* of their class telegraphists shall be required to give some substantial guarantee of excellence of conduct and efficiency of service when they reach a salary, in London, of £112 a year and in the provinces of 40s. a week; that the system of stripes for long service which carry with them increases of pay shall be extended so that a man may obtain six stripes for 30 years' unblemished service; each stripe representing five years' service; that the uniform of rural postmen shall be assimilated to that of urban postmen; that the burdens to be carried by postmen be limited to 35lb. in towns and 25lb. in villages; and that an increase of pay be given to postmen all round on scales which in London will rise from 18s. to 26s. in the outer districts and from 20s. to 34s. in the central districts, and in the provinces from a *minimum* of 16s. to a *maximum* of 30s. The committee condemn Christmas boxes in principle, but they adopt the view that it is impracticable to put an end to the system, and they suggest that solicitation should in future be prohibited.

Accompanying the report is a Treasury Minute dated March 9 and forwarded by Mr. Hanbury to the Duke of Norfolk. In this it is explained that the immediate cost of the changes proposed will be £139,000 per annum, while it is estimated that the ultimate cost will be £275,000. Their Lordships authorize the Postmaster-General to give effect to the recommendations on and from April 1 next. Their acceptance, they say, is dictated by a desire to do full justice to one of the largest and most important services of the State, and they add that the settlement must be accepted as permanently satisfying all the reasonable claims of the classes included in its terms. 11. 3. 97

ANSWERS TO POST OFFICE QUESTIONS.

Mr. PICKERSGILL (Bethnal-green, S.W.) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether, in reply to questions on Post Office affairs addressed to him in this House by honourable members, he had given answers drawn up by some permanent official, in respect of which the Postmaster-General had not been consulted. 3. 4. 97

Mr. HANBURY.—The replies which I have given in the House to questions on Post Office affairs have been either approved by the Postmaster-General himself or have been prepared by some officer of the Post Office acting with the Postmaster-General's concurrence and by his direction. On ascertaining, however, that one or two unimportant answers had only been seen by the permanent chiefs, I expressed the opinion that every answer should be carefully considered by the Parliamentary head of the Department, and I am now informed in all cases where the answer has been passed by the permanent officials only, so that I may then make special inquiry myself and approve or disapprove the reply. So many questions are asked upon the same day on which they first appear upon the paper that it must necessarily sometimes happen that there is not time to obtain the views of both the permanent and the political chiefs of the Department, and it is only in cases of that kind that any difficulty whatever has arisen.

THE NON-DELIVERY OF TELEGRAMS. 3. 4. 97

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, what compensation or redress was allowed to the sender of a telegram when heavy loss followed its non-delivery or blunders in translation on the part of telegraph officials; whether, in the case of complaint No. 72,852, where serious notice had been taken of such an offence, the mere refund of the amount paid was the utmost satisfaction the sender of the telegram could legally claim; and whether a sender of a telegram could by a small extra payment insure its delivery, as in the case of a registered letter.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—No compensation or redress is allowed. The Postmaster-General is not liable for any loss or damage which may be incurred by reason or on account of any mistake or default in the transmission or delivery of a telegram. Notice of this is given on the back of the telegram form used by the public, and also in the Post Office Guide. In the case referred to by the hon. member, the sender of the telegram has no legal claim to the refundment of the amount paid for the telegram, but it is the practice of the Post Office to repay the amount in such cases, and that is the utmost the Department can do. The answer to the third paragraph of the hon. member's question is in the negative. (Hear, hear.)

SIR J. FERGUSSON (Manchester, N.E.) asked whether it was not the fact that, upon payment of a small extra sum, the sender of a telegram could have it repeated from the other end in order to see whether it had been correctly transmitted.

Mr. HANBURY.—That is so. (Hear, hear.)

MOURNING BORDERED POSTCARDS. 9. 4. 97

In answer to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury),

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said.—The rule as to writing and printing on the address side of a postcard has recently been modified, and postcards with a mourning border on either side are now admissible.

Our Berlin Correspondent telegraphed last night in reference to the death early yesterday morning of Dr. von Stephan, Secretary of State for the Imperial Post, as announced in *The Times* yesterday:— 9. 4. 97

"Herr von Stephan had been suffering for some time from diabetes, and the disease latterly manifested itself in local symptoms, involving an inflammation of the foot. An operation was performed by Professor von Bergmann on February 22, but it was unsuccessful, and on Saturday last the amputation of the leg below the knee had to be effected. It was hoped that his life might thus be prolonged, but he gradually sank and passed away peacefully after half-past 12 this morning. Throughout his last illness, and even, it is said, after the operation last Saturday, he continued to manifest his well-known energy in the transaction of public business in his sick room.

"Heinrich Stephan was born on January 7, 1831, at Stolp, in Pomerania. He was the son, according to one account, of an artisan of that small town, though another biographer describes his father as a respected citizen and member of the civic council. He passed his final school examination at the age of 17, and in 1848 he entered the Prussian postal service. It is stated that on that occasion he parodied the famous saying about the field-marshal's bâton in the knapsack of the recruit by declaring to his brother-in-law that 'the man must be a poor fellow who is in the Post Office and does not think of becoming Postmaster-General.' After a short period of service in Berlin he was transferred to Cologne in 1851. At that time the whole transmarine postal service was concentrated and collected in the capital of the Rhine Province, and Stephan received an appointment in the foreign department. He improved his opportunities in order to study the postal traffic of the world, and had already formed in his own mind plans for simplifying it and for its unification. Meanwhile, he had passed various examinations which opened to him the higher branches of the Prussian postal service, and in 1856, when he had become confidential secretary to the Post Office in Berlin, he elaborated a simplified postal tariff between Prussia and the countries of the Austro-German postal union, which was accepted at the conference held in Munich in 1857. In 1860 he took part in the Postal Conference in Frankfurt, and in 1865 he was representative of Prussia at the conclusion of the postal treaty of Copenhagen.

"The great period of Stephan's public career, however, began with the new political conformation of Germany, following upon the Prussian victories of 1866. It was a memorandum submitted by him to the Prussian General Post Office which matured the resolution of the Government to abolish the privileged postal system in the hands of the family of Thurn and Taxis and to convert it into a department of State. He was, accordingly, intrusted with the personal conduct of this great enterprise, and himself superintended, in Frankfurt, from July 17, 1866, to June 30, 1867, the accomplishment of what might fairly be described as the German postal revolution. After the institution of the North German Federation Stephan's plans for a universal German *minimum* tariff of one groschen (about one and one-fifth pence) for letters, as well as his parcel, newspaper, and post-office order tariffs, were definitively introduced, and took effect on January 1, 1868.

"In 1870 he was appointed Postmaster-General on the nomination of Prince Bismarck, and his first achievement at the head of the Post Office was the introduction of postcards, which at once obtained an extraordinary popularity. In 1871 Stephan organized the German Imperial Post, and it was due to his proved diplomacy that the German States practically became one for postal purposes. On July 1, 1875, thanks to the action taken by Stephan, the universal Postal Union came into existence, and 28 States were represented at the conference which met in Paris in 1879. It is this achievement that Germans to-day recall with the greatest pride in the confidence that the initiative of Dr. von Stephan, to which it was due, will secure for him an immortality in the annals of civilization not even second to that of Rowland Hill. Many reforms, too, were brought about by Stephan in the narrower realm of the postal organization of his own country. In 1880 the Emperor William I. conferred upon him the rank and title of Secretary of State, and in 1885 the patent of nobility. In 1895 he received the title of a Minister of State. The late Secretary of State always showed friendliness to the work of the Press in Europe. He made no secret of his kindly feelings towards England, and it is stated that as the champion of international communication he was an advocate of free trade, or, at least, an enemy of prohibitive protection."

One Paris Correspondent reports the death at Wi...

THE POSTAL UNION CONVENTION.

Mr. JAMES LOWTHER (Kent, Thanet) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether care will be taken in connexion with the forthcoming meeting of the Postal Union Convention at Washington to reserve to her Majesty's Government and all other component elements in the British Empire complete freedom of action in respect of all postal arrangements, including charges within the limits of the Empire itself. 9.4.97.

Mr. HANBURY.—In 1890 the Post Office were advised that we had no power to establish rates other than those prescribed by the Union between Great Britain and the colonies. The Congress of Vienna in 1891 held that we might establish with our colonies rates lower than the Union rates, but higher than our inland rates; but whether this will be confirmed by the Washington Congress is a matter of speculation. The representative of the Government will, however, be instructed to urge the point. As a fact the United States and Canada have established rates lower than the Union rates between those two countries, as have Austria and Germany, and the Union has not interfered.

The Prince and Princess of Wales, who were accompanied by Princess Victoria, paid a visit yesterday afternoon to the printing establishment of Messrs. De La Rue and Co., in order to inspect the process of printing the Hospital Fund stamps. On their arrival at the entrance to the works in Dufferin-street, the Royal party were received by Mr. T. A. De La Rue (chairman of the company), Mr. Ernest De La Rue, and other directors. Lady Emily Kingscote and Captain Holford were in attendance, and there were also present Lord Rowton, Sir Savile Crossley, Mr. Stuart Wortley, M.P., Mr. Craggs, Mr. Purcell (Controller of Stamps), and Mr. H. C. Burdett. The process employed was explained by Mr. T. A. De La Rue to the Royal visitors, who watched the printing of several sheets of the stamps with close attention. One of the sheets produced under his notice was initialled by the Prince, who afterwards signed the visitors' book, as did also the Princess of Wales and Princess Victoria. His Royal Highness, before leaving, said.—I wish to say how very much interested we have been in seeing this process of printing the stamps. I most earnestly hope that the working classes will buy as many of them as possible, because in doing so they will be afforded the opportunity of contributing a shilling to the Hospital Fund, and they will always have a souvenir of the occasion by buying one of the stamps. The Royal party afterwards proceeded to the department where the English and Indian stamps are printed. 29.6.97.

THE MULREADY STAMP.

21.5.97.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether the Mulready stamp, the black penny stamp, and other postage stamps of the old issues were still available for postage purposes; whether, for some months past, the Postmaster-General and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue had insisted that stamp dealers and others should desist from publishing miniature and other sized illustrations of these stamps, in black or otherwise, in their catalogues; whether it was within the knowledge of the authorities that an illustration of the Mulready stamp was being largely distributed by the promoters of the Philatelic Exhibition of which the Postmaster-General was one of the patrons; and whether such imitation or illustration was contrary to the regulations of the Post Office and Inland Revenue.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—The answers to the first two paragraphs of the question are in the affirmative. It became known to the Commissioners of Inland Revenue within the last few days that an illustration of the Mulready stamp was being distributed as stated in the question. The Postmaster-General is a patron of the Philatelic Exhibition, but he was not consulted as to the issue of this imitation and was not aware of its issue until informed of it by the Commissioners. He has informed them that he hopes no special exception will be made in favour of the Philatelic Exhibition. In preventing, as far as they can, the imitation of any postage stamps, whether of the United Kingdom or of any colony or foreign country, the Postmaster-General and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue (with whom the enforcement of the law rests) are governed by the reasons which led Parliament to pass the 7th section of the Post Office Protection Act, 1884, and which led her Majesty's Government to enter into Article XVIII. of the Universal Postal Union Convention of Vienna, 1891. Nothing but certain legal doubts, removed by the decision of the High Court in "Dickins v. Gill" a year ago, have prevented a stricter enforcement of the law of which warning was given to all known stamp dealers by public notice in November, 1885. In the opinion of the Postmaster-General and Commissioners of Inland Revenue there is grave risk if dies capable of producing exact imitations of postage stamps in black and white are allowed to be used by unauthorized persons, and a foreign Government has more than once pressed this view upon the attention of her Majesty's Government. It is the case that fictitious stamps and materials for making them are imported into this country. The Judges commented upon this in "Dickins v. Gill," and nothing but the want of a convenient opportunity for legislation has prevented the introduction of a clause to deal with the matter by amending the Customs Consolidation Act.

EMBOSSED STAMPS. 10.4.97.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he was aware that an embossed stamp removed from a spoiled or unused telegraph form (A 1) would be accepted in payment or part payment of a telegram, but that embossed stamps cut out from envelopes or wrappers would not be accepted in payment of postage for a letter; and whether he was aware that the embossed stamps cut from envelopes and used for postage were not only defaced by postal *employés*, but the addressee was fined double the actual postage.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—The Postmaster-General is aware that embossed stamps removed from spoiled or unused telegraph forms are accepted in payment or part payment of telegrams, and also that embossed stamps cut out from envelopes or wrappers are not accepted in payment of postage on letters. The 19th section of the Post Office Act, 1870, distinctly directs that they shall not be so used, and directs that when they are so used the letter shall be dealt with as not prepaid. Embossed stamps improperly fixed to envelopes may in the hurry of stamping get defaced, but as they have already lost their value the owner of the letter is not injured.

1.5.97

It is rather a novelty to find proposals for reform of the postal service in a Budget speech, or indeed anywhere else except in the letters of indignant correspondents. The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER, however, has a surplus which, as we anticipated a month ago, is too large to be left entirely alone, yet not large enough to allow of any substantial decrease of taxation. In these circumstances he has given favourable consideration to some suggestions made by the DUKE of NORFOLK for the improvement of the Post Office services. It seems, in the first place, that there are no fewer than sixteen millions of letters per annum which the Post Office does not attempt to deliver into the hands of the persons for whom they are intended. All that it does is to leave them at some house of call from which the owners fetch them for themselves. Most of us have probably encountered this arrangement on our holiday rambles. There is about it something quaint and idyllic which adds to the charm of rustic seclusion taken in occasional doses. It has even been found useful by novelists, enabling them to weave webs of misunderstanding or intrigue which would otherwise impose a far severer strain upon their invention. But people who live in secluded spots all the year round are rather apt to overlook the romantic side of the house of call, and to sigh for the automatic arrangements that obtain in more populous places. The POSTMASTER-GENERAL is now going to deliver those sixteen millions of letters to their proper recipients. The change cannot of course be carried out in a day, but we understand that it is to be made with all convenient speed. It involves an increase in the number of rural postmen, concurrently with which there is to be some amelioration of their conditions of service at present in many cases somewhat onerous. Carts will have to be employed in many places where the work is now done on foot, and there will be some capital expenditure upon pillar-boxes and receiving-houses. All this will take a little time, but the intention is to have a direct delivery of letters to every house in the United Kingdom, a boon already enjoyed in France and Belgium, but hitherto refused in this country on the ground that district services ought to be self-supporting. 1.5.97

The telegraph service is to share in the liberality of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL. It is proposed that telegrams shall be delivered free within a radius of three miles, and that the charge beyond that distance shall be at the rate of threepence instead of sixpence per mile. This will tend powerfully to extend the use of the telegraph in country districts. Every one must have hesitated to send telegrams to friends in the country on account of uncertainty as to the tax he would impose upon them—a tax in some cases so heavy that men print an intimation of its amount at the top of their notepaper. The Post Office, however, will have to guard against the

temptation to delay delivery. If messengers have to go three miles instead of one, it is obvious that an increased number of messengers will be needed to maintain the existing efficiency. Instantaneous transmission from post-office to post-office is quite compatible even as things are with a final rate of transmission from sender to receiver which could easily be beaten by more primitive methods. Dwellers in towns will no longer have to pay delivery charges on account of the closure of their local office. Telegrams will be delivered free on Sunday as on week days and at all hours of the day or night. The guarantee required as a preliminary to the establishment of telegraph offices in sparsely-populated districts is to be reduced by one-half. Some check upon individual caprice is still thought indispensable, but greater liberality is promised in the way of permanently retaining any offices once established under guarantee.

Most people must have had occasion to remark the chaotic and anomalous character of postal regulations about letters, books, and parcels, to say nothing of the yet profounder mysteries of the sample post. A book, for example, weighing just under a pound costs fourpence if one complies with a number of minute regulations about leaving it open at the ends, inserting nothing which is not part of the book, and so forth. But if one disregards all these things and calls it a parcel it goes for threepence and may include anything one pleases. If the book weighs just under two pounds it costs eightpence, but made into a parcel it goes for fourpence halfpenny, and so on. A fourteen-ounce letter costs just fifty per cent. more than if you write "parcel post" on the upper left-hand corner. A praiseworthy attempt is at last being made to simplify this chaotic system. We gather from Sir Michael Hicks Beach that the sample post is to be abolished altogether, while the book post is to survive only to the extent of enabling one to send two ounces of printed matter for a halfpenny. All packets, whether letters, samples, or books, not weighing more than four ounces, are to be carried for a penny, an additional halfpenny being payable for each two ounces in excess of that weight. This is a great simplification of the whole business, yet it may be noted that on a packet weighing just under a pound it will still be possible to save twenty-five per cent. of the postage by writing "parcel post" on the corner. Indeed, it is not at all certain that it is not possible to save three times as much. For the parcel post itself is to be reformed. At present the tariff is threepence for the first pound and three halfpence for each subsequent pound up to the *maximum* of eleven pounds weight and eighteenpence postage. If Sir Michael Hicks Beach has been correctly reported, it would seem that the initial threepence is to be reduced to one penny and that each subsequent pound is to be charged a penny up to a *maximum* of one shilling, which would imply a *maximum* weight of twelve pounds. If the initial threepence and the *maximum* of eleven pounds weight are to be retained, it is obvious that the *maximum* payment would be, not a shilling, but thirteenpence. There is a third explanation—that the initial threepence and the eleven pounds *maximum* are both to be retained, but that the last penny is to cover an addition of two pounds. The matter is a little obscure; but if the first pound is to be charged one penny, then the Post Office has plainly plunged into a new set of anomalies, since it charges a packet at the rate of fourpence a pound when it is called a letter and of one penny per pound when it is called a parcel. The only proposal remaining to be noticed is one to reduce foreign postage from 2½d. to 2d. as a nearer approximation to the 25 centimes of the Continent. But this change requires the sanction of the Postal Union and can in no case come into force until the beginning of next year.

THE PRINCE OF WALES'S HOSPITAL FUND STAMPS.

14.5.97.

We give below a *fac-simile* of one of the Jubilee Stamps, issued for the benefit of the above Fund, which will be on sale to the public on Tuesday next, and can be bought then at all stationers and booksellers, with the exception of the railway bookstalls. They are issued to give small subscribers a handy and convenient form of receipt, and one which they can retain as a memento of the Diamond Jubilee, and of that increasing interest in hospital support and management shown during her Majesty's reign, not only by the Royal Family, but by all classes throughout the country, and culminating in this effort to set the hospitals of London on a sound financial basis. It is impossible to say exactly to whom the initiation of the idea can be credited, but to Mr. Burdett will be due the success of the scheme. The basis of the design selected by the Prince of Wales is taken from no less an authority in Art than Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose well-known picture of "Charity," executed for one of the Virtues in New College Chapel, Oxford, is the most appropriate design that could have been selected, embodying as it does a beautiful picture with Mrs. Sheridan as the chief figure. Valuable assistance has been rendered by Mr. de la Rue and by Mr. Purcell, C.B., the Controller of Stamps at Somerset House, who have taken the greatest interest in the undertaking from its commencement.

After his Royal Highness had approved of the design the engraving was begun, and proved a very much more serious affair than anyone unversed in these details would have anticipated. Such an engraving could only be executed by the most skilled hand. After the matrix had been produced and hardened, it had to be rolled into the steel plate under a pressure of twenty tons, given by a lever set in motion by the foot of the operator, and each impression had to be rolled in separately, the greatest care being taken to adjust the proper distances, and a magnifying glass being constantly in use. Each plate contains a double sheet of eighty, in which one false impression would spoil the whole, and great liability of cracking arises from the weight of the pressure. Every sheet has to be accounted for as carefully as a bank note, and this again entails still greater surveillance.

A large quantity of the issue has already been secured for insertion in the "Queen's Commemoration Bible" and also in the "Queen's Commemoration Prayer and Hymn Book," which are to be published as soon as the stamps are ready, and each of which will contain a stamp.

The President of the Fund has graciously signified that he will, if possible, personally witness the destruction of the plates from which the stamps are printed; but, in any case, they will be destroyed as soon as the printing of the limited number of the issue is completed, in the presence of the official representatives of the Fund, and of Mr. Purcell, C.B., Controller of Stamps. A certificate to this effect will be duly published, in accordance with the usual regulations.

The above is a reproduction of the half-crown stamp, which is printed in red; the shilling stamp is similar in design, but is printed in blue.

POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH REFORMS.

6.5.97

With a view to preventing any misapprehension we are requested to give the following detailed statement of the reforms announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech.

1. The free delivery of letters will be extended to every hamlet, and, as far as possible, to every house in the kingdom. In remote places the delivery will not necessarily be every day; but it will be on regular days and free. This reform, involving a revision of the walks of thousands of rural postmen, will take a considerable time to carry out; but no time will be lost, and an endeavour will be made to deal first with the most urgent cases.

2. A more liberal policy will be adopted in establishing post-offices in remote villages, and placing letter-boxes in localities where it is impossible to provide post-offices.

3. The rate of postage for inland letters is to be 1d. for the first 4oz., and ½d. for each succeeding 2oz. The effect of this reform will be, not merely to increase the weight which may be sent for 1d. in the letter post, but to sweep away entirely the harassing regulations which govern the inland sample post. There will in fact be no distinction between an inland sample and letter. The regulations regarding the book post will still have to be maintained for book packets whose weight does not exceed 2oz., because it is not proposed to withdraw the privilege of sending such packets for ½d. But for book packets weighing more than 2oz. the regulations in question will to all intents and purposes be abolished, seeing that to these packets the new rates of postage for letters will apply.

4. In the case of parcels the present rate of 3d. for the first pound will be maintained; but for every pound above the first the charge will be 1d. instead of 1½d., and the *maximum* charge will be 1s. The scale will progress by regular steps up to 9lb., which will go for 11d.; and, for the next 1d., 2lb. will be carried, making the *maximum* charge 1s. for a parcel of 11lb. The scale will therefore be as follows:—

Not exceeding 1lb	...	...	—	3d.
Over 1lb., but not exceeding		2lb.	—	4d.
,, 2lb., ,, ,,		3lb.	—	5d.
,, 3lb., ,, ,,		4lb.	—	6d.
,, 4lb., ,, ,,		5lb.	—	7d.
,, 5lb., ,, ,,		6lb.	—	8d.
,, 6lb., ,, ,,		7lb.	—	9d.
,, 7lb., ,, ,,		8lb.	—	10d.
,, 8lb., ,, ,,		9lb.	—	11d.
,, 9lb., ,, ,,		11lb.	—	1s.

5. Subject to the arrangements that may be made at the Postal Union Congress now meeting at Washington, the rate of postage for foreign and colonial letters will be reduced from 2½d. to 2d. This change cannot in any case come into operation before the 1st of January, 1898.

6. All telegrams for delivery within three miles will be delivered free. For distances beyond three miles the charge will be 3d. per mile reckoned from the office of delivery.

7. In the case of telegrams delivered in London all porterage charges will be abolished. There is no intention to harass the public by delivering unimportant telegrams at unseasonable hours. No change will be made in the existing practice in this respect; but what will happen is this:—If a person lives near a telegraph office which closes at, say, 8 o'clock, and a telegram is delivered to him from a distant office at, say, 10 o'clock, he will get it free instead of having to pay porterage from the distant office.

8. The loss which guarantors of telegraph offices incur under the existing system of guarantees will be reduced by one-half. For example, if a guarantee is given for £30 a year, and the annual revenue turns out to be £20, the guarantors, instead of having to pay the whole deficiency of £10 in each year, will only have to pay £5. The concession will apply to existing guarantees as well as to those in the future. At the same time the practice of calling for a renewal of a guarantee at the end of the first period of seven years will be abandoned, and the office will be maintained at the expense of the department if it serves a useful purpose.

The alterations in the rates of inland postage, the reduction in the charges for porterage on telegrams, and the concessions in regard to telegraph guarantees will, it is hoped, come into operation on Jubilee day.

~~was tantamount to [illegible] taxation.~~ The POSTMASTER-GENERAL desired to make certain reforms, which he would proceed to explain, in the postal service. In the first place, steps would be taken as soon as possible to secure that there should be a delivery of letters to every house in the United Kingdom, and this would involve a great multiplication of rural post-offices. Then, as to the delivery of telegrams, it was proposed that there should be a free delivery within three miles, and that the cost of delivery beyond that limit should be reduced to 3d. per mile. In London, during the hours of Sunday and the night, when certain post-offices were closed, it was customary to charge for the delivery of telegrams. These telegrams would in future be delivered free. An important concession would be made in connexion with the cost of the guarantee for opening a new telegraph office. It was further proposed to reduce the rate on parcels to 1d. per pound up to a *maximum* of 1s. The POSTMASTER-GENERAL also proposed that in future the sample post should be abolished, and that all articles, whether letters, samples, or books, under four ounces should be sent for one penny, with a further charge of one halfpenny for every two ounces exceeding that weight. Finally, our representative at the Postal Union, which met at Washington next month, would propose that the rate on foreign and colonial letters should be reduced from 2½d. to 2d. It would take time to bring all these changes into operation, and the total cost of them in the current year would be £366,000. ~~The total esti-~~

POSTMEN'S CHRISTMAS-BOXES. 8.5.97

Mr. J. STUART (Shoreditch, Hoxton) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, what would be the total saving that would ultimately be effected by the abolition of the allowances paid to provincial postmen in lieu of Christmas-boxes and for special duties, also by the abolition of the allowances at present paid to the London sorting staff.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—None of the allowances to provincial postmen can be properly described as allowances in lieu of Christmas-boxes, seeing that they are in all cases assigned to special duties, and they will be continued to present recipients so long as the special duties are performed by them. It is estimated that the total saving ultimately to be effected by the gradual abolition of the allowances will amount in the case of the provincial postmen to £29,000 a year and in the case of the London sorters to £10,500 a year. But it is calculated that the higher salaries to be paid will much more than counterbalance this saving in allowances.

SIR H. FOWLER (Wolverhampton, E.).—May I ask whether people are prohibited from giving Christmas-boxes to postmen if they choose to continue the practice?

Mr. HANBURY.—Oh, no, Sir; the prohibition is only directed against the solicitation by postmen. There is no reason whatever why people should not give them Christmas-boxes if they choose to do so.

SIR H. FOWLER.—I asked the question because I thought it desirable that if that were the case it should be known. (Hear, hear.)

THE POST OFFICE REGULATIONS.—Mr. J. F. Bateman writes from 119, Fordwych-road, West Hampstead:—"I have just re-posted a post card (apparently of some importance as it contains promise of immediate payment of certain 'cash') which reached me this morning tacked into an open commercial envelope. May I express a hope that in the new Post Office regulations this open envelope system may be discouraged as much as possible? Why not let anything under two ounces, whether closed or open, go for a half-penny, thus letting weight, and weight only, decide the postal charge?" 19.5.97.

19.5.97 POST CARDS.

In answer to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury),

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—The Postmaster-General is aware that receivers of post cards in this country are fined because the words "post card" are written and not printed on the address side, but, judging from the complaints which are received, such cases are comparatively rare. Various proposals in regard to post cards will be discussed at the Postal Congress at Washington, and the British delegates have been instructed to take up a liberal attitude on these proposals as towards the public.

29.5.97 POSTAL ORDERS.

In reply to Mr. HUDSON (Herts, Hitchin),

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—The Postmaster-General is aware that the payment of halfpennies on postal orders is refused, and he would refer the hon. member to the rule on the subject which appears at page 435 of the Post Office Guide. In view of the inconvenience which would arise if the practice were changed, the Postmaster-General regrets he is not able to do away with the rule.

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND THE POST OFFICE.

1897

The Duke of Norfolk, the Postmaster-General, who was accompanied by Mr. Spencer Walpole (Secretary), received, yesterday, at the Post Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, a deputation from the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom with reference to the mail service between England and Ireland and the present restrictions upon the sample post.

The deputation, which was introduced by the president of the association, the Hon. Sir H. Stafford Northcote, M.P., included Mr. J. F. Frith (the vice-president), Mr. E. W. Fithian (the secretary), and the following members of Parliament:—Mr. Horace C. Plunkett, Sir James Haslett, Mr. John Redmond, Mr. James Kenyon (representing the Bury Chamber of Commerce), Mr. Robert Ascroft (representing the Oldham Chamber of Commerce), Mr. A. Billson, Mr. Alfred Arnold, Mr. G. W. Wolff, Mr. William Johnston, Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, Captain Bethell, and Sir J. Barrington Simeon. Mr. J. R. Wigham, Mr. F. W. Pim, and Mr. M. Goodbody represented the Dublin Chamber of Commerce; Mr. W. Crawford, the Belfast Chamber; and Mr. Thomas Christy, Mr. A. Donneier, and Mr. F. Fehr, the London Chamber.

SIR STAFFORD NORTHCOTE, in opening the proceedings, said they would confine their remarks to the question of the mail service between this country and Ireland and the sample post.

Mr. J. R. WIGHAM, of Dublin, urged that in the rearrangement of the mail service no consideration of advantage to the Post Office should be allowed to interfere with the interests of the public. The mail service had been accelerated by two hours, and it was of the greatest importance to Ireland that the whole of this saving should be given to the people of Ireland, so that the people of the most distant parts of the country could have time to answer by return of post. They considered the granting of the hour and a half a great boon, but they were disappointed that they were not to have the advantage of the full two hours.

Mr. F. W. PIM said, with regard to the day mail, that the time of departure still remained 7 a.m., and he suggested that an alteration to 8 30 would materially develop the tourist traffic. They acknowledged that the service had been much improved, and they hoped his Grace would try and make it perfect.

Mr. G.W. WOLFF said the question was of such importance to Belfast that all the four members of the city were present to support that deputation.

Mr. W. CRAWFORD, of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, said that at Belfast they were closely connected in trade with the United States. One of their chief industries was the linen trade, and about one-half of their product went to the States. It was most important to them that the mails from America should be promptly delivered, and they were put to a great disadvantage by the mail being detained a night at Queenstown, as had occurred in March. They asked that when the steamer reached Queenstown after the departure of the last train to Belfast, a special train should be provided for the conveyance of the mail. They asked, in the second place, for an accelerated service between Dublin and Belfast and an accelerated delivery in Belfast; and, in the third place, that the connexion between Belfast and South Wales and the south-west of England should be improved. They saw no reason why letters posted in the afternoon should not be delivered, say, to Cardiff, the next morning, instead of midday as at present.

The DUKE of NORFOLK, in reply, said as to the main point he might say that if the Post Office could have seen their way to grant the full two hours they would have done so without waiting for the deputation of that day. With the best intentions and with the best attention to the subject they found it impossible to do so, and he could hold out no hopes that they would be able to overcome the difficulty. He quite appreciated the importance of every five minutes, but it was with great trouble that the hour and a half had been secured. With reference to the special train from Queenstown to Belfast he understood that the deputation asked for two special trains a week under certain circumstances. He promised to give the subject his best consideration; but he could not promise that their request would be granted. As to the day service, he could quite understand the advantage of the tourist traffic; but their first duty was to accelerate the mails and to secure the earlier delivery of letters, and not to consider the interests of passengers.

Mr. W. JOHNSTON urged that the acceleration of the American mail was of the utmost importance to Belfast, and was really the only thing they wanted.

Mr. CRAWFORD said the railway company supplied a special train for a single first-class passenger, and thought arrangements might be made for their doing the same for the mails.

Mr. ARNOLD-FORSTER said he had been asked by the London Chamber of Commerce to bring before the Post Office the question of the conveyance of liquids by sample post. The authorities had said that this could not be safely done, and that no package had been or could be devised which was satisfactory. He urged that our Post Office was absolutely singular in prohibiting the sending of these samples by sample post. Very large numbers of them came to England every day safely from abroad. The question was not of the same importance in inland as in foreign postage. Merchants on the Continent were sending large parcels of samples to our colonies, and the English merchant had to send his samples to France or Belgium to get them sent by sample post. These samples came already into the country, and it seemed only reasonable that they should be allowed to be sent out. There was an objection that dangerous substances might be sent by sample post, but that risk existed already in both the letter and parcel post, and he believed there was no real danger in it.

Mr. THOMAS CHRISTY said they had often before tried to get this concession. If in the drug trade they wished to send samples to India they had to send them to France. The samples came back to England, and the English Post Office sent them to India. In his experience there had never been an accident from the transmission of samples by post. The German, French, and Italian merchants inundated our markets with samples of their goods, and, if they could use the sample post, why could not the English merchant?

Other members of the deputation having spoken,

The DUKE of NORFOLK, in reply, said their presence that day was specially opportune. The matter was engaging their serious attention, and a committee had been appointed to go into the question. They would be glad to have the views of the deputation placed before them.

SIR STAFFORD NORTHCOTE, on behalf of the deputation, thanked the Duke for his courtesy, and the members withdrew.

7 5 97

POSTAL ORDERS.

In answer to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON,

Mr. HANBURY said,—The Postmaster-General is, of course, aware of the scale of poundage upon postal orders. The inequalities are due to the fact that postal orders are issued for fixed sums, and that it requires two postal orders to transmit intermediate sums. It was explained to the hon. member on May 1 last year that the Government did not propose to incur the expense which would be involved in issuing postal orders rising by gradations of 6d. up to 20s., and they do not see their way to reconsider this decision. It does not appear that any useful object would be served by taking formal evidence from the public on this question, for the public are never slow to bring their wants to the notice of the Postmaster-General. That the convenience of the public is met already appears to be clear from the fact that postal orders are very popular and that their circulation reaches 67 millions a year. The Postmaster-General does not propose to issue postal orders for 7s., 8s., and 9s.; any increase in the number of denominations would involve increased expenditure which it would be necessary to meet by an increase in the rate of commission.

In answer to another question put by Mr. HENNIKER HEATON,

Mr. HANBURY said,—The main objection to the establishment of an exchange of postal orders between this country and Australia is the danger of loss by forgery or fraud, which would be a serious risk in view of the length of time that must elapse before the discovery of the forgery or fraud. Although a resolution in favour of an exchange of postal orders with the United Kingdom was passed at the Postal Conference held at Hobart in 1892, no general proposal from the colonies has been received; and it is not known that the Australian Postmasters-General are unanimously of opinion that the risk of fraud would be no greater than is now encountered in using postal orders in England. The Postmaster-General has been giving careful consideration to the question, but no means of overcoming the objection to which I have referred has presented itself, and he regrets, therefore, that he is not prepared to give the system a trial.

THE POST OFFICE.

13 1 97

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he was aware that the telegraph officials at the West Strand office on Saturday last insisted on charging M'Calmont as two words; and whether these were the same officials who insisted on charging a person last year *bonheur* as two words.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—I must ask my hon. friend to postpone this question, as the answer I have received from the Post Office is quite unintelligible to me. (Laughter.)

SIR J. COLOMB (Great Yarmouth) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he was aware that postmen had been forbidden by the authorities of the General Post Office to ask for Christmas-boxes without any compensation being given to them for the loss thereby entailed; and, whether it was the case that Christmas-boxes had hitherto always been officially recognized as part of the wages of postmen.

Mr. HANBURY.—I am of course aware that postmen have been forbidden in future to ask for Christmas-boxes, and that their witnesses complained strongly before the Tweedmouth Committee of the indignity which asking for Christmas-boxes imposed upon them. I am also aware that in the provinces it has hitherto been forbidden to ask for them by printed card or letter, and that the London and provincial postmen are now for the first time brought under the same regulations. The committee did not anticipate that to forbid solicitation would lead to any considerable diminution in the amount of Christmas-boxes received from the public, and it is a fact that, although parcel postmen have always been forbidden to solicit Christmas-boxes, they nevertheless receive them, although no old custom of giving to them would suit the case as it does in that of the letter postmen. When the hon. member speaks of compensation he is, perhaps, not aware that the Christmas-boxes are by no means equally distributed among even the letter postmen, and that, while the juniors receive little or nothing on some walks, the seniors receive very much more than their share. Any system of compensation would in any case therefore be very difficult to carry out, but with the advantages given by the recommendations of the committee which have been accepted wholesale by the Treasury the Government think that the postmen, so far from losing, gain considerably.

THE POST OFFICE REGULATIONS.—Mr. J. F. Bateman writes from 119, Fordwych-road, West Hampstead :—" I have just re-posted a post card (apparently of some importance as it contains promise of immediate payment of certain ' cash ') which reached me this morning tacked into an open commercial envelope. May I express a hope that in the new Post Office regulations this open envelope system may be discouraged as much as possible? Why not let anything under two ounces, whether closed or open, go for a half-penny, thus letting weight, and weight only, decide the postal charge?" 18.5.97

POSTAL REFORMS AND THE PILLAR-BOXES.—" P." writes :—" Amongst the advantages that ' jubilee day ' is to bring us, the Postmaster-General promises to convey a 4oz. letter for a penny stamp. But, how will the pillar-boxes take to this new arrangement? At present most of them seem overburdened with their 1oz. letters ; and constantly, from one cause or another, altogether refuse to receive them into their lower depths. I have one of these pillar-boxes close to my home, and, not once or twice, but constantly, have found other person's letters so close to the aperture that I could have taken them out. Of course this has arisen from large newspapers, or rolls of music, or tradesmen's samples being forced into the orifice, just out of sight, and effectually stopping up the gangway for letters—for which the pillar-box was primarily designed. But, as this will be the normal state of things under the new regulations, it will be absolutely necessary to have printed on every pillar-box, ' For letters only,' or else to have an entirely new plan of construction for every pillar-box." 5.5.97

THE PARCEL POST.

In answer to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury),

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—Applications have been received from various quarters that the parcel post rates should cover slightly more than the even pound or pounds in order to allow for the weight of wrappers. The changes in the scale of rates which have been announced will to some extent meet the wishes of the hon. member by reducing the charge on a parcel between 1lb. and 2lb. from 4½d. to 4d., but it is not possible to make any further concession. The weight of the packing would, of course, vary greatly according to the nature of the articles sent, and it would be impracticable to fix a margin which would be fair to all alike.

22.5.97. TELEGRAPH ANOMALIES.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether, as he had consented by special official notification to charge " shan't " as one word and " mother-in-law " as one word, he would so far relax the rule as to permit " Charing Cross " to go as one word in telegraphing ; and whether he was aware that " Kentish Town," a postal and telegraph office, was charged two words in a telegram, but " Woodford Green " was charged as one word.

Mr. HANBURY.—The anomalies which the hon. member so frequently points out are the result of concessions. One of the words he has quoted as anomalous —" mother-in-law "—was, I believe, first dealt with as one word at the urgent request of my hon. friend himself (Laughter.) I think that the rule which refers to the names of places is a reasonable one. It is that the names of all separate towns and villages are treated as one word. Of course, neither Kentish Town nor Charing Cross is the name of a town or village. If that rule were departed from it is difficult to say what might not be treated as a local name and claim the privilege.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON.—May I ask why is " stepfather " charged as two words and " grandmother " one? (Laughter.)

IMITATIONS OF POSTAGE STAMPS. 27A notice which appears in the *London Gazette* of last night says that the Postmaster-General and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue direct attention to the case of " Dickens v. Gill," reported in the Law Reports (1896), 2 Q.B., 311. This was a special case stated by Sir John Bridge, chief magistrate of the metropolis, by way of appeal from a judgment given by him upon a prosecution for recovery of the penalty imposed by section 7 of the Post Office Protection Act, 1884 (47 and 48 Vict., c. 76). The proprietor of a newspaper circulating among stamp-collectors and others caused a die to be made for him abroad, from which imitations or representations of a current colonial postage stamp could be produced. The only purpose for which the die was ordered by him, and was subsequently kept in his possession, was for making upon the pages of an illustrated stamp catalogue, called " The Philatelist's Supplement," illustrations in black and white and not in colours of the colonial stamp in question, this special supplement being intended for sale as part of his newspaper. The Court held that the possession of a die for making a false stamp, known to be such to its possessor, was, however innocent the use that he intended to make of it, a possession without lawful excuse within the meaning of the section. The notice adds :—" It is obvious that the possession of dies from which representations of postage stamps can be produced and the issue of representations of stamps produced from dies of this description are contraventions of the section above mentioned, and all persons are cautioned accordingly."

SOME POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH REFORMS.

June 97

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—It would be ungracious to write a carping letter to the new Secretary of the Post Office. We have knowledge that the numerous concessions and victories won in past years are greatly appreciated ; and it is with some diffidence, therefore, that I venture to submit to the new permanent head of the Post Office a brief list of postal and telegraphic reforms, every one of which is supported by a mass of letters from the people :—

1. That a parcel post be established between this country and the United States of America, of whose exports we take 50 per cent. America has already a parcel post with many of our British colonies.

2. That the *minimum* price for a parcel shall be reduced to 1d. per pound.

3. That telegraph money orders be extended to France, Egypt, India, Australasia, America, and Africa. A telegraph money order system at present exists between France and Egypt.

4. That since the charge for telegrams in both France and England does not exceed a half-penny per word, the rate between England and France shall be one penny per word instead of twopence, as at present. That telegrams should be sent also to Belgium, Holland, and Germany for a penny per word, and the reductions in rates which I have recommended made in the case of Egypt and other countries, viz., 3d. to Egypt, 6d. to India, 1s. to Africa, and 1s. to Australia.

5. That an Imperial or at least an international postage stamp should be brought into use, and until this is done a room should be set apart in each of the more important post offices of the United Kingdom for the sale of foreign and colonial stamps for small remittances and replies to letters.

6. That post-cards should be sold, as in all other countries of the world, at their face value, and that three farthings should be no longer charged for a single card.

7. That our post-cards, which are the smallest, dearest, and meanest in the world, shall be at least as large as the postal union size—14c. (5·112in.) by 9c. (3·543in.).

8. That letter boxes be attached to all through trains and even to tram-cars on the principal lines.

9. That the weight of a letter carried to India, Australia, &c., be increased from ½oz. to 1oz. for the *minimum* stamp.

10. That the fine of double the deficiency be abolished on foreign, colonial, and inland letters, and that for the future the fine on the former be not more than 1d., and on the latter one half-penny in addition to the deficient postage.

11. That the time has arrived for expediting the delivery of the mails in London and other large cities and towns by establishing three classes of postmen—that first-class postmen deliver letters and post-cards only, that second-class postmen deliver newspapers and circulars, and third-class postmen deliver parcels.

12. That the charge for registering a letter shall not exceed 1d.

13. That the rules requiring a periodical, to pass as a registered newspaper, to be published at intervals not exceeding seven days and to contain a certain proportion of current news be abolished, so that valuable and interesting magazines be no longer excluded from the advantages of the newspaper postage rate.

14. That the repeated applications of the Australian and other colonies for an exchange of postal orders between Great Britain and her dependencies be immediately complied with.

15. That the anomalous charges for poundage on postal orders be abolished by the issue of more postal orders of intermediate value. To-day postal orders for 9s. 6d. cost 2d., but an order for 10s. is 1d. The poundage on postal orders for 19s. 6d. is 2d., and for £1 only 1½d.

16. That the *mandat carte* system, so successful and profitable on the Continent, shall be brought into operation in this country—the money being delivered with the *mandat* at the payee's residence.

17. That the charges on inland telegraph money orders be reduced, and the money be sent with the order to the receiver's residence, as in India.

18. That shipping mail subsidies be placed on an honest basis. We are now paying 3s. per lb. for conveying letters to America in the Majestic, and only 1s. 8d. per lb. for conveying letters to America in the New York and St. Paul—equally good ships.

19. That " the cash on delivery system " be introduced in this country for the convenience of the people.

20. That a reply foreign letter arrangement should be introduced, as we have now foreign reply post-cards.

21. That the names and addresses of the senders of telegrams be transmitted free, or at least 20 words be allowed to be sent for 6d.

22. That efforts be now made to establish universal penny postage. It costs no more to send a letter to France than to Ireland.

23. That the present ridiculous arrangement of allowing a person living within three miles of a telegraph office free porterage, but charging a person living one yard beyond three miles 1s. for porterage on each telegram, be abolished, and all telegrams be delivered free.

24. That compensation for blundering or plundering on the part of postal and telegraph officials be given, as in the case of private firms not enjoying a monopoly. A careless telegraph official sent the word "two" in place of "five," a loss of £3,000 occurred, and no redress could be given. In another case a postal official was found in possession of stolen postal orders, yet the Postmaster-General refused to give them up to the owner.

There are 50 other small reforms on my list, but I will merely direct attention to one in this letter—I mean the refusal of the department to deliver a telegram to a well-known person in any town in the kingdom unless the telegram contains the full name and address. Merchants who have lived 50 years in Manchester have their telegrams now returned unless the very street and number are given. Yet letters which only bear a penny stamp are always delivered, but sixpenny telegrams are returned. I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In a few days the Prime Ministers of the colonies will be consulted on the question of establishing Imperial penny postage. I beg, therefore, that you will help us by publishing the final correspondence on the subject—that is, letters addressed to the Prime Ministers and to the Postmaster-General of Great Britain. I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

House of Commons, June 25.

"House of Commons, London, June 25.

"My dear Sir,—Will you allow me, as keenly interested in the fate of the Imperial penny postage scheme, briefly to call your attention, at this unique opportunity for consultation, to the remarkable situation which has recently developed in connexion with it:

"As you are aware, Mr. Hanbury stated, a few weeks ago, in the House of Commons that the colonies are in no way opposed to our sending our letters at a penny, by the all-sea route, to their shores. It is the foreign Governments that object; and they only object to the penny rate where intermediate land transit rates are involved. They have, of course, every reason for opposing the extension of British Imperial communications; and according to Machiavellian morality, they were quite right in vetoing at Washington even the 2d. rate.

"But Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Rosebery, Sir M. Hicks Beach, and other Imperial 'forwards' of unquestioned sagacity never have admitted that foreigners had anything to do with this matter, which concerns the mother country and the colonies as exclusively as a family settlement concerns the family. This is where our Post Office officials have gone wrong. They have only to propose, under the Postal Union Convention, to exercise our admitted right of forming a purely British Union, like the Americo-Canadian, Austro-German, and other Unions. If they, or any Colonial Government, will make such a proposal, Mr. Chamberlain, to my certain knowledge, will heartily support it.

"The cost of carrying out this change is, strange to say, in inverse ratio to the significance and value of the reform. It would only apply to British letters sent to the colonies by sea. In other words, only ten millions of letters are received from the colonies of the Empire, while 1,875,000,000 letters are dealt with in England, every year. To the British Postmaster-General the financial difficulty is ridiculously small.

"I enclose (1) a letter which I addressed to the Postmaster-General on the subject, and (2) a precedent giving the model of the desired agreement. It will be remembered that no colony will be called upon to take reciprocal action. Each will maintain the existing return rate until it suits its policy and financial conditions to establish a return penny rate to England. And thus are observed the spirit and letter of Lord Rosebery's aphorism: 'Imperial Unity, with Local Self-Government.'

"It is unnecessary for me to add that by offering this collective compliment and kindness to the millions of the mother country you will be advancing the interests of trade no less than the happiness of the poor. All the necessary parties to the negotiation are assembled; the occasion is propitious; it is the one Imperial measure on which both our colonial and our home statesmen agree, and which could be carried out without sacrificing a shilling of colonial revenue.

"I venture to ask you to celebrate this historic festival by laying, together, the foundation-stone of Imperial unity.

"I have the honour to be your obedient servant,

"J. HENNIKER HEATON.

"To the Right Hon. the Prime Minister of——
(Canada, the Cape, Natal, Newfoundland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, New Zealand, Queensland, Western Australia, and Tasmania)."

(Enclosure 1.)

"House of Commons, Feb. 6, 1897.

"My dear Duke,—Permit me to sum up the heads of the proposal which I laid before you at our recent interview.

"It is obvious that an extension of the radius of the penny post to the colonies and India as desired by the whole population of the Empire would be singularly appropriate at a time when her Majesty's subjects, led by the Prince of Wales, are endeavouring to celebrate the long and brilliant reign of the Queen, not merely over the United Kingdom, but the far-extending British Empire. If, however, this extension, this new departure is to harmonize with the Jubilee celebration there is no time to be lost, and I venture respectfully to claim your attention to the matter as one of unique urgency and importance.

"The proposal is that, having regard to the constant stream of emigration, and the existence of some millions of emigrants in the colonies, drawn from the poor classes at home, a penny post shall be established for letters to be conveyed wholly by sea (ocean penny postage) to the colonies. This service would be modelled on the (fourpenny) ocean, or all-sea post of a few years back, under which large numbers of the poor communicated with emigrant relatives. And permit me to remind you that you have already a penny post to the colonies and India for sailors' and seamen's letters.

"It is further proposed that this ocean penny post shall be instituted to each colony, the Government of which shall signify its assent. But no colony shall be required to alter its postage to this country, though its establishment of a return ocean penny post would at any time be welcomed.

"I will undertake that the Governments of Canada and Australasia will at once accept these terms. No increased subsidy would be payable and no administrative change whatever would be called for from England or the colonies. I repeat, for years there were two rates of postage to the colonies and India—one the high overland rate, the other a lower ocean rate. There is here a precedent to guide us.

"Though you declared yourself quite unable to accept an individual guarantee against loss by the arrangement proposed, I trust you will reconsider this point; and on being supplied with an estimate of the expected loss I am prepared to place in your hands a guarantee to cover it, signed by at least three gentlemen of position.

"One word more. I am anxious to leave the matter wholly in the hands of the Government. I know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Colonies are favourable. By inaugurating this reform at this striking period of our history the Government will be thanked by thousands of poor people in this country, who have sons and daughters abroad. Through you, my Lord Duke, as Postmaster-General, I beseech the Ministry not to let slip this unequalled opportunity of obliging the people, and doing honour to the Queen.

"I am your faithful and obedient servant,

"J. HENNIKER HEATON.

"The Most Noble the Duke of Norfolk, K.G.,
Postmaster-General."

(Enclosure 2.)

"A few years ago the Government of the United States resolved to establish penny postage to Canada and Mexico. The Canadian and Mexican Governments, however, felt that they could not afford to establish penny postage to the United States. The clever Americans overcame the difficulty in this way. They persuaded Canada and Mexico to make conventions providing that the domestic or inland rate of postage in each country should cover the transmission of letters to the other. This arrangement is exactly similar to what I propose, and, made between a great British colony and Washington, is so important that I here give the text of it:—

"'Preamble.

"'The Post Office Department of the United States of America and the Post Office Department of the Dominion of Canada being desirous of effecting, by means of a new arrangement, the unification of the postal systems of the United States and Canada, in respect to correspondence exchanged between them, the undersigned, duly authorized for that purpose by their respective Governments, have agreed upon the following articles:—

"'Article 1.—Correspondence of every kind, written and printed, embracing letters, postal cards, newspapers and pamphlets, magazines, books, maps, plans, engravings, drawings, photographs, sheets of music, &c., and patterns and samples of merchandise, including grains and seeds, mailed in the United States and addressed to Canada, or, *vice versa*, mailed in Canada and addressed to the United States, shall be fully prepaid at the domestic postage rates of the country of origin, and the country of destination will receive, forward, and deliver the same free of charge.

"'Article 2.—Each country will transport the domestic mails of the other by its ordinary mail routes, in closed pouches, through its territory, free of charge. . . .

"'Article 4.—No accounts shall be kept between the Post Office Departments of the two countries in regard to international correspondence of any kind exchanged between them; but each Department will retain to its exclusive use all the postage it collects on mail matter of every kind sent to the other for delivery.

"'Article 5.—The Post Office Departments of the United States and Canada shall each return to the other all dead letters, unopened and without charge, monthly or oftener, as may best suit the regulations of each Department.'

"Here follows the Convention with Mexico:—

"'For the purpose of facilitating the intercourse springing from the friendly relations existing between the people of the two countries, their closer neighbourhood and increasing commercial and personal dealings, by better and more intimate postal arrangements, the United States of America, by William F. Vilas, the Postmaster-General, thereto duly authorized by law, and the United Mexican States, by Matias Romero, their Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Washington, thereto duly empowered by the President of the United Mexican States, have agreed upon the following articles:—

"'Article 1.—(a) Articles of every kind or nature which are admitted to the domestic mails of either country, except as herein prohibited, shall be admitted to the mails exchanged under this convention. . . .

"'(b) Except as required by the regulations of the country or destination for the collection of its Customs duties, all admissible matter mailed in one country for the other, or received in one country from the other, whether by land or sea conveyance, shall be free from any detention or inspection whatever, and shall, in the first case, be forwarded by the most speedy means to its destination, and in the latter be promptly delivered to the respective persons to whom it is addressed, being subject in its transmission to the laws and regulations of each country respectively.

"'(c) The classification of and the rates of postage and the registration fee to be levied and collected upon mail matter originating in either country and addressed to the other shall be in accordance with the domestic laws and regulations of the country of origin, provided that the rates of postage and registration fees so levied shall not exceed in either country the *minimum* rates of postage and registration fee prescribed for articles of a like nature by Articles 5 and 6 of the Universal Postal Union Convention of Paris of June, 1878, as amended by the additional Act of Lisbon of March 21, 1883.'

"'Article 2.—(a) Each administration shall retain to its own use the whole of the postages and registration fees it collects on postal articles exchanged with the other, including deficient postage. Consequently, there will be no postage accounts between the two countries.' . . . .

"'Article 5.—(b) Each country shall provide for and bear the expense of the conveyance of its mails to the other; or if by agreement the conveyance in both directions in overland exchanges, other than by railway, is provided by one of them, the expense of transportation shall be shared between them in proportion to the distance travelled over the territory of each.'"

OUR BRITISH POST OFFICE.

14.6.97

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The abuse heaped on me by your correspondent for the introduction of open envelopes is exceeded in my own household, the members of which are overwhelmed with magnificently crested circulars from Court dressmakers and company promoters. I am, however, satisfied with the defence I have given in *The Times* and in the House of Commons, and alluded to by your correspondent—viz., that they are a great public convenience, and before their introduction millions of these were sent to Antwerp to be posted back to England, Ireland, and Scotland, and thereby our Post Office did all the work and the foreigners got all the revenue for stamps.

In a few days we shall be able to send 4oz. for 1d. in a closed envelope. There is certainly a danger of some of these (trade circulars) being redirected to the Continent and heavy postage incurred. It may therefore be necessary to compel tradesmen to endorse all circulars with the word "advertisement" on the cover.

Leaving this matter, I regret to have to inform you that the Postal Union Congress, which has just finished its labours at Washington, has rejected England's proposal to reduce the postage from 2½d. to 2d.

It remains to be seen whether England will be content to be forced to charge her people a higher rate for postage than any foreign country, or whether she will have the courage to make the reduction announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, if necessary, form a purely British Postal Union.

In this connexion I am glad to state that every influential member of the Cabinet who has expressed an opinion is in favour of making the British Empire, so far as England is concerned, a single penny postal district (for ½oz. letters), leaving the colonies to reciprocate when their finances admit.

I am your obedient servant,

Carlton Club. J. HENNIKER HEATON.

THE "G.P.O." ONCE AGAIN.

12.6.97.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In your to-day's issue there is a letter from Mr. Lehmann complaining of the loss of numerous letters sent to and from him, on account of which he attacks the negligence of the G.P.O. That is putting the saddle on the wrong horse; the real cause of the now so frequent loss of letters is the abomination of the open envelopes. Since the fine invention of facilitating the deluge of advertisements under which our "civilization" groans by the open halfpenny envelopes, one hears on all sides complaints of letters miscarrying, so that where formerly one committed a letter to the post in quiet confidence it would duly reach its destination, one can never write one now without the pleasant doubt whether it will not be carried off to Australia in some large advertising envelope. The plainest common sense must surely suffice to recognize how in the shuffling of a myriad million letters some must inevitably slip into these open envelopes, which are usually large and by the majority of mankind who suffer under their infliction are at once, without being opened or inspected, flung into the waste-paper basket. A little while back there were many letters in your paper complaining of this recognized fact, whereupon that one-ideaed man Mr. Henniker Heaton, in deadly fear for the safety of his own cherished bantling, uprose in his wrath and fiercely denied its being a fact!—for which his protestation one would suppose might scarcely suffice as a proof. As, however, this is the age of fads apparently it was so accepted, and the highly inconvenient loss of letters goes on unchecked—Mr. Henniker Heaton triumphant! I would that an abler pen and higher authority would take up the matter, which is of serious importance to a business community.

I remain, Sir, yours,

June 7. G. S.

POST-OFFICE METHODS.

7.7.97.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I shall feel much obliged if you can find space for the following statement, illustrating the business methods of some departments of State

For many years past the town of Weston-super-Mare has been outgrowing the accommodation provided by its present post-office buildings. As far back as 1892 the pressure became so serious that a site for a new post-office was bought by Government at a cost of about £5,000. It may appear incredible, but it is the fact, that from that day to this no building has been even begun. The unvarying answer of the responsible authorities to repeated public and private representations on the subject is that "the matter is still under consideration."

It appears that the united attention of the Treasury, the General Post Office, and the Office of Works is given to these cases. Until all agree nothing can be done. Here, where any private individual or firm could have settled the matter in five minutes, three great State departments profess themselves unable to come to a decision in the course of five years.

Meantime, the interests of the public suffer. So intolerable became the strain on the local officials owing to inadequate accommodation that the authorities have been forced not only to hire additional premises, but also to spend a considerable sum in tinkering at the old condemned post-office—thus entailing fresh expense on public funds in addition to the £5,000 sunk in the purchase of the unused site.

I have placed an amendment on the paper to reduce one of the Post Office votes in order to call attention to these wasteful proceedings, but, as the vote may be reached at an hour when debates are imperfectly recorded, I would ask you to give the wider publicity of your columns to the matter.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. GEORGE H. JOLLIFFE, M.P. Wells Division.

House of Commons.

INLAND LETTER AND PARCEL POSTS RATES.

3.30 In answer to GENERAL LAURIE (Pembroke and Haverfordwest). 9.7.97.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—The alterations in the rates of the Inland Letter and Parcel Posts which the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced would come into force on Jubilee Day were duly made on that date and were officially announced by public notice.

GENERAL LAURIE asked when and how this notice was given. He had inquired at a great many post offices and could not find it. If it were posted up at all it must have been in the private offices of the different postmasters.

Mr. HANBURY said that the notices were sent out to all postmasters some time before the Jubilee celebration day, and in addition public notices were sent out to be posted up in all post-offices. He was assured that this had been done in London.

SUPPLY.

THE POST OFFICE VOTE.

The House then went into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. W. Lowther (Cumberland, Penrith) in the chair.

On the vote to complete the sum of £7,466,460 for the salaries and expenses of the Post Office services, the expenses of the Post Office Savings Bank and Government annuities and insurances, and the collection of the Post Office Revenue,

SIR H. FOWLER (Wolverhampton) said he desired to raise, for the consideration of the Committee, the important question of the unsatisfactory nature of the relations between the Postmaster-General and the House of Commons. He was sure no one would impute to him any desire to cast any reflection either upon the Secretary to the Treasury, who discharged the duty of representing the Postmaster-General in the House as he discharged all his other duties, with rare ability (hear, hear), or upon the Postmaster-General, who as a public officer commanded, deserved, and possessed the confidence of the public. But he should lay down the broad principle that in the case of the Post Office there was not that Parliamentary control which existed in all the other departments of the State. He ventured to submit that they should have in the House of Commons the responsible Minister of a department like the Post Office, which involved so large an outlay of public money and so widespread a public taxation—a taxation which pressed so universally, he did not say heavily or unfairly, on all classes of the community. When he was Secretary to the Treasury he had to do exactly what was done now by the present Secretary to the Treasury, he had to represent the Post Office in the House, and he therefore knew from personal experience the unsatisfactory manner in which those duties had to be discharged. The Secretary to the Treasury had not only very difficult duties, but very conflicting duties, to discharge. The right hon. gentleman had to answer in the House questions of administration of which he had no personal knowledge, in respect to which he was not responsible, and which he was unable to alter if he disapproved of them; while, on the other hand, the right hon. gentleman occupied, in our financial affairs, the position of a checking authority over the department, for his business as the Financial Secretary was to prevent the Post Office spending too much money. What was wanted was that the House of Commons should have, not only control over the expenditure of the Post Office, but that the department itself should be in touch with the House. It was impossible for any one outside the House of Commons, no matter how distinguished or experienced, to understand the House of Commons' temper, the House of Commons' disposition, or the House of Commons' desires. The House of Commons represented in this matter the commercial interests of the country; and the commercial population were constantly requiring additional postal conveniences. He did not shut his eyes to the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had during the last few months proposed very considerable additions to the postal facilities and conveniences of the public; but there were constant questions arising in reference to Post Office administration which could not possibly be properly dealt with in the House of Commons except by the Minister who was responsible to the House of Commons. The late Mr. W. H. Smith, a good many years ago, before he reached to the responsible position of leader of the House, was, as would be seen by a letter to Sir Stafford Northcote, which would be found in his "Life and Letters," in favour of the abolition of the office of Postmaster-General and of putting the department entirely under the Treasury. Nowadays he was sure that the House of Commons would never tolerate a great administrative Department like the Post Office being put under the Treasury, whose first and proper duty was to cut down expenditure, not to develop public convenience. He wished to speak of the Treasury with the greatest respect and admiration, but, after all, cutting down expenditure was not the whole duty of an administrative department. He was sure that a great deal of money which had been well spent in all departments would never have been spent at all, if the decision had been left entirely to the Treasury. The House of Commons, which looked to efficiency as well as to economy, must be the final authority on the wisdom of expenditure. The argument was certainly strongest in regard to the Post Office, which could not legitimately be looked to as a source of public revenue. Sir Robert Peel held that the profit earned by the Department should be applied in promoting the public convenience; but of course it was too late to raise that doctrine now. When, however, the Post Office was producing large and increasing revenues the public had a right to bring pressure to bear in order that their convenience might be considered. It did not always follow in matters of this kind that the two front benches were right. He could remember the two front benches being defeated on the sixpenny telegram question. If that question had been left to the Treasury alone we should not have sixpenny telegrams to-day. This showed the necessity of keeping the Post Office free from Treasury administration though under Treasury control. Without casting the slightest reflection on the present head of the Post Office he thought that the present mode of telegraphic messages between the Department and the House of Commons, and questions being answered by a gentleman who had no responsibility for Post Office business, was very unsatisfactory, and removed control from the House of Commons. He should not move an amendment, but he would ask the First Lord of the Treasury to give an assurance that this matter would be considered.

Mr. BALFOUR said that no one would complain of the tone of the right hon. gentleman, who undoubtedly spoke with special authority, because he had himself been Secretary to the Treasury, and had carried on in the House the functions which the right hon. member for Preston performed with such distinguished success. Though he sympathized with much that had fallen from the right hon. gentleman, and admitted that the point raised was well worthy of consideration, he thought there were certain aspects of the question which the right hon. gentleman had omitted from his view. The right hon. gentleman was careful not to put in a claim that every Minister responsible for great expenditure should necessarily and for that reason have a seat in the House of Commons. Every successive Government—those to which the right hon. gentleman had belonged as much as any other—had found it absolutely necessary to have some of the Ministers responsible for vast expenditure in the House of Lords. Therefore the question was, not whether the Postmaster-General should be in the House of Commons, but whether he should have some representative to deal with Post Office questions in the House of Commons other than the Secretary to the Treasury. Of course there would be some advantages in the creation of a new Under-Secretary to deal with Post Office questions, but there would also be disadvantages. In the first place, to create a new office was a rather serious responsibility. The House kept the number of paid Government officials to the narrowest limits conformable with the due discharge of public business; and every Government and every Opposition would look with well-founded caution on any suggestion creating a new Ministry, a new official, or a new Parliamentary representative either of existing Departments or of a new department. If that were a difficulty—and it undoubtedly was—what was the special necessity in the case under discussion? He was prepared to maintain the view—provisionally, at any rate—that the Treasury were specially qualified to deal with questions connected with the Post Office. After all, the Post Office could not start any great policy except by the direct sanction of the Treasury. In a sense that was also true of every Department; and no doubt there had been occasions when the Minister responsible for some Department had had to defend a policy which had been rather imposed by the Treasury than suggested by his own initiative. But if the Post Office were represented in the House of Commons by an official—not the Postmaster-General, but a subordinate—would not that representative be put in a position incomparably more embarrassing and awkward than that of any Minister? Every question of Post Office policy was really a question of Treasury policy. Of course there were a vast number of important details of administration in which the Treasury never interfered. But questions such as those to which the right hon. gentleman had made special reference—questions in which the Post Office came into contact, and, it might be, into collision, with great commercial interests—were for the most part Treasury questions rather than Post Office questions. The Postmaster-General had no interest but to satisfy every demand which the public made upon him; but he could not act in these matters except as, in some sense, a subordinate of the Treasury. He was a great independent Minister from some points of view, but from others he could not be independent of the controlling authority of the Treasury. And if the Treasury were to be really responsible for the control of the Post Office in these great matters it was just as well that the Treasury should have to defend their own action by the mouths of their own officials. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that the policy of the right hon. gentleman was carried into effect and an Under Secretary of the Post Office were created to represent the Department in the House of Commons, while the Postmaster-General was in the House of Lords; supposing some great demand were made upon the Post Office for greatly increased facilities in respect of some district, or some commercial interest, which desired to have cheaper and easier communications, the Post Office would probably, as far as they alone were concerned, be very ready to grant every facility. But the Treasury, which was the controlling authority, had to consider wider interests than any single Department. Would it be advisable or for the convenience of the House that the person who had to get up and refuse the demand of which the Treasury disapproved should not be a Treasury official, but some subordinate of the Postmaster-General, who, if he had only to consider his own Department and not his position as a member of the Government, might be glad enough to sanction the demand? While there was something to be said for the right hon. gentleman's contention, there were very strong arguments on the other side; and the fact that the Post Office was more closely and inevitably connected with the Treasury than any other Department made it not inappropriate, and in many cases exceedingly fitting, that the Treasury officials should be responsible to the House of Commons for the policy pursued by the Post Office. Though he did not wish to enter a *non possumus* answer to the appeal of the right hon. gentleman, he thought there were distinct advantages in the existing arrangement—advantages which should be well weighed before they were abandoned in favour of the more symmetrical, but not more practical, scheme which the right hon. gentleman had urged.

4.30 SIR A. ROLLIT (Islington, S.), in rising to move to reduce item A of the vote by £1,000, said the motion was intended to reflect upon the report of the committee rather than upon either the Government or the department, for he thought more might have been done to remedy the abuses which were shown to exist in the course of the report itself. To speak of the Post Office as

a revenue-earning machine was, in his opinion, not a full or adequate description. He shared to the full the opinion that its first object was to give facilities to the public rather than merely to earn profit, and also to do justice to its *employés*. There were grievances which had not been redressed by the report, and the House had a great deal more to do in that direction. It was no answer to say that the Treasury had appropriated a sum of £139,000 for that very purpose, for, after all, what did the appropriation amount to? It only amounted to a rectification of the inadequacies of the past. It was not in London only, but throughout the United Kingdom, that something like chronic discontent existed. The complaints were loud and widespread. He did not at all agree as to the propriety of the course intimated by way of notice to the Postmaster-General that if the grievances were not redressed overtime work at night would be suspended. That was an extreme remedy in cases where the public convenience and service were concerned, but, after all, every man's labour was his own right, and if there were no disposition to remedy present grievances even that extreme way of trying to bring about a remedy might possibly have to be resorted to. The Treasury was, of course, a barrier to a good deal. He did not say the heads of departments who were represented on the committee would not try to do justice, but sometimes the head of a department did not value as much as he might do pecuniarily the services of those who contributed to the joint effort which he and they made for the public advantage, and, if we had a splendid Civil Service in this country, it had one great defect, and that was a too glaring disproportion between the salaries of the highest officials and those of the lower (hear, hear), and this disproportion might well be redressed. There was first the case of the telegraph clerks. Their claim was that they should have 28s. a week and after five years' service an annual increment of 2s. 6d. per week to a *maximum* of £200 a year after 27 years' service. There were now large numbers of men who after 27 years' service were only earning a *maximum* of £145 after a life's work and with no real prospect before them. That their position was a hard one was not challenged by the postal representative on the committee. One witness said that during 23 years the *maximum* had only been raised for these clerks 12 per cent., while the *maximum* of the second division clerks had been raised no less than 75 per cent. Yet these facts had been ignored by the committee. The committee were warned that if they abolished classification without making some change in the scale the position of the telegraph clerks would be worse by £30 a year. No compensation

7.7.97 ORDERS FOR GOODS BY POST.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he was aware that on June 23 the postal authorities fined a merchant for sending an order for goods in the following words, "please send at once," and that, in answer to the complaint, a reply (No. 243,426) was sent stating that the order contained written matter other than that allowed; and whether the fine was imposed for the words "please send" or the words "at once."

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—On the date mentioned an order for goods such as described was charged with letter postage, and the addressee who complained of the charge was informed as stated by the hon. member. When orders for goods are sent by book-post they may not contain any written matter beyond the particulars specified in the Post Office Guide, and they become liable to letter postage if any communications such as "please send at once" or "please send" are written and not printed or hand-stamped. This was fully explained to the hon. member on June 23, 1896, when I stated that the concessions which have been made in the past in order to extend the privilege of a cheap and unremunerative post have already gone as far as it is possible to justify, and, if the apparent inconsistencies which have resulted from such concessions are found inconvenient, it may be desirable to reconsider the whole matter and subject all documents of a like character to the letter rate of postage.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON.—Will my right hon. friend answer the last paragraph?

Mr. HANBURY.—Three words out of the four are wrong. "Send" is the only word allowed "Please" and "at once" are not allowed.

STAMPED ENVELOPES AT RAILWAY STATIONS.

3.30 Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he was aware that it was not possible to purchase a stamp, a postcard, or a stamped envelope at the great railway stations at Paddington, Euston, Victoria, Waterloo, Liverpool-street, New-street, Birmingham, Templemead, Bristol, &c., although letters could be posted at most of these places, and whether he would make arrangements forthwith to supply this want. 23.7.97

Mr. HANBURY.—The Postmaster-General is aware that no official arrangements exist for the sale of stamps and postcards within the railway stations named, though post offices are maintained in their immediate vicinity. At Euston there is a post office at the entrance to the station. Hitherto it has not been found practicable to get these facilities provided; but the Postmaster-General would be very glad if arrangements could be made for providing them.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON asked whether the right hon. gentleman would not in connexion with this matter open negotiations with Messrs. W. H. Smith and Co.

Mr. HANBURY.—That has been done some time ago.

POST OFFICE EMPLOYÉS' GRIEVANCES.

31.7.97

The conference between the Postmaster-General and Mr. Hanbury and the Post Office *employés* was resumed yesterday in No. 14 Committee-room of the House of Commons. On behalf of the Post Office there were the following permanent officials—Mr. Spencer Walpole, Mr. Fischer, Mr. Lamb, and Mr. Bruce. Sir Albert Rollit, M.P., Mr. Schwann, M.P., Mr. Ascroft, M.P., Mr. Lawrence, M.P., and Mr. Patrick O'Brien, M.P., were present to support the case of the London and provincial postmen, whose delegates were admitted to the room. Their names were as follows:—London representatives—Mr. C. Churchfield (general secretary of the Postmen's Federation), Mr. T. G. Barnes, Mr. G. H. Stuart, Mr. H. M. Wilson, and Mr. E. Cock; the provincial delegates were Mr. J. C. Brown (Glasgow), Mr. E. M'Loughlin (Ripon), Mr. R. W. Whitehurst (Liverpool), Mr. A. M'Laren (Glasgow), and Mr. J. G. Walton (Newcastle-on-Tyne).

The statement submitted on behalf of the London and provincial postmen urged with regard to wages that the *maximum* for the larger towns should be £2 a week, and a correspondingly less sum for smaller towns, but no *maximum* should be less than 30s. per week. The *maximum* was at present as low as 22s. for places like Brighton and Eastbourne, where living was very expensive, while London postmen's wages rose to 45s. per week. Rural postmen, again, who started at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, received no allowance whatever; and it was contended that they should have shelter and increased horse allowance, say at the rate of 18s. per week. Another grievance was with regard to the qualifications for "stripes." At one time stripes were conferred after 15 years' service, but now the discipline qualifications were so stringent that very few postmen had hopes of receiving them. Promotion was at present conferred on the recommendation of the postmasters of the various towns, and the petitioners urge the Department to lay down a rule for seniority to prevail. It was stated on the general question of allowances and Christmas-boxes that the Tweedmouth Committee had forbidden soliciting for Christmas-boxes, but that Mr. Hanbury had stated that in future they might do so. Christmas-boxes had been reckoned as part of their wages; and the indoor men in the provinces, who had no opportunity of soliciting the public, were allowed to share in them. It was proposed to do away with this allowance to the provincial indoor men, and it was suggested they ought to be compensated. On the question of pensions the letter carriers felt it to be a grievance that if a man died in the service before reaching 60 years of age his widow received no allowance.

Other grievances connected with the Department were dealt with, after which the conference was adjourned until Wednesday.

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.—An account showing the gross amount received and expended on account of the telegraph service during the year ended March 31, 1897, and the balance of the expenditure over receipts, prepared in pursuance of section 4 of the 39th Vict., c. 5, has been issued as a Parliamentary paper. The gross amount received was £3,287,611 1s. 8½d., less amount paid to cable companies, &c., £360,553 17s. 7d., and telegram moneys refunded, &c., £4,608 5s. 8½d., leaving a total of £2,922,448 18s. 5d.; and the value of telegraph services performed for other public departments without remuneration, £44,904 11s. 6d. The amount expended was £3,111,809 18s. 1½d., making a balance of expenditure over receipts of £144,456 8s. 2½d. The amount expended on account of the annual charge for the securities created for the purpose of the Telegraph Acts, 1868 to 1870, was £298,888 5s. for the year ended March 31, 1897. The deficiency of telegraph revenue in the year ended March 31, 1897, to meet expenditure and the interest on telegraph stock created was £443,344 13s. 2d. The total of the deficiency to March 31, 1897, from the year 1872 was £6,629,890 13s. 4d. 5.4.98

LONDON PHILATELIC EXHIBITION.

23.7.97

In 1890 the jubilee of penny postage was celebrated by an exhibition promoted by the Philatelic Society of London, and held at the Portman-rooms. The Diamond Jubilee of the Queen has appealed to the very large number of her Majesty's subjects who are interested in the collection of postage stamps as a suitable occasion for another exhibition. A very large and valuable collection of stamps has therefore been brought together and is now to be seen at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours in Piccadilly. The Duke of York, who is one of the patrons of the exhibition, visited it yesterday afternoon, accompanied by the Duchess, and formally declared it open. The other patrons are the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, who opened the exhibition of 1890, and her Majesty's Postmaster-General, the Duke of Norfolk. The committee includes members of the leading philatelic societies in Great Britain, representative collectors from all parts of the kingdom, and members of the principal firms of dealers. With the vastly-increased number of modern stamps the tendency to form collections of single countries or groups of countries has become more and more marked, and "specialized" collections may be regarded as constituting the chief feature of this exhibition. Due prominence has been given to the stamps of the British Empire by forming them into two groups by themselves, while the stamps of Europe, Asia and Africa, and America have been placed in three other large and interesting divisions. Special classes have also been devoted to general and special collections in albums, rare stamps, envelopes, post-cards, and letter-cards. Other sections have been allotted to philatelic literature, albums, and appliances, while there are classes for exhibits by stamp engravers and other objects of general interest. The prizes will be awarded by judges selected from the leading philatelists of this country and the Continent, and consist of numerous gold, silver, and bronze medals. Among the donors of medals is the Duke of York, who offers a gold and a silver medal for competition by ladies. The committee claim that the exhibition is the most varied and valuable collection of stamps scientifically arranged that has ever been brought together and that it includes almost every known existing variety. There are 11 classes, with 302 entries, and when it is stated that the estimated actual value of the exhibits is £250,000 it will be apparent at once that the exhibition is a very remarkable one. The Duke of York lends, in addition to other stamps, a complete collection of the stamps of the De la Rue series represented by imperforate copies from each plate registered on being put to press, including the new 6s. prepared many years ago but not yet issued. The council of the Prince of Wales's Hospital Fund for London show a copy of each value of the stamps as issued, the three original plates from which the stamps were printed, as defaced in the presence of the Duke of York, the original certificate of destruction signed by the Duke and Duchess of York and others, besides other objects. Among the exhibitors whose collections are worthy of special mention are Baron A. de Wormis, Messrs. H. J. White, W. T. Willett, F. West, W. B. Avery, H. J. Duveen, F. H. Hancock, W. W. Blest, A. de Reuterskiöld, R. Ehrenbach, M. P. Castle, W. Dorning Beckton, T. Wickham Jones, T. W. Hall, R. Frentzel, and L. Gibb. It would be impossible in a limited space to describe the many treasures, from the philatelist's point of view, which are included in the collections shown by these and other exhibitors. They must be seen to be appreciated, and few who take an absorbing interest in stamp collecting can afford to lose so exceptional an opportunity of inspecting the finest and rarest specimens of stamps in existence.

The Duke and Duchess of York arrived at the exhibition at 3 o'clock, attended by Lady Mary Lygon and the Hon. Derek Keppel. They were received by Mr. J. A. Tilleard, the secretary, who presented to their Royal Highnesses the members of the reception committee—Messrs. W. B. Avery, E. D. Bacon, W. Dorning Beckton, M. P. Castle, E. B. Evans, T. Wickham Jones, C. J. Phillips, and Gordon Smith. The Duke and Duchess of York then made a somewhat minute examination of the exhibits, under the guidance of these gentlemen. Mr. J. S. Purcell, C.B., the Controller of Stamps, was also present, and accompanied their Royal Highnesses round the exhibition. The Duke of York formally declared the exhibition open, and subsequently a number of prominent foreign collectors were presented to him. When their Royal Highnesses were about to leave, a bouquet of orchids was offered to the Duchess of York by Miss Castle, daughter of the vice-president of the exhibition, and graciously accepted by her Royal Highness. The exhibition will be open to the public every weekday up to and including Thursday, August 5. 23.7.97

POST OFFICE EMPLOYÉS' GRIEVANCES.

30.7.97

The Postmaster-General yesterday received the various sections of the London sorters or postal clerks in No. 14 Committee-room of the House of Commons. The Duke of Norfolk was accompanied by Mr. Hanbury, M.P., Mr. Spencer Walpole, Mr. J. C. Lamb, and Mr. Badcock; and Sir Albert Rollit, M.P., Captain Norton, M.P., Mr. Hudson Kearley, M.P., Mr. Clough, M.P., Mr. Schwann, M.P., and Mr. Patrick O'Brien, M.P., were present to assist the *employés* in stating their grievances.

For the London senior sorters, Mr. H. Groves, chairman of the Fawcett Association, said that about 150 of the senior sorters suffered by the abolition of classification, as they were near promotion when it was abolished. In most cases the abolition of classification made a difference of from £5 to £10 a year to each man, and as these men entered under identical conditions with those who were appointed previous to the Tweedmouth Committee revision, it would take them four years longer to reach their *maximum* than those who were made first-class under the old system. Then, again, the senior men would be 24 years in going from the *minimum* to the *maximum*, whilst the new entrants would only be 20 years.

Mr. Durrant, on behalf of the junior sorters, said they claimed a *minimum* wage of 24s. per week, in lieu of the present wage, which was 18s. per week till competent and £1 per week when competent. They complained strongly of the reduction of the overtime rates to 6d. an hour for all night work and to 7d. an hour for Sundays, Good Fridays, and Christmas Days. They also complained of their "split" duties, which were generally from 4 in the morning till 7 30 a.m. and from 4 30 in the evening till 8 o'clock. Evidence with regard to these duties was given before Lord Tweedmouth's Committee in June, 1895; and shortly after these duties were strongly condemned by the medical officer to the Post Office, who said he would not expect any officer to keep his health on such a duty.

The case for those sorters who deal with registered letters was presented by Mr. J. E. Freeman, and that for the travelling sorters by Mr. Keane. The latter complained particularly that no interval for refreshment was allowed on such a journey, for example, as from Euston to Carlisle, which involved over seven hours' continuous duty, and that the men were required to work 48 hours per week before overtime was allowed for either Sunday or extra duty.

In the course of a discussion on overtime Sir Albert Rollit asked on behalf of the *employés* for a clear and definite statement as to what the Post Office held to be its legal rights with regard to overtime, adding that the *employés* did not object to overtime, but they did object to compulsory, unlimited, and chronic overtime. As a mere matter of law, while it might be that the Crown, as distinguished from an ordinary employer, could dismiss an *employé* who refused to do overtime, this was its only sanction, and he thought the Crown could not legally compel specific performance of overtime work, and had no legal or moral right to absolutely require from an *employé* something beyond his agreement, especially when the contract and his obligations were limited by the regulations of the Civil Service.

Mr. SPENCER WALPOLE, in reply, said the rule of the Post Office was that whenever overtime was required volunteers should be asked for, and if possible the overtime should be given to the men who volunteered for it. Failing a sufficient number of volunteers coming forward, the rule of the Post Office was that men should be impartially selected for overtime duty and marked off for it, and that when they were so marked off, by the long custom of the Post Office, which had been affirmed by two successive Postmaster-Generals (Mr. Raikes and Mr. Arnold Morley), that overtime was compulsory, and it was as much a breach of discipline to refuse it as to refuse the ordinary work of the service. With regard to the length of overtime, although ordinarily they endeavoured to arrange that it should not exceed a couple of hours, yet often the *employés* themselves desired its extension, sometimes to four or five hours, in order the better to fit in with their suburban trains and to suit their own arrangements. 30.7

To-day the Postmaster-General will receive deputations representing the London and provincial letter-carriers.

ENVELOPES FOR CIRCULARS.—The Postmaster-General, replying to a Hampstead correspondent on the subject of the danger of letters going astray through slipping into unsealed envelopes open at the sides, used for the postage of circulars, has expressed his repret at the impossibility of prohibiting the use of such envelopes, and of enforcing, for the postage of circulars, the use of envelopes opening only at one end. He adds, "It should be stated, however, that the Department encourages the use of bag-shaped envelopes which open at the end in preference to those which open at the side, and that the envelopes with embossed stamps which are sold at post-offices are of this pattern." 7.8.

POST OFFICE IMPROVEMENTS IN 1897.

7.1.98.

The Jubilee year of her Majesty's reign has appropriately witnessed changes of exceptional importance in the postal service. Chief among the number were those which came into operation on Jubilee Day, June 22, when the postage on inland letters not exceeding 4oz. in weight was reduced to 1d., with an additional ½d. for every 2oz. beyond that weight. Thus the letter-post rates became the same as those which had previously been charged in connexion with the inland sample and pattern post, and, there being no further need for the latter, it was abolished. Books and other packets not exceeding 2oz. continue, as heretofore, to pass through the post at a fee of ½d., but all such packets which weigh more than 2oz. have been transferred to the letter post, the new rates being the same as those of the book post. The express fee of 1s. previously charged for the delivery, by special foot-messenger, for packets not exceeding 5lb., was, up to a distance of three miles, reduced to 9d.; the rate of postage on inland parcels was materially reduced —in some cases to the extent of 50 per cent.— and with respect to telegrams all charges for delivery within three miles were abolished, while beyond the limits of free delivery the charge was reduced to 3d. for each mile, reckoned from the terminal telegraph office. From these concessions the public have derived substantial advantage. The immediate effect of the reduction in the postage rates was to transfer to the letter post a large number of what were formerly treated as small parcels, and this change, as already shown in *The Times*, was largely responsible for the remarkable expansion of letter-post work witnessed during the Christmas season. Sample and book post packets have, in the same way, become letter packets, and there is no branch of trade which does not gain by the new arrangement. The book post, as stated, remains only for books and other packets not exceeding 2oz., but this weight merely covers the lighter class of circulars and pamphlets, and, to speak generally, nearly all the packets that once passed at book-post rates are now carried according to the letter-post scale of a quarter of a pound for 1d. A further convenience attaches to the amended regulation in that it permits letters to be enclosed in parcels. Hence the merchant and the manufacturer can now forward his account, or any other communication, in the parcel sent to the customer, and thereby effect a double saving in the postal charges. These reductions represent a large loss of revenue, and they certainly go a long way to meet the objections of those who contend that the public are entitled to participate in the profits of the Post Office.

When the concessions enumerated were decided upon, the Postmaster-General appealed to the public on the subject of the late posting of letters. He issued a statement that the result of the extension of the latest time of posting for the night mails despatched from the General Post Office had been to bring forth an immense mass of correspondence during the comparatively short time allowed for the sorting and despatch of the mails. The Postmaster-General further said :—

From the first the strain which this put upon the Department was great; but now, owing to the growth of business, it has increased, and the effect of the new reforms will be to increase it still more. The strain cannot be met by an increase of force, as there is no space available in the existing building, and to provide additional accommodation will take a considerable time. The question, therefore, has been raised whether the extension of the time for posting must not be withdrawn if the mails are to be sorted in time to catch the trains by which they are expected to travel to the distant cities and towns of the kingdom. But, rather than withdraw a privilege which must be highly valued by those who cannot get ready all their letters before 6, the Postmaster-General ventures to appeal to the public and to ask them to aid the Department by posting as much of their correspondence as they can before 5 30, or even before 5. He would ask them to regard 6 o'clock, not as the time at which the Department ought to accept their correspondence, but rather as an extreme limit, fixed at the latest minute possible, for the acceptance of such letters only as cannot be got ready in time for previous collections. If, as he confidently expects, the public respond to this appeal in the spirit in which it is made, existing privileges need not be disturbed, and the work of the Department will be much facilitated.

It is stated that this very reasonable request has, for the most part, passed absolutely unheeded. There are few commercial houses in the City which attempt to post any portion of their correspondence early in the afternoon, as might easily be done in a large number of instances, and the result is that an abnormal pressure is thrown upon the staff at St. Martin's-le-Grand between 6 p.m. and 7.45 p.m., at which time the mails have to be sealed in bags and sent to the various railway termini for transmission to home, colonial, and foreign addresses. The Department cannot, of course, be suddenly enlarged, and consequently when, as at Christmas, the stream of correspondence is greatly swollen, the operations of the largest staff that can be employed are very seriously hampered, and the public themselves become responsible for all, or nearly all, the delay occurring in delivery. We have reproduced the words of the Postmaster-General, as embodied in his circular of June last, in the hope that the large City firms which daily throughout the year forward hundreds and even thousands of letters in the ordinary course of business may be induced to co-operate with the authorities by posting their correspondence in batches during the afternoon rather than in bulk at the end of the day's work.

Several minor but important improvements were introduced early in February, the principal being the abandonment of the old and somewhat vexatious rule which prohibited the appearance of any writing or printing, except the address, on the front of post-cards or on the right-hand half of the address side of letters and book packets. The only restriction now imposed is the very necessary one—and this applies to all classes of correspondence, and not to post-cards alone—that nothing must be printed or written on the address side of a communication which, by tending to prevent the easy and quick reading of the address, or by inconvenient proximity to the postage stamps, or in any other way, is likely to embarrass the sorters in dealing with the article in its transmission through the post. Not less welcome was the reduction, at the same time, of the charge on unpaid post-cards from 2d. to 1d. People were never able to understand why a fee of 2d. should be demanded when a halfpenny post-card was posted *minus* stamp. The charge was imposed to induce care in posting, and so to save the Department the trouble which all out-of-course communications necessarily involve. As soon as experience proved that this lesson had been learned, the Postmaster-General readily consented to a reduction of the surcharge, so that the unpaid post-card is no longer treated as a letter. The *maximum* weight allowed to newspaper packets was, at the same period, fixed at 6lb., and the limits of size extended to 24in. × 12in. × 12in., newspapers containing prohibited enclosures henceforth being treated as insufficiently paid letters or as parcels posted out of course, whichever treatment involved the lower charge to the addressee, whereas formerly all such packets had been regarded as insufficiently paid book packets. The compulsory registration fee, which previously stood at 8d., was reduced to 4d., and the practice was incorporated of compulsorily registering any open packets found to contain (1) postal orders in which the name of the payee had not been inserted, (2) uncrossed cheques, (3) dividend warrants, (4) bank notes, (5) postage stamps of the value of more than 1s., or (6) any other article exceeding that value. A small revenue is derived from this latter regulation, but the sole aim of the Department in introducing it is to encourage people to observe reasonable precautions in transmitting money or valuable articles through the post, and thus to diminish the temptation to theft.

The rates of commission on money orders also underwent a change, being fixed as follows :—

For sums not exceeding £3, threepence; for sums exceeding £3, but not exceeding £10, fourpence. Telegraph money orders—for sums not exceeding £3, fourpence; for sums exceeding £3, but not exceeding £10, sixpence. Foreign and colonial money orders—for sums exceeding £2, sixpence; for sums exceeding £2, but not exceeding £6, one shilling; for sums exceeding £6, but not exceeding £10, 1s. 6d. With one exception, all these alterations represented reduced rates. The exception was the commission proposed to be charged upon money orders for sums under £1, which was increased from 2d. to 3d. This additional fee was soon found seriously to affect friendly societies in regard to the numerous small sums which they are regularly in the habit of transmitting as sick allowance to their members; and from the beginning of May the old rate of 2d. on money orders for sums under £1 was revived, much to the satisfaction of all whom it most closely affected. Another minor change effected had reference to the compulsory registration of parcels containing coin, jewelry, or anything made of gold or silver which might be received from places abroad, the fee for which under the insurance system was reduced from 8d. to 4d.

On April 1 the recommendations of Lord Tweedmouth's Committee on Post Office Establishments came into effect, resulting in improved conditions of service to many branches of the rank and file. But all were not satisfied. Further improvements were suggested during the discussion of the Post Office Estimates in the House of Commons, and the case made out was sufficient to induce the Postmaster-General and the Secretary to the Treasury to meet in conference the members who had particularly addressed themselves to the subject. The conclusion arrived at was that on the whole the findings of the committee were sufficient. A threatened strike on the part of the telegraphists, who were chief among the servants of the department dissatisfied with the outcome of the inquiry, was very wisely abandoned.

At 4 p.m. on Saturday, February 6, the Post Office took over from the National Telephone Company the maintenance and working of the telephone trunk circuits at Liverpool and Manchester, the transaction completing the transference to the Government of the whole of the existing trunk telephone system in the United Kingdom. During the year various extensions of the telephone service followed, the places connected including Basingstoke, Gateshead, Chesham, Dudley, Tavistock, Lichfield, Bridlington Quay, Walsall, Witney, Tamworth, Cork, Limerick, Leatherhead, Bangor, Carnarvon, Selby, Southend-on-Sea, Tadcaster, Newport (Isle of Wight), and Uttoxeter.

The facilities of the money order system have been extended to the Niger Coast Protectorate, to the Virgin Islands, and to the German protected territory in South-West Africa, with the result that practically the whole area of the civilized world has now been brought within the scope of that system. From the beginning of last month a direct money order service to Zanzibar was established, whereas formerly all such orders had to pass through the medium of the Indian post office.

Telegraph extensions have been made by certain companies, acting in conjunction with the Post Office, to Sandakan, in North Borneo; to Les-saintes, in the West Indies; and to several places in the Philippine Islands. Additional telegraph offices were also opened in the Portuguese possessions on the West Coast of Africa; the telegraph rates to Queensland and New Caledonia were reduced; the more liberal method of counting words under the European telegraphic system was extended to the extra-European system, to the manifest advantage of a large number of commercial houses; and finally the rates for private wires and for Post Office telephone exchange wires were reduced.

The extensions in connexion with the parcel post were comparatively few, owing to the fact that there is hardly any territory except America which has not already been brought into direct association with this country by means of the parcel post. In October last arrangements were made whereby parcels from Mauritius going by the Colombo route could be insured under the usual conditions up to the value of £50; in the same month the parcel post was extended to the Republic of Honduras; a reduction in the parcel rates to China and Hong-kong came into operation on Saturday last; the postage on parcels for British East Africa and Zanzibar has been reduced from 8d. to 6d. for the first pound; the insurance system on parcels was extended to certain Austrian possessions in the Ottoman Empire; and an arrangement was made enabling persons sending parcels to certain British possessions and foreign countries to undertake the payment of the Customs and other charges arising in the country of destination.

During the year the express delivery services performed in London have increased by over 21 per cent., the total number of such services recorded being upwards of 340,000. The increase has been noticed more especially in the number of ordinary letters and parcels delivered, at the request of the addressee, by special messenger, and these were 43 per cent. more numerous than in 1896. Express letters and parcels intended for delivery by special messenger throughout are now accepted on week days at all express delivery offices in the kingdom during the hours within which they are open for telegraph business, instead, as formerly, up to only 7 p.m. in all places outside London. Another facility provided under the express delivery service is that hand-registered letters can now be conveyed by special messenger from any express delivery office in London and handed to the officials in charge of the sorting carriages attached to the mail trains. In some cases this convenience is extremely valuable, and the service is undertaken on the payment of a late fee of 1s., in addition to the ordinary postage, registration, and express fees. On June 1 the National Telephone Company's exchanges were connected with certain district and branch post offices, so that subscribers might telephone a message for (*a*) transmission over the postal telegraphs and delivery as a telegram; (*b*) delivery as an express letter; (*c*) conveyance and delivery as an ordinary letter; or (*d*) calling for the services of a Post Office express messenger. In the following month the international express delivery system, which had up to that time been confined to letters, was extended to parcels in the case of the following countries:—Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Luxemburg, Montenegro, and Switzerland. Persons sending parcels to any of these countries can now have them on arrival delivered by special messenger by prepaying a fee of fivepence in addition to the postage. This extra fee covers the express delivery for parcels addressed to houses in the neighbourhood of the post-office of destination; but when the place of address is beyond the limits of the ordinary parcel delivery an additional charge is levied in the country of destination on the basis of the inland express rate, allowance being made for the fivepence prepaid by the sender. Parcels coming from abroad bearing the express delivery mark, and indicating that the express fee has been paid in addition to the postage, are delivered in the United Kingdom under similar conditions.

Many British colonies which cannot at present arrange for the express delivery of parcels and letters from their own post-offices have agreed to accept express letters and parcels for express delivery in this country. In such instances the whole of the express fee—which is fixed at the rate of threepence per mile—is collected on delivery as regards letters, but in the case of parcels the express fee of fivepence has to be prepaid in the colony of despatch. If the distance from the office of delivery should exceed one mile, an extra fee of fivepence is collected from the addressee. The colonies which have adopted this arrangement are Barbados, Malta, Cape Colony, Trinidad, Queensland, Cyprus, Seychelles, St. Vincent, Hong-kong, Singapore, Tasmania, British Honduras, St. Helena, Bahamas, Gibraltar, South Australia, and Victoria. Persons wishing to obtain important letters or parcels from any of the colonies mentioned as early as possible after the arrival of the mails should instruct their correspondents to mark the articles "For express delivery," and in the case of parcels to prepay the express fee of fivepence in addition to the ordinary postage. The express delivery service has been adopted in Sierra Leone, St. Lucia, and Egypt as regards letters and parcels sent both to and from the United Kingdom.

No further extension of the night mail road

parcel coach system from and to London has taken place during 1897; but in consequence of the increase in the number and size of parcels—following the reduction in June last of the rates of postage—it has become necessary to introduce a supplementary coach for the traffic to the many towns on the road to Brighton. Here the steam motor van of Messrs. Julius Harvey and Co. has made its appearance for a trial extending over six weeks, dating from December 16. As already stated in *The Times*, the van, carrying parcels weighing altogether as much as 15cwt. or 16cwt., is running from the General Post Office to Redhill and back, in order to relieve the four-horse coach of some of its burden, which is at times exceedingly heavy. Up to the present the motor van has performed the service very satisfactorily, and nearly every night, even during the dense fogs which have lately been experienced, it has completed the journey in each direction well within the allotted time, experience demonstrating that it could safely travel much quicker if permitted by the different local authorities through whose districts the car passes. An oil motor belonging to the British Motor Car Syndicate had previously been tried by the Post Office to carry letter mails between the General Post Office and the South-Western District Office, and afterwards to convey parcel mails between the same district office and Kingston-on-Thames. This experiment was not continued for more than a week on each service, but it was eminently satisfactory, the time kept by the car being better than that attained by horsed coaches. A short time hence an electric car will be tried for the conveyance of the mails between the General Post Office and the West Central, Western, and Paddington District Offices. As the records of the night mail road parcel coaches are seldom referred to, it may here be added that in the recent foggy weather they have kept excellent time, indeed, if anything, better than the trains with which they to some extent compete.

Every disturbance in the industrial world inevitably affects, in a greater or less degree, the business of the Post Office Savings Bank. The protracted dispute and lock-out in the engineering trade has, therefore, had a marked effect upon the operations of that Department; but it is at least satisfactory to know, as shown by the published returns of the National Debt Office, that the aggregate of savings is still largely on the increase. On December 31, 1896, the total amount due to depositors was £108,098,641, the number of accounts open at that date being 6,862,035. In 1896 the highest number of deposits made on any one day was 91,571—namely, on February 29—while the highest amount deposited in one day was £303,125, on the last day of the year. The largest number of withdrawal warrants issued in one day was 40,128, on December 22, and the largest amount of such warrants was £166,285, on December 16. The latest return available for 1897 shows that the total amount at the credit of the Post Office Savings Bank had increased to £115,730,351. Owing, no doubt, mainly to the engineering dispute, the amount of the withdrawals at Christmas was the largest ever yet reached, although probably not in any undue proportion to the number and amount of the depositors' accounts. A classification of the accounts open at the end of 1895, according to the amount of the balance due, showed that 90·8 of the balances did not exceed £50, and further evidence of the small scale of the mass of the Department's transactions is to be seen in the fact that, notwithstanding an appreciable reduction in the rate of working expenses, the business in 1896, after payment of expenses and of 2½ per cent. interest to depositors, left a deficit of £3,791, which Parliament voted in the Estimates. This was the first time since the establishment of the Savings Bank that any loss had occurred. The operations of the Department exhibited further expansion during 1897, and there is every reason to believe from the deposits which are now being made in large number that the amount standing at the credit of the bank at the end of the current financial year will fully re-establish the normal balance.

THE HUMOURS OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE.

14.1.98.

Mr. H. Tiedeman, a Dutch Press representative in London, writes to us as follows from Hampstead:—

The humours of the General Post Office, not unlike those of the Old Lady of Threadneedle-street, are not generally known, certainly far from sufficiently appreciated. The *beaux esprits* of St. Martin's-le-Grand will therefore, I am confident, feel grateful towards me for directing universal attention to them through the world-wide medium of *The Times*.

During the recent gales, telegraphic communication with Holland and Germany was, at one time, entirely suspended. Instead of stating this in plain English, when I presented my usual telegrams in the Threadneedle-street office for transmission abroad, I was merely told that there would be considerable delay in getting my telegrams through, which may mean anything, where the distance to be covered is but short. I found out the true quality of the G.P.O. joke No. 1 when the "telegrams" I had sent were returned to me from abroad as useless, having been forwarded by mail, and, consequently, arriving with my letters on the following day.

This was not enough for the wags of St. Martin's-le-Grand. They promptly followed up joke No. 1. by joke No. 2. in charging me full telegraphic rates for my unfortunate "telegrams" sent as letters.

In due course, I was instructed by my employers to demand the return of the money paid for such "telegrams," my people not quite relishing the fun of paying for a letter at the rate of twopence a word. But my request has merely elicited the following reply, which I can only regard in the light of another piece of G. P. O. banter.

Surely, they have pushed their three-fold joke too far to be long enjoyed, at least by the cynics of the foreign Press! For the future we should be told, I would most humbly suggest, when there is a total cessation of telegraphic communication, that our telegrams cannot be forwarded except by post. If that had been done in my case, I should positively have refrained from the luxury of paying for letters at the rate of telegrams.

This is the official letter above referred to:—

"General Post Office, London, Dec. 29, 1897.

"Sir,—With reference to your application of the 6th inst., I beg leave to inform you that owing to the severe gale of the 28th and 29th ultimo telegraphic communication with Holland was completely interrupted on the latter date.

"Telegrams for Holland handed in for transmission on the 29th ultimo were therefore sent to that country by post.

"A notice warning senders of telegrams to Holland of considerable delay in the delivery of their messages was conspicuously posted at the counter of the Threadneedle-street Office and, in the circumstances, the Department regrets that it is unable to return the cost of the telegrams in question.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"Mr. H. Tiedeman." "J. CHAMBERS.

"ROBBERY BY POST."—Mr. H. Tiedeman writes from 102, Fordwych-road, Hampstead, stating that since the publication of his letter in *The Times* of January 14 under the heading of "Humours of the General Post Office" he has received several letters from stockbrokers and others who, on the date given, had their "telegrams" treated in the same cavalier fashion as his own, and who also could not get their money returned. "This simply bears out," he says, "what Mr. Chambers was instructed to write to me—namely, that on the day mentioned, when telegraphic communication between this country and part of the Continent was interrupted, all messages from here to the affected countries abroad, whether handed in at Threadneedle-street, West Strand, or elsewhere, were, after a certain hour of the day, simply stopped, enclosed in envelopes, and despatched by mail, the senders being in all cases charged the full telegraphic rate." Mr. Tiedeman adds that two members of Parliament have promised to bring the matter before the House of Commons as soon as possible, and he wishes his "fellow-sufferers" to communicate with him as promptly as possible, either authorising him to use the communications already sent or to furnish him with all necessary particulars bearing upon their cases. 22.1.98

THE DELIVERY OF LETTERS.

Replying to Mr. LUTTRELL (Devon, Tavistock),

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—When announcing the intention of the Postmaster-General to aim at including every house in the kingdom in the free delivery of letters, the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressly stated that the delivery would not necessarily be a delivery every day, and that the work would necessarily occupy a considerable time. Considerable progress, however, has been made and arrangements have already been sanctioned for the delivery of one-third of the correspondence addressed to places at which there was no delivery in June last. The work will be continued without any unnecessary delay until the whole of the United Kingdom has been dealt with. 28.2.98

25.2.08.

THE INDIAN POSTAL SYSTEM.

The courage with which the Indian Post Office undertakes services from which St. Martin's-le-Grand still shrinks might warm the heart of a British postal reformer. With the assimilating powers of a young institution, it absorbs whatever it finds suitable to its own growth in the systems of Europe and America, and quadruples its work in short periods of years. The Indian Post Office dates only from the beginning of the Queen's reign, and the first Indian postage stamps were struck in 1854 as one of the daring innovations of Lord Dalhousie. It now ranks fourth in the world as regards the number of its post offices, fifth as regards the number of its letter-boxes, and seventh in the amount of its money-order business. It has attained to these dimensions in a single generation, and among a population of whom only 4 per cent. can yet read and write. It advances by bounds with the progress of public instruction, and before another generation is gone, if the career of British rule in India sustains no check, it will bid for a first place among the postal administrations of the globe. During the past 12 years its number of letters and post-cards doubled, while in all other postal business the expansion has been still more rapid.

Many facilities long given by the Indian Post Office have but recently been conceded here. The parcel post, telegraphic money orders, and the free redirection of letters were features of the Indian postal service for years before they were introduced in the United Kingdom. Even now there is a want of simplicity in our English system of redirecting letters, for the redirection of parcels an extra charge is made, and a second commission is taken in the case of money orders if the office of payment be changed. The Indian Post Office saves the public all such vexations and uncertainties by a uniform rule of free delivery for the initial charge. Money orders and parcels, as well as letters, are redirected without further payment, although the fresh journey may involve another 2,000 miles, from Quetta to Mandalay, or from Peshawar to Tuticorin. The Indian authorities admit that a second charge is justifiable, but they find that the convenience to the public, and the encouragement to use the post, greatly exceed the loss to themselves.

These words "encouragement to use the post" give the keynote of the whole Indian system. That system, on its modern lines, had to be created among an illiterate population, which clung to the old Asiatic methods of transmitting communications by messengers or by word of mouth. The problem, therefore, was how to develop a postal service requisite for carrying on the government of a great empire at as little cost as possible, by tempting the people themselves to use it, and so to contribute to its maintenance. In this task the Indian postal authorities have displayed a spirit of enterprise and a wise liberality. They recognized that Indians are poor, but love secrecy, and use small or light pieces of paper, so they gave a halfpenny post for sealed or closed letters of little weight. The transmission of money through the post office without the need of any separate communication between the remitter and the payee, the payment of money orders by postmen at the house of the addressee, and the cash on delivery system for parcels, are a few of the arrangements of the Indian Post Office of which we have little or no practical experience in this country, although they exist in European postal systems. To take an example of how such arrangements bring the post office into the trade and economic distribution of the country. The cash on delivery system for parcels, or "value-payable post," as it is called in India, is an arrangement under which a letter, parcel, or open railway receipt goes through the post on condition that it is to be delivered only on payment to the postman of a sum specified by the sender, which on receipt is at once forwarded to him by the post office. This system has been in operation for 19 years, and last year more than two millions of articles, valued at over 23 million rupees, were thus sent through the Indian Post Office. The arrangement not only tends to place purchases on a cash basis, but it enables the consumer in remote up-country districts to obtain the benefit of the lowest cash prices in the great centres of production or of trade. No previous references are given or required, for the distant seller knows that he is certain of his money on the delivery of the goods. Calcutta firms alone posted over 700,000 consignments last year on this expansion of the cash system, and received in return from the post office 8½ million rupees. The business has doubled within the last seven years, and like the *service des envois contre remboursement* of the Continent meets a real want.

The Indian Post Office, however, is very far from being purely imitative of European methods. It strives to bring within its scope not merely trade distribution, but also the relations between the Government and a vast population of small taxpayers. The postal money-order service provides a special procedure for the payment of the land revenue to the Treasury, without requiring the cultivator to stir a foot from his often distant hamlet. It has another special set of forms to facilitate the payment of rents by cultivators who wish to avoid the delays and petty exactions incident to their attending in person at their landlord's office. In the Punjab there is a further development of the system, based on the value-payable post, under which persons in the interior can obtain copies of documents from the courts without the expense involved by a personal journey or by the employment of a lawyer. In the same province, too, there is a special arrangement for the payment of military pensioners through the post, and for their identification at their local post office. Last year over 24,000 pensioners were paid under this arrangement without troubling them to leave their native villages.

Indeed, so closely has the postal system been brought into the popular life that almost every department of the public service tries to enlist its agency whenever it has to deal directly with the people. In this way the Indian Post Office is led into tasks which would scarcely be appropriate in European countries. Thus in 1892 when Sir Charles Elliott, the late Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, resolved to check the scourge of malarial fever by offering the peasantry pure quinine at cost price, he could find no agency likely to be so efficient as the village post offices. The duty was admittedly outside the range of the postal authorities, but the importance of the cause was held to justify their co-operation. The quinine is made up in single-dose sealed packets of five grains, stamped with the Royal arms and bearing directions for use, and sold at the village post offices for a *pice* each—the Indian equivalent of a farthing. This arrangement has since been extended with great success to other malarial provinces, and during the last two years nearly six million quinine packets were thus sold by the village post offices in Lower Bengal alone. More strictly legitimate, and, perhaps, even more striking, is the banking business done by the Indian Post Office. More than 91 per cent. of the depositors in its savings banks are Indians, and nearly the whole of its eleven million money orders last year were sent by and paid to natives. The sepoy on active service, the coolie from distant provinces on the Assam tea-gardens, and the domestic servant following his master's fortunes over the length and breadth of India are as sure that their monthly wages will punctually reach their remote homes as if they paid over the money with their own hands. A small but promising beginning has also been made in life insurance through the agency of the post office.

Such facts are more significant than figures, however large. Yet the figures are very big ones. Of the 123,000 miles of mail lines in India only 42,000 are by railway, steamer, or coach. The remaining 81,000 are lines on which the mails have to be carried by foot runners, mules, camels, horsemen, or country boats. The very accidents of such a postal system form a romance of their own—a rest-house at the height of 13,500ft. buried beneath an avalanche, or the mails attacked by frontier or native states' banditti, or swept away by river floods or irresistible invasions of the sea.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

7.6.98.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—We sometimes meet with that curious type of servant the masterful old butler, or coachman, or housekeeper who, while observing all the outward forms of respect and subjection, rules master, mistress, and household with a rod of iron. In our public economy the Postmaster-General represents this domestic tyrant. British public opinion, which sways the destinies of the Empire, is as powerless to control him as a weak and vacillating valetudinarian is to contend with a stiff-necked major-domo. Permit me to illustrate this.

It has long been known to the readers of *The Times* that an Imperial penny post would please all her Majesty's subjects, while benefiting most and injuring none. Though resolutions were carried by all the important representative bodies—from Chambers of Commerce to the House of Commons—the postal authorities at St. Martin's-le-Grand have quietly ignored the subject, or rather the orders positively given by Prime Ministers and leaders of the House of Commons to carry it out. The brilliant Imperial statesman, Lord Rosebery, on his way to Osborne to take the seals of Office, spoke to the new Postmaster-General of his wishes on the subject; the present able and most sagacious Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Chamberlain, has declared that no money consideration will be allowed to stand in the way of its accomplishment; the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir William Harcourt, has been known to throw into the waste-paper basket the private document prepared by the postal officials against Imperial penny post; it is asserted he told the obstructionist it was narrow enough to be worthy of the opponents of Rowland Hill; and, finally, the present Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that he would be delighted to see a scheme submitted to him with the object of carrying into effect Imperial penny postage. It is no secret that his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, though ever careful to avoid interference in politics, has in this matter never ceased to express deep interest and privately to speak in favour of the scheme. He takes the ground that the inhabitants of New Zealand are as dear to us as those in Kent or Surrey, and it would be the highest policy to make them on an equality as regards postal communication.

I have repeatedly pointed out that we have at the present moment universal halfpenny postage—that is, for all printed matter up to 2oz. in weight—from this country to all parts of the world; and it is ridiculous, therefore, to tell us we cannot afford to send ½oz. letters conveyed by the same ships, trains, and postmen for one penny each.

When I entered Parliament a good number of years ago the authorities of St. Martin's-le-Grand prepared a strong denunciatory document and also a brief for their representative in the House of Commons against my proposal to reduce the postage rates from England to India and Australia from 5d. and 6d. per letter. They said the country could not possibly afford this because of the awful loss. The battle raged loud and long, and we at length won. I am comforted by the recollection of our victories in these respects when dealing with the new tactics of the astute gentlemen who have in charge the postal affairs of this country.

For the information of those who have not followed the arguments it should be explained that, finding the Government of England ordering that no opposition, but rather the contrary, shall come from England, they, the officials, now take refuge in the argument that the colonies are not able to reciprocate, and insist that all the colonies shall make reductions *pari passu* with us. It is like saying that no trade shall be done with a colony until it comes into line with England on Free Trade principles. They are aware that the rates charged on letters sent to this country obviously have nothing to do with the rates on letters sent from this country. The condition thus added by the gentlemen at St. Martin's-le-Grand to the undertaking of a Cabinet Minister vindicated their cleverness, for owing to the banking crisis some of the Australian Governments could not venture to imperil a fraction of their revenue. Again, I may point out that a score of plunging, high-mettled colts about to start for the Derby give trouble enough before they are got into line for a start; but this is child's play to the work of bringing over 50 colonies to one mind on a question of finance. The "Concert of Europe" with six members is a byword with mocking wits; what would a colonial concert of 50 discordant elements be?

My proposal is that the Mother Country shall set her children the example by instituting a penny post to the colonies, leaving them free to imitate that example or reciprocate when they can. This plan is simplicity itself. The charges for the conveyance of our letters to the colonies are paid by us; so that not one farthing of colonial revenue would be affected. In further support of this I would point out that man for man the people of this country are poorer and less able to pay outward postage than their relatives in the colonies are to pay the homeward postage. On the other hand the British Post Office has a big surplus, while the colonial Post Offices are carried on at a loss.

The British Post Office objects to the plan above indicated, and calls for a uniform rate of 2d. in both directions. The answer has come from Australia by cable refusing to accept this proposal. Meanwhile Canada asks permission to charge 1½d. per letter to all parts of the Empire, this being her inland rate. It is no more awkward to charge 1½d. than 2½d. The successful action of the British Post Office in putting pressure on Canada to withdraw her proposal is strongly condemned, and will be the subject of discussion at a meeting of the Colonial party next week in the House of Commons.

For a great number of years the postage of letters from the United States to Canada has been 1d. per letter, and the rate from Canada to the United States 1½d. per letter. Canada fully expected in offering to give the same favour to England as is enjoyed by the United States that England would at once reply by charging 1d. per letter to Canada, for surely it is more expensive to convey a letter from New York to Vancouver 3,300 miles by rail than it is for a less distance by sea—from England to Canada.

The principle is that the domestic rate of postage of the country of origin shall frank a letter to the country which is a party to the agreement. Throughout the United States the postage is 1d. per letter, and throughout Canada 1½d. per letter. The Canadian Government decline to believe that the British postal authorities acted with the consent and knowledge of the Government of this country in so ungraciously refusing the offer.

Much has been said about the anomaly of charging a lower rate to Australia than the postage in Australia itself. This is easily answered. Already greater anomalies exist. For instance, postage on newspapers is abolished in some of the Australian colonies, yet we charge postage in England; a postcard from England to Australia is 1d., but a postcard from Australia to England is 1½d., and a circular from here to Adelaide is ½d., but it is a 1d. postage for a circular from one street to another in Adelaide.

England will show a grand example by making the British Empire one postal district. So sure as the ducklings follow the mother duck into the water, so sure will our colonies in a little time follow England's lead in establishing low postal rates.

The 2d. proposal has been rejected by the Australian Governments. On the other hand, I am assured that my scheme will be favourably received. The late Prime Minister of Victoria sent me the following message, and it has since been endorsed by the present Prime Minister of that colony and by the Prime Ministers of South Australia, New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand:—"I cannot see any colonial objection to your proposal for penny post from England to Australia. It will increase correspondence and commerce and will not affect our postal revenue. Premier, Victoria."

It is to be hoped that our friends will rally round us now, and that the great reform will no longer be delayed.

I am your obedient servant,

7.6.98. J. HENNIKER HEATON.

THE NEW CANADIAN POSTAGE STAMP.—Recent issues of postage stamps by the Canadian Government have attracted much attention from collectors. Messrs. Whitfield, King, and Co., of Ipswich, send us a specimen of the new two-cent Canadian stamp issued in commemoration of the introduction of Imperial penny postage, for which, as our Ottawa Correspondent has stated, there is already a tremendous demand. The design is that of a miniature map of the world. The American continent is placed, not unnaturally, in the middle of the picture, the Canadian Dominion being coloured very prominently in bright red. The British Isles, India, Australia, the Cape Colony, and other British territories and dependencies are similarly coloured. At the head of the engraving are the words "Canada, Postage," with the design of a crown, and at the foot the motto, "We hold a vaster empire than has been," with the date, "Xmas, 1898." The design is distinctly novel and pretty. 10.12.98.

Post-cards for Abroad.—Mr. Samuel James Capper writes from Turin, under date October 12:—"I enclose two post-cards received to-day, upon each of which I have had to pay 3d. I went to the Central Post Office and the Postmaster-in-Chief most courteously explained to me that it was not the doing of the Italian Post Office. All the members of the Postal Union are content that ordinary cards shall be used and shall not be liable to a surcharge if they have a stamp on them equivalent to 1d. or 10 centimes. The English Post Office alone stands out, and insists upon regarding as a letter any communication not written upon a foreign post-card specially issued as such by the department. The two cards, therefore, that I enclose were treated by the London Post Office as letters with a 1d. stamp upon each instead of 2½d., and I am therefore surcharged with double the deficiency. We have doubtless reason to be very proud of the noble devotion to red tape always shown by our great national departments; but as ordinary cards are allowed to go as post-cards through the post in England and between all the other members of the Postal Union except England, English people travelling abroad—and they are legion at the present moment—are sure to have to pay pretty stiffly for the cast-iron rigidity of the great institution of which we are so proud. It is perfectly futile for a traveller with a large correspondence to inform all his correspondents of the nice distinctions of the English Post Office." 17. 10. 98.

The Stamp Duties Management Act.—At the West Ham quarter sessions, William Walker, 56, box-maker, was indicted last week, before the Recorder (Mr. E. Morten), under the Stamp Duties Management Act, 1891, for knowingly and without lawful excuse having in his possession a large quantity of stamps which had been fraudulently removed from other material. Mr. W. J. Grubbe prosecuted on behalf of the Inland Revenue authorities. It appeared that, in consequence of information received, the police obtained a search warrant under the Act, and in September last visited the defendant's house. The defendant, who was at home, handed them a paper bag containing over 900 embossed stamps. Some of these had been roughly cut from documents, while others had been most carefully trimmed so as to leave no trace of a margin; and of this latter class a large number had been gummed on to slips of blue paper, giving them the general appearance of bills or notes. On further investigation it was discovered by the officials at Somerset-house that nearly all the stamps in question had been removed from insurance policies which had been stamped for a well-known office. In order to account for his possession of the stamps, the defendant called as his witness a man who had at one time been a local superintendent for the insurance company. This person stated that when his employment ceased he had in his possession a large number of policies that had lapsed or had not been taken up. These spoiled policies he had sold as waste paper after removing the stamps, but, finding that he could not dispose of the latter, he had thrown them away. The defendant, who declined to give evidence under the recent Act, stated that he purchased waste paper, &c., from warehouses in the City, and sorted the stuff on the very spot where the stamps had previously been thrown by the ex-local superintendent. In this way they had got into his possession, and, although he had tried to sell them, he had never attempted any concealment in the matter and was quite unaware that he was doing anything illegal. The jury *Convicted* the prisoner, and he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour. 20. 10. 98.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

12. 7. 95

Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., sends us the following "50 reasons for establishing Imperial penny postage":—

Policy.

1. Because cheap postal communication is the life-blood of a scattered Empire.

2. Because over 200,000 emigrants swarm out from our shores every year, never to return; and it is both politic and humane to aid in maintaining the natural ties that bind them to the old country.

3. Because these emigrants sent to their poor relatives in the United Kingdom some £1,500,000 in small money orders from 10s. to £5 last year.

4. Because cheap postage is the seed-corn of commerce, which has always shown a greatly increased rate of development on every reduction of rates.

5. Because British commerce is threatened by protectionist rivals in all parts of the world, and cheaper postage would give our traders a certain advantage in the struggle.

6. Because, although foreign postage is no higher than ours, foreign countries pay far more heavily than we do for the mail services, in the shape of larger subsidies to the mail-ship lines, and we can therefore better afford to reduce postage.

Cost.

7. Because the subsidies paid to mail-ship lines (which subsidies are made the pretext for keeping up high postal rates) are paid, as reported by a Parliamentary Committee, to (*a*) encourage British commerce; (*b*) encourage the shipbuilding trade; (*c*) retain a fleet of auxiliary convertible cruisers; and only incidentally (*d*) pay for the conveyance of mails. Up to 1860 these subsidies were paid by the Admiralty.

8. Because sea freightage rates for such a light article as a letter are practically the same trifling amount (under a farthing) for any distance; it costs no more to convey a letter to New Zealand than to Ireland.

9. Because the freightage on valuable goods from London to Sydney is only £2 per ton, whereas Imperial postage would yield, at 1d. per letter (three letters to the ounce), £448 per ton.

10. Because shipping agencies charge one and the same rate—3d. a pound—for conveying a parcel to Boulogne or to Adelaide. The Post Office charges 8s. 4d. for a letter weighing one pound.

11. Because it costs the Post Office less to deal with colonial than with inland mails, since it is saved on outgoing colonial letters the separate distribution, and on incoming colonial mails the separate collection.

12. Because, even if a reduction to the penny rate produced no increase in the number of letters, the Postmaster-General estimates that the reduction would not cost more than £70,000 in the first year: because the nation paid for the Ansidei Madonna £75,000, or more than the amount thus officially estimated.

13. Because private gentlemen, believing that there would be little or no loss, as the increase of correspondence under the penny rate would compensate for it, have twice offered to guarantee the Government against all loss.

14. Because since it is admitted that the cost of collection, sorting, and distribution is the chief item of expenditure on the mails, the cost of carriage by sea for any distance, even to the Antipodes, being an almost inappreciable factor, it follows that the rate for colonial should be the same as that for inland letters.

Popularity.

15. Because the Press and public of the Empire are unanimously in favour of the reform; and its realization would produce a thrill of gratitude and patriotism among all classes in the Empire.

16. Because the Associated Chambers of Commerce have repeatedly passed resolutions demanding it.

17. Because the most eminent statesmen, including representatives of all shades of thought, such as Lord Rosebery, Sir M. Hicks Beach, Mr. Chamberlain, and Sir W. Laurier, are warm supporters of it.

18. Because the House of Commons accepted an assurance of Sir W. Harcourt, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, that it should be granted when the finances permitted and the colonies were willing.

19. Because the financial difficulty has been admitted by Ministers to be "not serious."

20. Because the Government of Canada has formally proposed it at the Imperial Postal Conference now sitting, the proposal being seconded by the Agent-General for the Cape, and supported by the Agent-General of Natal.

21. Because the Australian Press and people are also heartily in favour of it: although, owing to the well-known financial pressure in that continent, their Governments have to content themselves for the present with favouring penny postage one way—namely, to their shores; their sentiment having been thus expressed by a leading Australian journal:—"We are neither inclined, nor is it our interest to say to England, 'What we cannot have you shall not enjoy.'"

22. Because the present Minister for the Colonies, Mr. Chamberlain, said, on June 24, 1897, to a conference of the Colonial Premiers, "As far as this country is concerned, I believe we should be quite ready to make any sacrifice of revenue that may be required in order to secure a universal penny post throughout the Empire."

Feasibility.

23. Because no new machinery is required, not a single extra ship, train, mail-car, postman, or sorter. Even should Australia not at once reciprocate the letters sent there would require answering, and the Australian revenues would correspondingly benefit.

24. Because no further expenditure for sea freightage is involved: so small is the space occupied by the letters (as distinguished from newspapers and periodicals) that the shipowners are willing to carry three times as many for the present subsidies.

25. Because the Postal Union Convention expressly authorizes (in Art. 21) the formation of a "restricted union" such as the British Imperial Union now proposed.

26. Because several such "restricted unions" have already been long in existence—*e.g.*, between Canada and the United States, between the United States and Mexico, between Germany and Austria, &c.

27. Because while it costs 2½d. to send a letter from Liverpool to Quebec, 3,000 miles (by sea), a letter may be sent from Washington to Vancouver, 5,000 miles (by rail), for 1d. It must never be forgotten that while England has an enormous postal surplus, and is therefore better able than any of her colonies to bear the initial loss, yet her people individually—that is, man for man—are less able to pay high postage to their friends in the colonies than their colonial friends are to pay such postage to England.

Miscellaneous.

28. Because the colonial correspondence is but a small fraction (not much more than one-one hundred and fifty-eighth part) of the total mails handled by the British Post Office, so that postal revenue will not be appreciably affected; in other words, there are but 12,000,000 colonial letters, as against 1,900,000,000 letters dealt with. Colonial letters are a mere drop in the ocean.

29. Because there is already Imperial penny postage to and from the colonies, for sailors' and soldiers' letters.

30. Because we have already Imperial (and indeed universal) halfpenny postage to and from the colonies, for printed matter. All printed matter may be sent at the rate of ½d. per two ounces, whether from one London street to another or from London to Vancouver or Melbourne.

31. Because the present charge of 2½d. is kept up by the postal authorities partly to help in meeting the subsidies to mail-ship companies (for which, as already stated, the Post Office should not be liable), and partly to meet the exorbitant charges of France and Italy for the Calais-Brindisi service, to which we need not submit, as an alternative route is open to us.

32. Because the effect of the 2½d. rate is, that Canada and other colonies have to pay a higher postage rate than they wish, in order to help to pay for the transmission of the Eastern and Australasian mails *via* Calais-Brindisi; by which route no mails are sent to Canada and South Africa.

33. Because the inclusion of the whole Empire in one penny postal district will amount to an opportune and significant assertion of Imperial solidarity, of which no rival Powers can complain.

34. Because the inland postage throughout the United States being, like our own, 1d. per ounce, it is certain that the States would willingly join the contemplated British union; and thus would be laid the foundation-stone of the desired Anglo-American Alliance.

35. Because Imperial penny postage is the natural outcome, on a wider field, towards the end of a glorious reign, of that great measure of inland penny postage, passed near its commencement, to which so much of the moral and material progress of the Victorian Era is due.

36. Because it is the duty of the rich and populous mother country, peopling and manufacturing for all parts of the Empire, to take the lead in this matter—as the parent duck sets an example to her brood by plunging first into the water.

37. Because it would be a delicate acknowledgment by the mother country of the striking display of colonial attachment and loyalty at the time of the Jubilee.

38. Because it is the most suitable reward for those hundreds of thousands of our countrymen, pioneers of British power and civilization, who have emigrated to the frontiers of the Empire, and are there toiling, face to face with savage foes, and physical hardships and difficulties of all kinds, for our ultimate benefit.

39. Because the effect of the higher rate hitherto prevailing has been to penalize, and virtually suppress, all communication between the emigrants and their friends in these kingdoms (there is now the silence of the grave between the two classes), much misery resulting to parents and others in humble life.

40. Because the British Post Office is the richest in the world; and with a clear annual profit approaching £4,000,000 can well afford the trifling initial sacrifice of revenue required.

41. Because in virtue of its central and pre-eminent position, its wealth, and its vast and perfect organization, the British Post Office should no longer take a parochial, but an Imperial view of its functions.

42. Because for many years our countrymen had to pay much more than foreigners for the postage of letters to British colonies, and it is only fair that they should now reap a corresponding advantage.

43. Because the present high rate leads to fraud, such as the sending of half a dozen tiny letters in one envelope to be distributed or re-posted here, and the marking of printed characters in a newspaper so as to form a message.

44. Because the opposition to the reform is now entirely confined to a few officials; it is Taper *contra mundum*.

45. Because the Postal officials were equally implacable foes of Inland penny postage, to which they assert their annual surplus of £4,000,000 is almost exclusively due.

46. Because they have themselves, by proposing as a compromise a 2d. rate, admitted that the 2½d. rate is too high.

47. Because it would lead to the introduction of a common or Imperial penny stamp.

48. Because it is unsound finance to tax the communications of the people to such an extent as to obstruct or repress them, such taxation being as objectionable as was the old toll-gate system on our bridges and highways. Families now write at first once a month, then once in three months, and correspondence finally ceases. Anything above the familiar penny rate will not be popular, but will check the correspondence of the people, especially the poor.

49. Because this country is governed by public opinion, and it would be an affront to the nation to refuse what it has so long and earnestly demanded.

50. Because the Heir to the Throne is well known to be a warm though necessarily inactive friend of the reform, and its realization would embody the spirit of his Royal Highness's memorable words, "A resident in Canada or Australia is as dear to me as an inhabitant of Kent or Surrey."

But, perhaps, after all, the best 50 reasons for Imperial penny postage are the half-hundred British colonies and dependencies.

12. 7. 98.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

2.12.95

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—With great reluctance I beg for space for the annexed appeal to the Governments of Australia, which I have despatched, and I know they are now considering.

Very little pressure on the Australian Chancellors of the Exchequer is required to win the day.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

21, Eaton-square, Nov. 30.

Imperial Penny Postage.

To the Prime Ministers and Postmasters-General of the Australasian Colonies.

Gentlemen,—You are already aware that the declared policy of the British Government is to cast the mantle of unity over the Empire by constituting the entire dominions of the Queen a single penny postal district; thus showing, in the memorable words of the Prince of Wales, that an inhabitant of New Zealand is as dear to us at home as an inhabitant of Kent or Surrey.

Your Agents-General have warned the British Government that if the people here attempt to send any letter to Australia at the penny rate you will refuse to deliver it. I may say at once there never has been any intention on the part of England to send letters to Australia at the penny rate without your full consent. It would be absurd to propose to do this, if for no other reason than because it would be a breach of the principal clause in the Postal Union Convention to which we have solemnly pledged ourselves. May I once again make an earnest appeal to you?

The British masses are man for man much less able to pay 2½d. for postage of a letter than are their cousins in the colonies. I would respectfully but strongly ask your sympathetic consideration of this point, and entreat you not to prevent the old folks at home, superannuated it may be, earning precarious wages, deprived of their sons' assistance, from enjoying a privilege on which they have set their hearts, although you cannot at present see your way to confer a similar privilege on your own people.

India has just accepted the Imperial penny rate: the whole Empire, and not merely the United Kingdom, is now awaiting the voice of Australia. Will you not telegraph your consent? It will not cost you a farthing; and to cite the forcible language of one of your leading newspapers, "Confidence exists that you will not say to England 'what we Australians cannot have, you in England shall not enjoy.'"

Let me, in the fewest possible words, answer certain objections, and restate some pregnant facts. Nine million newspapers at a penny each, and only four million letters at 2½d. each for postage are despatched every year to Australia. The total loss to Australia would be less than £15,000 per annum—a mere trifle divided amongst seven colonies.

The total weight of letters sent to Australia (40 to the lb.) is less than 45 tons in the whole year. How grotesque, therefore, to talk about vast extra bulk and enormous increase of cost of conveyance? Distance, as pointed out by Rowland Hill, has hardly anything to do with the cost of conveying so small and light a thing as a letter. It is an antiquated fallacy of the officials that the cost of carriage for a few miles is much less than for 10,000 miles. It costs the same sum to convey a letter from London to Dublin across the Irish Channel as from London to New Zealand. The real cost is incurred in handling, stamping, packing, and delivering.

Imperial penny postage will not involve the employment of a single extra coach, train, steamer, horse, or letter carrier in Australia. Your Agents-General spoke in England of the enormous distances in Australia, and the consequent cost. But they omitted to say that 90 per cent. of the people had railway communication and lived in or near the seaports of Australia.

Anomalies were feared. But you have already the anomaly of halfpenny postage from England to Australia for circulars, whereas from one street to another in Australia the postage of these is double. Yet you do not complain. Again, postcards from here to Australia only cost one penny, but from Australia to England you charge three halfpence.

The final objection is that your local rate is two pence per letter, except in towns, in most colonies, and your people would soon become dissatisfied and demand a penny rate. Need I reply that if the people of Australia really wish for a penny rate they will have it, and will of course have to pay for it. I may, however, point out that for twenty years the postage rate from the United States to any part of Canada was one penny (two cents), but in Canada itself the inland rate was and is three cents, or 1½d. Yet there has never been any agitation against it. I have, I hope, exhausted and answered the objections raised against the policy of the British Government—a policy based on the wishes of the British people.

I know it is the anxious desire of every Australian to meet England in this matter, and I therefore venture to express the unanimous hope entertained on this side that you will exchange views without delay and generously consent. The matter has not heretofore been before you collectively, and I understand that you would not hesitate on the score of cost if you could get over the difficulty of your local rates. I gather from the utterance of the Postmaster-General of Victoria that it will not be long before he resumes the penny rate for the whole colony.

It is now recognised that reductions in postal rates, while for the moment diminishing revenue, indirectly feed it in far greater proportion by promoting commercial operations, especially between that large class which, owing to the distance between the parties, must necessarily be transacted by letter. The Indian Government has accordingly not hesitated to sacrifice £100,000 a year to secure Imperial penny postage, together with cheaper inland postage.

For these reasons, and, above all, because her Majesty's subjects are united as one man in seeking this boon, I once more beg you to join hands with us, and to leave no gap in the Imperial circle.

Later.—While telegraphing this I learn that the Canadian Government intend to maintain their inland three-halfpenny rate side by side with the Imperial penny rate until they see what the latter costs them. Why should not the Australian Governments cut the Gordian knot in the same spirited way?

2.12.98. J. HENNIKER HEATON.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

29.12.98.

Since Imperial penny postage was introduced on Christmas Day, no fewer than 5,000 letters posted for the countries to which the reduction applies have been prepaid to the extent of 2½d., while 36,700 have been properly prepaid at the reduced 1d. rate. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that a very large percentage of people in this country are as yet unaware of the lower rate of postage introduced in the case of the British colonies and protectorates mentioned in the Treasury Warrant, which has been published broadcast throughout the United Kingdom. Two typical illustrations of this excess of prepayment may be mentioned. Out of 6,540 letters posted for India since midnight on Saturday, 975 were prepaid to the amount of 2½d. instead of 1d., and of 970 letters posted for Natal, 288 were in the same way overpaid. The first batch of letters posted in accordance with the reduced rate at the General Post Office just after midnight on Saturday were eight in number, and were all addressed to Canada. On the envelope of one of them the writer had inscribed the words, "Thank Henniker Heaton for this."

The first despatch of mails from Liverpool for Canada under the new Imperial penny postal arrangement took place last evening, when the White Star steamship Majestic sailed from the Mersey for New York, carrying 435 sacks of correspondence for the United States, Canada, and New Zealand, the latter to go *via* Vancouver. Some of the correspondents had affixed the old 2½d. stamp instead of the 1d. stamp.

THE QUEEN AND IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

30.12.98

Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., marked the realization of the Imperial penny postage scheme by distributing last week, among those who had helped to advance the proposal, silver pennies to be kept as a memento of the occasion. One of these little coins Mr. Heaton asked to be allowed to present to her Majesty. In acknowledging the gift, Sir Arthur Bigge wrote that the Queen had been very pleased to accept the memento and that the completion of this important change in the relations between various parts of the Empire was a matter of sincere satisfaction to her Majesty. Sir Arthur Bigge added that the Queen was well aware of the great interest Mr. Henniker Heaton had taken in the matter.

Owing to an erroneous impression which exists, several thousand letters have since Sunday been posted for the Cape bearing only penny stamps. The Treasury Warrant makes it plain that the reduced rate has not yet been extended to the Cape, and consequently all such insufficiently prepaid letters will on delivery be surcharged double the amount of the deficiency—namely, threepence.

A correspondent who inquired whether the new penny postal rate to Canada applied to letters specially directed by the fast New York steamers has received the following reply from the Post Office:—"I am directed by the Postmaster-General to inform you that letters from this country for Canada are prepayable at the rate of 1d. per half-ounce, irrespective of the route or steamers by which they may be forwarded."

24.12.98

Christmas Day, 1898, will henceforth be a memorable date in the annals of the British Empire. It marks the initiation, though not the completion, of what will no doubt shortly become a uniform system of postage for letters at the rate of a penny for half-an-ounce to all parts of the Empire. At present the Australasian colonies, including New Zealand, stand aloof, and the adhesion of the Cape Colony has not yet been received. But the omission of these colonies and some others, such as Mauritius, from the list issued by the Post Office of British possessions and protectorates to which the new system applies can only be regarded as temporary. The contagious momentum of a change so far-reaching, and so conducive to the social solidarity of the Empire, must in the long run prove irresistible even though financial considerations have led in some cases to hesitation and delay. Hence we may fairly take Christmas Day, 1898, as the date of the virtual establishment of Imperial Penny Postage. It cannot be for long that a letter to Australia or New Zealand will cost 2½d. while a letter to the Fiji Islands will cost only a penny, or that the same contrast should apply to the Cape Colony and Natal, to Mauritius and the Seychelles, to Gibraltar and Malta, to Jamaica and British Honduras. There is no half-way house in such a matter. The system once initiated is bound to extend itself until it includes every part of the Empire. We cannot force the pace, however. We cannot have self-governing colonies and expect to be allowed to interfere with so entirely domestic a matter as the regulation of their rates of postage. But henceforth the new system will apply to the whole of the Dominion of Canada, to the whole of the Indian Empire, to immense regions in Africa, to our possessions and dependencies in the Far East, to all the West Indian colonies except Jamaica, to nearly all the Crown colonies in different parts of the world, and to all HER MAJESTY'S ships abroad. With such a start the pace will force itself.

The change is immense, and only a few years ago the attempt to effect it even to the extent that has now been accomplished would have been regarded as wildly Utopian. We do not owe it to the Post Office, which has never been very forward in the initiation of great reforms. Perhaps, indeed, it is hardly the business of the Post Office to consider such Imperial questions as affect its department from a large Imperial point of view. The Post Office is an excellent institution, it is the greatest agency of communication in the world, and its daily work is a marvel of intelligent organization. But the vastness of its business, the complexity of its machinery, the very skill with which it discharges the functions assigned to it, are of necessity obstacles to its adoption of new ideas and far-reaching reforms. "We are doing very "well as we are" is its habitual, perhaps its inevitable, attitude, "we are conducting a highly "specialized business to the entire satisfaction of "the best of specialists, and we cannot allow "importunate amateurs to rush in where the best "of specialists fear to tread." Hence, if we had waited for the Post Office to establish Imperial Penny Postage of its own initiative we might have waited until the next century was growing old. But one important amateur was not to be put off in this way. He might not be deeply versed in the mysteries of Post Office business, and he might seem to treat with scant respect the dilatory or obstructive pleas of official experts. But he fixed his eye steadily on the

essential fact that the actual cost of sending a letter to the ends of the earth is almost infinitesimal, and armed with this fact he insisted, in season and out of season, that what ROWLAND HILL had done early in the reign for the United Kingdom might be done and ought to be done without delay for the whole of the British Empire. For years, like reformers of the same stamp before him, he knocked at the doors of the Post Office in vain. For years he appealed to the House of Commons, not without considerable sympathy and support, though official inertia was too strong for him. But he stuck to his cause and fought for it in all parts of the Empire, and at last his steady persistence and sturdy faith have carried him to a triumphant victory. In the Jubilee year a light coming almost unexpectedly from the colonies broke through the darkness of official obstruction at home. At the conference of colonial Premiers held in that year, MR. CHAMBERLAIN announced the readiness of the home Government to make such sacrifice of revenue as might be required to establish Imperial Penny Postage. These words soon bore fruit. SIR WILFRID LAURIER, the Canadian Premier, a statesman of large, liberal, and truly Imperial ideas, soon afterwards authorized his Postmaster-General, MR. MULOCK, to propose Imperial Penny Postage at a conference held in London, and with a few exceptions—or, rather, perhaps reservations—the other colonial delegates at the conference accepted the proposal. Thus the victory was won. But, if the Canadian PREMIER decided the battle by bringing up his colonial reserves, it was an English postal reformer who had planned the campaign and borne, almost unsupported, the burden and heat of the day. Every one will remember the generous tribute paid by SIR ROBERT PEEL to the real author of the repeal of the Corn Laws. Many causes and many personalities have, as is explained to-day by a Correspondent, contributed to the establishment of Imperial Penny Postage. MR. CHAMBERLAIN and the DUKE of NORFOLK, MR. MULOCK and MR. HUTTON, formerly M.P. for Manchester, have done work for the cause which should not be forgotten. The Press at large, and in particular *The Times*, has lent its aid. But we may borrow SIR ROBERT PEEL's words and say, "The name which ought to be chiefly associated "with the success of these measures is the name "of MR. HENNIKER HEATON."

It is easy to be cynical over this latest phase of postal evolution. Those to whom the daily post is a burden will hardly be enthusiastic at the prospect of a colonial addition to the growing flood of superfluous postal matter which already threatens to overwhelm them. But this is really the Little Pedlington view of the matter. With a little consideration and some imagination we shall readily understand how great a boon to all classes cheap postage has been, and how close-knitting a bond of Empire it must henceforth become. It is sometimes thought that the Empire is a mere abstraction to the toiling masses of the community, and this is no doubt in a sense true. The Imperial idea, with all that it implies, appeals but feebly to those who have never grasped the larger aspects and interests of labour, industry, and trade, who have never realized that their labour is but an individual thread in the world-wide fabric of British maritime trade, and do not understand that if the fabric were destroyed the thread would perish with it. But in a more intimate and domestic sense the Empire is an almost daily factor in the experience of nearly every family in the land. It is not only the "classes," as they are called, which send forth their sons to serve the Empire in all parts of the world. The "masses" do it much more largely. It is from them, too, that the bulk of emigrants is drawn—the men and women of stout hearts and sturdy frames who go forth to make new homes and carve out new fortunes for themselves beyond the seas. To the classes, however, the cost of postage is a trifle in any case, and to them the pang of separation is rarely embittered by the thought that correspondence with their distant loved ones must be costly and, because costly, infrequent. This added bitterness of parting is, on the other hand, the common lot of the poor, who are, nevertheless, as warm-hearted as the rich, and quite as much interested in this domestic aspect of the Empire. The mere cost of postage thus attenuates the thread of correspondence, and in time destroys the habit of letter-writing altogether. In spite of this, however, the countless filaments of affection and remembrance which stretch from nearly every other family in the mother country to distant parts of the earth are in reality the true bonds of Empire, tougher than steel, indestructible as adamant. They are like the ether which pervades all space, and can, as we are beginning to learn, be made the direct medium of man's communication with man. MR. HENNIKER HEATON is in reality the MARCONI of this new telegraphy of hearts. By bringing the postage of the Empire within the reach of the poorest he has rendered vocal innumerable chords which have long been dumb, and acclaimed the unity of the Empire by the responsive chorus of myriads of gladdened hearts. Christmas is a peculiarly fitting season for the spread of these glad tidings throughout the Empire, for, after all, the true spirit of Christmas is the outgoing of human brotherhood and affection. We do no more than express the sentiments of Englishmen in all parts of the Empire when we offer MR. HENNIKER HEATON a hearty Christmas congratulation on the happy inauguration of a really great stroke of Imperial policy.

IMPERIAL PARCEL POSTAGE.

16.7.98.

We have authority to state that at the recent conference on postage within the British Empire, the Postmaster-General brought forward the question of simplifying and reducing parcel postage, and proposed, for ultimate adoption in the case of all parcels exchanged between the United Kingdom and other parts of the Empire, the following scale :—

For a parcel weighing—

Not over 3lb.	1s.
Over 3lb., but not over 7lb.	2s.
Over 7lb., but not over 11lb.	3s.

This would supersede the various British scales, numbering more than 20, now in force; and would greatly encourage the use of the Parcel Post by providing moderate charges for heavy parcels, in respect of which the present charges are in some cases high. For parcels not exceeding 1lb. in weight there are, of course, lower charges than 1s. at the present time. But the scheme of allowing the lowest rate to carry parcels of three times the present weight, and of making the highest rate 3s., as against the present rates varying from 4s. to 9s. 6d., must of necessity give a great impulse to the commerce conducted through the Parcel Post. The scheme was very cordially received by the colonial representatives, who undertook to refer it at once to their Governments for consideration.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

24.12.98

The *London Gazette* of last night publishes the following :—

FOREIGN AND COLONIAL POST.

TREASURY WARRANT.

We, the Commissioners of her Majesty's Treasury, in exercise of all powers given to us by the Post Office Acts, or any of them, and of all other powers enabling us in this behalf, do, by this Warrant, made on the representation of her Majesty's Postmaster-General (testified by his signing the same), order, direct, and declare as follows :—

Warrant to be read with Foreign and Colonial Post Warrant, 1892.

1. This Warrant shall be read as one with the Foreign and Colonial Post Warrant, 1892 (hereinafter referred to as "the Principal Warrant"), and all warrants amending the same.

Rates on British Letters.

2.—(1) On every British letter there shall be charged and paid (in lieu of the rates of postage payable under the Principal Warrant) the following rates, that is to say :—

On every letter not exceeding half-an-ounce in weight, 1d.

On every letter exceeding half-an-ounce in weight, for every half-ounce, or fractional part of half-an-ounce, 1d.

(2) A British letter means and includes—

(a) An outgoing letter posted in the United Kingdom for transmission to any country or place specified in the schedule hereto, or to any of her Majesty's ships of war, whether on the high seas or in any port or place outside the United Kingdom.

(b) A letter sent from any of her Majesty's ships of war, whether on the high seas or in any port or place outside the United Kingdom, to any place in the United Kingdom or to any country or place specified in the schedule hereto.

(c) A letter deposited in a letter-box on board a British ship, or in the hands of the commander of such ship, when on the high seas or in a port in any country or place specified in the schedule hereto, for transmission to the United Kingdom or to any country or place specified in the said schedule.

(3) The rates fixed by this clause in relation to letters to and from her Majesty's ships of war shall apply only to letters transmitted in closed mails to or from such ships.

Incoming Letters Re-directed.

3. Where an incoming letter liable to be charged with the rates of postage specified in this Warrant is re-directed to any country or place to which such rates do not apply, there shall be charged and paid on such letter an amount which, together with the amount chargeable thereon under this Warrant, shall be equal to the rates of postage on letters charged and paid under the Principal Warrant.

Short Title of Amendment Warrant, 1895.

4. Clause 1 of the Foreign and Colonial Post Amendment Warrant, 1895, is hereby repealed, and that Warrant may be cited as "The Foreign and Colonial Post (Amendment No. 2) Warrant, 1895."

Short Title.

5. This Warrant may be cited as "The Foreign and Colonial Post (Amendment No. 3) Warrant, 1898."

Commencement.

6. This Warrant shall come into operation on the 25th day of December, 1898.

Date.

Dated this 22nd day of December, 1898.

W. H. FISHER } Two of the Commissioners of her
STANLEY } Majesty's Treasury.
NORFOLK, Her Majesty's Postmaster-General.

The Schedule before referred to :—Aden, Ascension, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Central Africa, British East Africa, British Guiana, British Honduras, Canada, Ceylon, Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Fiji Islands, Gambia, Gibraltar, Gold Coast Colony, Hong-kong, India (British), Johore, Lagos, Leeward Islands—viz., Antigua, St. Kitt's, Nevis, Dominica, Montserrat, and the Virgin Islands; Malay States (Federated)—viz., Perak, Selangor, Negri-Sembilan, and Pahang; Natal, Newfoundland, Niger Coast Protectorate, Niger Territory, St. Helena, Sarawak, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Straits Settlements, Tobago, Trinidad, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uganda, Windward Islands—viz., Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent.

HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

Christmas Day this year will pass into the history of this country as an occasion ever to be remembered, and one of scarcely less importance than the memorable 10th of January, 1840, when uniform inland penny postage was introduced. To-morrow the population of our vast Empire will receive its Christmas present in the shape of Imperial Penny Postage, and colonies and mother country will thus be drawn together in a tangible bond of unity. It is now 12 years since the agitation for the reduction of the postage rates to our colonies to one penny was begun, and the story of the movement is in many respects not dissimilar from that of inland penny postage. Those who favoured the agitation found themselves beset with difficulties at every turn, and it has only been by dint of persistent action and patient perseverance on their part that the matter has been brought to a successful issue.

The idea of Imperial Penny Postage is not by any means a new one. As far back as 1842, or two years after the introduction of the inland penny rate, Elihu Burritt wrote a pamphlet strongly urging the adoption of a scheme of Ocean Penny Postage. The matter was also taken up at intervals by others, but the practicability of the plan seems never to have been seriously discussed until about the year 1886. At that time, and for over 30 years previously, the rate for letter postage to Australia and many other of our colonies stood as high as 6d., and a feeling was beginning to spread that this was excessive. Mr. Fawcett, the indomitable Post Office reformer, had made great efforts to induce the colonies to reduce their rates, but without success. The question of the postage rates to the colonies and foreign countries was also brought up at the quinquennial Postal Union Conference which had just been held at Lisbon. Moreover, in 1886 France had decided to reduce the rate of postage for all post-offices under its control to 2½d. (25 centimes), but for financial and other reasons Great Britain was unable to follow suit. The result was the creation of a very undesirable anomaly, inasmuch as a letter handed in at the French post-office at Shanghai or Zanzibar to an address in London was carried for 25 centimes, whereas if it were handed in at the English post-office in the same town it cost 5d.

It was in this position of affairs, when the letter rate to countries of the Postal Union was 2½d. in the case of all the countries of Europe, Egypt, Canada, and the United States, 4d. to most places beyond the sea, and 5d. to places in the East *via* Brindisi, that Mr. Henniker Heaton sounded the first note of universal penny postage. Mr. Heaton was the new member of Parliament for Canterbury, and on March 30, 1886, he moved in the House of Commons "That in the opinion of this House the time has now arrived for the Government of this country to open negotiations with other Governments with a view to the establishment of a universal penny postage system." It will be seen that in the first instance Mr. Heaton's proposal was of a much wider scope to that to which it has since been reduced. The main argument he used in its favour was the contention that the Post Office should not be carried on for purposes of profit, and that the surplus should therefore be expended in the reduction of rates. Mr. James Hutton moved an amendment in favour of Imperial Penny Postage as being a more feasible scheme, taking advantage of the opportunity to point out the anomaly referred to above. Neither the amendment nor the motion, however, was agreed to, although Mr. Heaton had 130 supporters, the Secretary to the Treasury explaining that the country was losing £365,000 a year by its packet services. He stated that within the Postal Union, to which almost all the civilized countries belonged except our South African and Australian colonies, the rate was 2½d. with power to levy an additional charge of 2½d. in respect of sea communication, and this country was obliged to levy the additional charge in order to prevent the loss referred to becoming still greater. In the same year, on May 7, Mr. Hutton returned to the charge, urging in the House, when in Committee of Supply, that there "should be a discontinuance of the charges of higher postage rates from Great Britain to the colonies than is charged in Continental countries." Once more he referred to the anomaly of postage rates as between France and this country to our colonies, and instanced the case of a firm who saved over £300 a year by sending a clerk every Friday morning to Calais to post their letters there for the colonies. In another case he pointed out that her Majesty's Consul in New Caledonia sent letters to England for 2½d., while a reply cost 5d. Nevertheless, the motion was not agreed to, the Secretary to the Treasury pointing out that our correspondence with the West Indies and the West

Coast of Africa was so small that it need hardly be reckoned with, while as regards India it was admitted that we lost money by carrying letters from France for 2½d. On the other hand, however, Mr. (now Sir Henry) Fowler pointed out that our letters were carried across the Continent of Europe at the same rate, and the letters carried at a cheap rate by us were few compared with the number of our letters carried at a cheap rate across the Continent. Thus the motion was again lost. In the general election of 1886 Mr. Hutton lost his seat, and it was left to Mr. Henniker Heaton to carry on the struggle for the reduction of the colonial postage rates, so far at least as Parliament is concerned. This he did by repeated questions, public speeches, and innumerable letters and utterances in the Press.

In October, 1888, the letter postage to Australia by sea was reduced to 4d., which was, of course, a step in the right direction. But Mr. Heaton had pressed for a 3d. rate, and accused the department of breach of faith. It appears, however, that the colonial conference at which the rate was fixed had decided upon a 4d. rate, so that the Postmaster-General had no option in the matter. This step seems to have whetted the public appetite for further reform in the same direction, and popular agitation for reduced colonial postage grew rifer every day. Increasing attention was directed to the glaring nature of the anomaly between the rates for letters sent from France to post-offices in our colonies under French control and our own rates to those colonies, and at length, in 1890, the Government had to give way in the matter. That was the 50th year of uniform inland penny postage, and it was a fitting year in which to make some postal concession. As may be imagined, the question of Imperial Penny Postage was kept well in the foreground at the time, and Mr. Raikes, then Postmaster-General, referred to the subject in a notable speech at the postal jubilee dinner held that year. He was, of course, opposed to the scheme, mainly on financial grounds, and in pointing out what he described as the hollowness of the agitation, summed up the case by saying that "Sir Rowland Hill proposed a great change because he believed it was for the good of all, especially of the poor, at the same time that it was shown to increase the revenue. We are asked, on the other side, to adopt a change which must necessarily largely diminish the revenue, and must do it for the sake of the few at the expense of the many." Mr. Heaton promptly replied in a letter published in *The Times*, in which he asked for a Parliamentary committee, contending that the adoption of his plan would cost only £60,000 a year, and would be of immense advantage to the Empire. The answer to this was that the colonies found it of more value to obtain rapid rather than cheap postal communication, and that as subsidies were necessary to achieve the former object Ocean Penny Postage was not feasible. As a matter of fact, the colonies had shown themselves unwilling to adopt the penny rate; on the contrary, as has been shown, they even rejected Mr. Raikes's proposal for a 3d. rate in favour of a 4d. rate to Australia. Herein lay the real reason of the Government for delaying the reduction of the colonial postage rates. There was, of course, the financial reason, for the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointed out that the reduction would cost the country £105,000 a year. But the determined opposition of the colonies themselves was a more vital matter, and one which Mr. Heaton throughout the agitation appears to have been disposed to treat too lightly. In face of such opposition it would have been unwise to have forced the reduction of rates on the colonies, and in the case of those colonies which had entered into the Postal Union such a step would have been contrary to the Union's convention. That the colonies did at length consent to the change made in 1891 was the result of the legitimate pressure of British public opinion and nothing more.

Just about this time the question of Universal Penny Postage sprang up in a new quarter. It was taken up in the *Review of Reviews* by Mr. Stead who began organizing a monster petition in favour of the scheme. There can be little doubt that this step, taken in conjunction with the fact of there being at the moment a large surplus in the nation's balance-sheet, did much to bring about the important reduction in the colonial postage rates announced in 1890 with a view to getting rid of the anomaly that has already been alluded to. On April 17 of that year, Mr. Goschen, in introducing the Budget, proposed to introduce 2½d. postage to all the colonies at a cost of £105,000 a year. Admitting that it was a great anomaly that it should be possible to post letters at Calais to our colonies at a cheaper rate than they could be posted in London, he proposed to remove it, "if we can persuade the other interested parties to join with us, because we cannot act in this matter without the cordial co-operation of the colonies themselves." Referring to Ocean Penny Postage, Mr. Goschen remarked that it "has been recommended very much on the ground that it would draw us closer to the colonies; but it would be a very unsatisfactory beginning to such a proceeding if we were to embark upon a cheapening of postage to which the colonies themselves were oposed." Nevertheless the reduction in colonial postage which the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced was a distinct and important advance towards the goal of Imperial Penny Postage. The change, which was hailed with much satisfaction throughout the country, was brought into actual operatoin on January 1, 1891, most of the "interested parties" having fallen in with the arrangement. Mr. Heaton, of course, was by no means satisfied with the concession, but for the time his efforts to revive the universal penny rate proved unavailing, while Mr. Stead's half finished petition dropped out of sight.

In 1891 the Imperial Federation League took up the question of Imperial Penny Postage and brought the matter very prominently before the public. In April of that year that body published a pamphlet entitled "Uniform Imperial Postage, an Enquiry and Proposal," written by R. J. Beadon. In this pamphlet Mr. Beadon discussed the whole question with perfect fairness, for he did not shirk the difficulties which lay in the path of accomplishing the scheme he advocated. Nevertheless, he contended strongly for a system of penny postage throughout the Empire as being the beginning of an Imperial Commercial Union, which was the matter dearest to his heart, and he endeavoured to demonstrate that this could be done at a cost of £75,000 a year. The Imperial Federation League followed up the publication of this pamphlet by a deputation to the Postmaster-General on February 10, 1893, with the object of urging that to whatever countries the penny letter-rate might eventually be extended, it shall be first applied to countries within the Empire. Many able speeches were made in support of the object the deputation had in view by such members of the League as Mr. Arnold-Forster, M.P., and Mr. Beckett, M.P., and an exhaustive and careful reply was delivered by Mr. Arnold Morley, who was then Postmaster-General. Whilst expressing full sympathy with the object the League had in view, and admitting that the financial and administrative difficulties were not insuperable, he pointed out that the real difficulty lay in the fact that the colonies themselves were opposed to the movement and that therefore we could not force it on them, under the terms of the Postal Union. As a matter of fact the Australasian colonies did not enter into the Union until 1891 and then only on the express understanding that the postal rates governing the transmission of letters from one country to another should remain at the amount which had then been fixed—namely, 2½d. In the teeth of that agreement, therefore, it was impossible, as Mr. Morley pointed out, to take action in the matter of a reduction of the rates without the full consent of the colonies, which apparently they were unwilling to give. Later on in 1893 the matter was again threshed out in Parliament, a resolution having been moved in the House of Commons on April 28 by Mr. Loder, "That in view of the recent declaration of the Postmaster-General, to the effect that there are no serious financial or administrative objections to such a step, the time has come when the charge for the transmission of letters from the United Kingdom to all parts of the British Empire should be reduced to one penny per half-ounce letter." Much the same ground was gone over as before by honourable members who used the same arguments, and again Mr. Morley replied that the "time had not come" for the

desired change, and the resolution was by leave withdrawn.

Meanwhile, Mr. Henniker Heaton had not been inactive. His letters and articles in the Press on the subject were continuous, as well as his utterances in and out of Parliament. On May 3, 1892, he delivered a considerable speech at Manchester, in which he declared that her Majesty's subjects were calling unanimously for the reform he urged, which, perhaps, was somewhat open to doubt. He maintained that the scheme of Imperial Penny Postage would eventually prove most profitable, but he made no proposal as to the return postage from the colonies. That he considered the business of the colonial Governments, and a matter with which we had nothing to do. The colonies, however, still hung back. At the Intercolonial Postal Conference, held in 1894 at Auckland, New Zealand, a resolution was carried by the votes of all the colonies except New Zealand expressing the opinion of the conference that "the heavy cost of providing speedy and regular communication does not permit of any further reduction being made at the present time, the reduction to 2½d. in 1891 having resulted in an annual loss to the colonies of about £40,000." So matters drifted on until the year 1897. In the intervening years no definite action was taken, though the supporters of the agitation kept the movement well before the public. In 1897 the delegates of the Postal Union countries met in congress at Washington, and opinion was freely expressed beforehand that advantage would be taken of the opportunity to bring about a satisfactory reduction of the foreign and colonial postage rates. Opinion did not err, for the British delegates made strenuous efforts to get the postage on letters to places abroad reduced to 2d. the half-ounce, but the opposition of the representatives of other nations was too strong to be resisted, and the proposition had to be dropped. The question then arose whether a twopenny rate could not be obtained by this country for its own colonies by forming a subsidiary union consisting of the various parts of the British Empire, with the possible addition of the United States.

Whilst inquiries were being made in this direction, Canada suddenly announced its intention of applying on January 1 last the Dominion inland rate of 3 cents (1½d.) an ounce to letters posted in Canada for any part of the British Empire. This rate, it is important to remember, applied not only to places within the Dominion, but also to letters sent from Canada to the United States, so that the Canadian Government, in pursuance of their policy of encouraging trade between the Dominion and the rest of the Empire, desired to make it possible for Canadians to correspond with their British or Australian fellow-subjects on the same terms as with their neighbours across the southern frontier who had just raised against them the unfriendly barrier of the Dingley tariff. The Canadian proposition trenched, however, on the provisions of the Postal Union, which made it inadmissible for one country to reduce its postage to another country without the consent of the latter, and this the Duke of Norfolk pointed out to the Canadian Government. He was willing, at the same time, that a conference should be held to discuss what should be done, and suggested to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that representatives of all the other parts of the Empire should be invited to take part in the discussion. Mr. Chamberlain entered warmly into the matter, while the Foreign and India Offices co-operated, with the result that the famous conference of July last was held at Westminster Palace Hotel.

That conference was the beginning of the end in regard to Imperial Penny Postage, and the rest of the story is soon told. The Australian representatives were instructed to oppose any reduction of postage, while the South African representatives were prepared to support a rate of 1d. the half-ounce. This was how the matter stood when Mr. Mulock, Postmaster-General of Canada, announced his readiness to abandon his original proposal for a 1½d. rate in favour of a penny rate, and he accordingly formally proposed that the postage between different parts of the Empire should be reduced from 2½d. to 1d. The proposal was, of course, opposed by Australia mainly on the ground that it would involve a reduction of their inland rate from 2d. to 1d. at a cost to the colonial revenues of a quarter of a million a year. India was not anxious for the reduction, as it would benefit only British residents, a small proportion of the population. Cape Colony and Natal supported the proposal, but the Home Government suggested that a 2d. rate might be adopted as a compromise. Finally, after protracted discussion, it was decided that the parts of the Empire which desired to have penny or twopenny postage between themselves should be at liberty to do so. This decision the Imperial Government accepted, and Mr. Chamberlain undertook to take steps to induce the various colonies, as far as possible, to adopt the reduced rates. Since then the majority of the colonies have fallen in with the arrangement. Australia, as we have seen, has withheld from it because such a step would necessitate a reduction of the inland postage rates which would entail a loss. There is reason to hope, however, that it will not be long ere this difficulty will be got rid of and the Australasian colonies will be included in the scheme of Imperial Penny Postage. India, which at first held back, recently notified her desire to enter into the scheme—a matter that is one for much gratification, as was pointed out in these columns at the time. Cape Colony, which was one of the colonies that originally supported the proposal for a penny rate, has, curiously enough, withdrawn from the arrangement, but that is owing to some temporary difficulty between the Cape and the Home Government which it may be reasonably hoped will be soon removed.

Such briefly is the story of Imperial Penny Postage, which, after many years' struggling for, has become an accomplished fact. Undoubtedly this happy result is due principally to the persistent agitation of Mr. Henniker Heaton, whose name will always be associated with the reform. But it must not be forgotten that it was Mr. James Hutton who first brought the idea before Parliament, and that it was Mr. Mulock, the Canadian Postmaster-General, with the aid and support of the Duke of Norfolk and Mr. Chamberlain, who at the last hastened on the measure to a successful issue. The action of the British Post Office throughout the agitation has been quite consistent. Postmasters-General have freely admitted that the fiscal and administrative difficulties, though great, were not insuperable, but so long as the colonies withheld their consent the Imperial Government could not force the penny rate on them. When at length they were induced to give their consent, the Post Office lost no time in promoting the scheme, as is well evidenced by the fact that only five months have elapsed since the conference was held here at which this great Imperial measure was decided upon. What the effect of the scheme will be it is hard at present to prophesy, but whatever else it may do, it will certainly bring the colonies and the mother country into closer union and so more closely cement the ties of relationship between those at home and those so far abroad. This result alone would be sufficient to place Imperial Penny Postage amongst the most important events of the close of the nineteenth century.

CHRISTMAS AT THE POST OFFICE.

26.12.98.

The Christmas postal traffic has in its proportions this year, both in respect of correspondence and of parcels, exceeded all previous records. To cope with the work nearly 5,500 supernumeraries were added to the London postal staff, over 2,800 of these being engaged in the parcel post department, where the increase of the traffic was even more marked than in letters, book packets, and newspapers. The reduction of the inland letter rate to one penny for four ounces accounted, no doubt, for the remarkable increase in the number of light packets which passed through the letter post, but, as Imperial penny postage did not come into operation until midnight on

Saturday, its effect had no influence upon the Christmas correspondence. Although time has not yet permitted the preparation of statistics, it is believed by the authorities of the General Post Office that all branches of the correspondence of the season has this year been greater than ever. Some of the foreign incoming mails have shown a remarkable growth, those from the United States and Canada delivered during the past week being the heaviest remembered. The Cunard steamer Umbria brought no fewer than 2,351 sacks of correspondence, each sack weighing on the average ¾cwt. Of these sacks 1,540 contained letters and other packets for delivery in Ireland and the provincial towns in the north of England, the remaining 811 sacks being for London. The American Line steamship Paris, which left New York on the 14th inst., arrived at Southampton on Wednesday last with the largest mail which has yet been forwarded to London, consisting of 1,487 sacks of letters, newspapers, and postal packets other than parcels. On the previous day the White Star steamer Majestic had brought 676 sacks, and on Friday the new steamer Cymric, belonging to the same line, arrived with 665 sacks, 430 of which contained correspondence for Ireland and the North of England, the other 235 sacks being filled with letters, newspapers, and postal packets for delivery through the General Post Office in London. The mail from the West Indies, which came to hand on Wednesday, consisted of 311 sacks, and the India and Australian mail reaching Southampton on Saturday was carried in 682 sacks, while the mail from the Cape, dealt with on Friday and Saturday, contained no fewer than 80,000 letters, by far the greatest number ever transmitted from the Cape by a single mail. As a general rule the public paid less heed than usual to the request of the Postmaster-General to post early, but under the direction of the Controller of the London Postal Service (Mr. J. C. Badcock) the permanent and special staff worked together with praiseworthy zeal, and there was much less congestion than might have been anticipated by those who witnessed the vast piles of correspondence which during the last few days have reached the department from all parts of the world. The whole of the Christmas parcel work was concluded in time for the special delivery which was made yesterday morning, but a considerable number of letters posted on Saturday remain, of course, to be distributed this morning.

CHRISTMAS POSTAL TRAFFIC.

31.12.98.

It was stated in *The Times* of Monday that all branches of the Christmas postal traffic had this year exceeded in their proportions every previous record. The statement has been fully confirmed by the opinion of experts. It is the practice of the General Post Office, some time before the approach of the Christmas season, to make inquiries among the chief publishing firms with the view of ascertaining the probable output of cards conveying Christmas and New Year's greetings. From all quarters the reply came this year that the production would in all probability be in excess of that of any other occasion, and the anticipation was realised. The reduction introduced in the postage rates 18 months ago has led to a very considerable increase in the amount of ordinary correspondence passing between one part of the United Kingdom and another, and this fact, coupled with the steady expansion of the Christmas mails, showed the authorities that they must prepare for unexampled pressure.

At ordinary times the staff of servants engaged in the London postal service consists of about 21,000 persons, and to these nearly 5,500 were added for Christmas week. Over 2,800 of the supernumeraries were detailed for parcel work, and the experience of the season went to prove that in future years even this number will have to be exceeded. A considerable percentage of the hands casually employed by the Post Office at this time of the year can always be relied upon for such service, but a school for the instruction of the remainder has each year to be maintained under the direction of the Controller. At least 700 police constables assisted the Post Office during the two or three days of pressure while they were free from their own duty, and the Postmaster-General finds that reliance can always be placed upon such services. Another valuable body of recruits is obtained from the telegraph service, whose senior boy-messengers work with great industry in order to earn the overtime pay offered to them by the Postmaster-General. Among this force of 5,500 temporary workers it is perhaps inevitable that there should be a few whose conduct is the cause of complaint, but on the present occasion, as in previous years, these cases have been extremely rare, and the successful manner in which the authorities of the General Post Office dealt with the season's traffic was due not less to the loyalty and zeal of all branches of the rank and file than to the excellent arrangements made by the Controller (Mr. J. C. Badcock) and his staff.

The last occasion on which Christmas occurred on Sunday was in 1892, and the lesson of that year justified the belief that much of the correspondence specially due to the season this year would come to hand somewhat earlier than when the festival falls on a week-day. To this circumstance must be attributed, more than to any general compliance with the notices in which the Postmaster-General requested early posting, the happy result that there was much less congestion visible both in the letter and parcel branches than has been experienced in some years with a much smaller volume of traffic. No expedient was neglected which could facilitate the rapid transmission of correspondence. Mail bags going through London were sent direct from the station of arrival to the station of departure, and large numbers of through bags, which are usually dealt with at the chief office, were, in like manner, carried direct from station to station. The plan of making up direct bags in the newspaper section at the chief office for provincial head offices and sub-district offices in London worked so well in 1897 that the experiment was this year considerably extended, and similar bags were likewise made up at certain of the provincial and metropolitan sub-district offices.

In recent years the operations of the Post Office have in many cases been seriously delayed owing to the late arrival in London of the up night mails. In some instances these mails have during Christmas week been as much as two, three, and even four hours late, the result, of course, being that the mails which they carried have missed the connexions intended either for provincial towns in Great Britain and Ireland or for the colonies and foreign countries. On the present occasion the up night mails came to hand a little better than usual, though some of them were one, two, or three hours late. But owing to the measures taken by the Post Office authorities comparatively little inconvenience was experienced. On the busiest days of the week the vouching between the up night mails and the down day mails was suspended, and the correspondence sent into London was sorted into bundles for distribution among the different railway divisions. This arrangement had the effect of saving many down mails which would otherwise have been missed. In 1897 for the first time special provincial despatches were made at Christmas from certain head district offices, and these arrangements were considerably developed this year with advantage. Thus, while the chief office was by these various means relieved from much of the labour which it has formerly undertaken, an additional demand, reaching in many cases to considerable proportions, was made upon the principal district offices in the metropolis. The altered circumstances were, however, carefully borne in mind in the distribution of the forces, and if any section of the service was temporarily undermanned it was the chief office itself at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Unusually heavy mails to and from the colonies afforded the first indication of the increased volume of correspondence which was to be anticipated. Indeed, in the colonial mail department the pressure began to be noted as early as October 28, and it continued without cessation until Christmas Eve, the traffic meantime being far in excess of that of any previous year. A striking proof of this growth was afforded in the case of the mails to New Zealand, Australia, India, China, and Ceylon, the Cape, Canada, and the United States. At ordinary times of

the year these mails consist altogether of rather more than 4,400 bags, each weighing on the average ¾cwt. The Christmas mails of 1897 amounted to 5,828 bags, and the New Year's mails to 5,062 bags, while the Christmas mails of this year consisted of 6,377 bags, and the New Year's mails of 5,617 bags. Thus the Christmas and New Year's mails to those countries contained this year 1,104 bags more than the mails of 1897, the respective totals being :—Christmas and New Year, 1897, 10,890 ; Christmas and New Year, 1898, 11,994.

The Australian mail which was despatched from London on November 11 contained 195,000 copies of an appeal issued on behalf of a particular institution, and the Australian mail going out a week later took 48,000 additional copies of the same appeal. The India, China, and Australian mail which left London on November 25 consisted of 2,472 sacks of correspondence, this being by far the largest number ever conveyed in a single mail by a P. and O. steamer, and 262 sacks in excess of the corresponding mail of 1897. Similarly the mail despatched to the Cape on the 3rd inst. was a "record" mail. It filled 1,188 sacks, or 19 sacks more than the mail of the previous year, which up to that time was the heaviest ever made up for the Cape at the London Post Office. The work of the foreign section was consequently unusually trying during the whole of the week ended December 3, the total number of bags despatched during the seven days to foreign countries being 11,354, which is by far the largest total yet reached in a similar period. But even then there came no diminution in the pressure, and in the two weeks ended December 10 and December 17 further records were established. The India and China mail despatched on the 9th inst. consisted of 1,554 sacks, the largest number ever forwarded. This mail contained 37,000 letters for the military and naval forces in India and in Chinese waters. During the week ended December 10 the despatches to the United States and Canada occupied 2,250 sacks, and in the following week there were 2,284 sacks, both numbers being in excess of any mentioned in previous statistics.

In these circumstances it was perhaps not surprising that the incoming mails from the United States and Canada should also be of greater proportions than ever. The increase observable in the homeward mails was, in fact, more remarkable than that in the outward mails. During the week ended December 17 these mails filled 2,830 sacks, or 950 sacks more than in the corresponding week of 1897—a growth which is probably without parallel in Post Office history. The American mail that came to hand early on the morning of December 21 contained 40,000 money order advices, 10,000 of which were addressed to persons in Ireland. The sending home of money from those who have left the mother country and gone to reside in distant parts of the world is a practice that has steadily grown within recent years, and it is now well known that scattered over various parts of the United Kingdom are a large number of persons whose domestic life is cheered by the welcome gifts which come to them regularly at this season of the year from relatives or friends who have thus gone out and found success in a new life. On Friday, December 23, a remarkable mail was received from the Cape. It filled 494 of the largest receptacles which the Post Office find it possible to employ in the carriage of mails. Eight of these were wicker baskets weighing about 300lb. each, and containing nothing but Christmas cards, 50,000 in number, which had been posted at the ½d. rate. On the following day, Saturday, three other large foreign mails arrived in London.

Special Christmas postings were this year more numerous than at any time, on the part both of charitable institutions and of commercial firms. These postings represented a total of 2,747,686, as compared with 2,588,455 last year. Of the former no fewer than 1,949,696 were sent out in the interest of a single institution, which, in respect of the widespread extent of its Christmas circulars has for many years outdistanced all others, whether public institutions or private firms. Another institution distributed 183,600 circulars, and a third 58,000, those of the latter being enclosed in cardboard boxes containing specimens of artificial flowers.

Up to the afternoon of Saturday, December 24, there was, during the whole of Christmas week, no diminution whatever in the pressure witnessed throughout the London postal service, but the progress made was so great that early on Christmas Eve comparatively little remained to be done at St. Martin's-le-Grand, the inland and newspaper sections being, indeed, so unusually clear that after the arrival of the up night mails it was possible to relieve the greater part of the force from further duty—a fact which afforded the best possible proof of the excellent arrangements which had been made to cope with the enormously increased volume of correspondence passing through the post. The authorities find it difficult to institute an exact comparison with former years, owing to the fact that the work was distributed over a longer period than usual ; but it is well within the mark to state that, in relation alike to the incoming and to the outgoing inland and foreign letter mails, the total amount of correspondence dealt with at Christmas in London alone this year was at least 5 per cent. greater than in any previous year, notwithstanding that for many years past a continual growth has been recorded in the same direction.

The parcel traffic was not less gigantic in its dimensions. This branch of the postal service has, it may be said, expanded literally by leaps and bounds. Month by month its useful agency has been carried further and further afield, and there is little doubt that the time is not far distant when it will exist side by side with the letter post in every part of the civilized world. The parcel rates fixed by the Post Office are in every instance as low as possible, with allowance for a reasonable margin of profit, while the value of the parcel post has been materially enhanced by the gradual extension of the system of insurance, which, effected at little cost, is a guarantee against loss or damage. The headquarters of the parcel post in London are at Mount Pleasant, where they cover a portion of the site formerly occupied by the Coldbath Fields Prison. When this large area of land became available for the purpose it was, in some official quarters, supposed that certain portions of it might be devoted to other than the Post Office service, but the experience of a few years has been sufficient to demonstrate that the whole of the land will inevitably be required for the work of that department.

An enormous floor space has been provided in the buildings already erected, but the parcel post is clearly destined to undergo much greater expansion, and, to judge by the unprecedented demands made during the Christmas season this year, it is perfectly certain that the existing accommodation will have to be considerably enlarged. The first evidence of this pressure was observed at the end of October, when the Christmas mails to the colonies began to be despatched, and from that time forward up to Christmas Eve there was an unbroken flow of traffic, greater in volume than in any previous year. During the nine weeks from October 29 to December 17 last year 114,448 parcels were despatched to the Continent and 100,367 to the colonies. In the same period this year the figures were increased to 118,507 parcels for the Continent and 107,433 parcels for the colonies. The number of parcels in the foreign section showed in every instance an increase over the Christmas parcel mails of 1897, the growth of the Cape mail being particularly noticeable. In the period from October 29 to December 11 the parcel mails to the Cape contained last year 28,497 parcels, and this year they consisted of 31,448 parcels, or an increase of 10 per cent. The additional work imposed upon the department arises not merely from the greater number of parcels that year by year are being forwarded, but also from the larger size which a considerable proportion of them have recently attained under the extended regulations issued by the Postmaster-General. The growing tendency to transmit through the parcel post articles which make up bulky packages was observable this year, especially in connexion with the parcels coming to England from the Continent. Some surprise was occasioned a year or two ago when a hatter sent three silk hats in a single package through the parcel post, but it is no longer an exceptional occurrence for the officials of the department to have to deal with numerous consignments of equally inconvenient size.

Friday, December 23, established a record at Mount Pleasant. The staff had from the end of October been working uninterruptedly with unflagging zeal; but as Christmas Day itself approached the casual observer might easily have imagined that their labours had for the most part been in vain. Parcels of every shape and size continued to flood the sorting rooms, and at one time there were more than 30,000 parcels stacked together in three great piles awaiting distribution. Heap after heap was successfully attacked by the willing workers of the branch, but as fast as one set of piles was cleared their place was taken by others which meantime had accumulated close at hand. Thanks, however, to the systematic method in which the operations of the department are conducted, the end of the task was reached almost before the carol singers had retired to rest, and by Christmas morning Mount Pleasant was reported to have cleared its decks. Although no letters were delivered in London on Christmas Day, there was a special delivery of parcels, and by this means every parcel posted in time for distribution reached the person to whom it was addressed at Christmas. 31.12.98.

POST OFFICE IMPROVEMENTS IN 1898.

7.1.99.

Apart from the introduction of Imperial penny postage the past year has been one of steady progress in all branches of Post Office work, notably in the growth of the trunk telephone system, and in the extension of the foreign and colonial parcel post.

In March last a scheme came into operation under which the public were allowed to have their correspondence officially redirected beyond the limit formerly sanctioned. Previously a redirection notice was recorded and acted upon without fee for 12 months—that is to say, if a person changed his address, the Post Office undertook, on receiving notice thereof, gratuitously to redirect his correspondence for one year. This arrangement was found in practice to meet the needs of the general public; but in the case of commercial firms having customers and correspondents in various parts of the world, experience showed that redirection of letters was necessary for even a longer period than 12 months. It was therefore determined by the department to continue the redirection notices indefinitely on the payment of a fee of one guinea per year after the expiration of the first 12 months, during which time letters will, as hitherto, be officially redirected as desired without charge. This arrangement is, of course, quite apart from the redirection of letters undertaken by the public, the only condition in the latter case being that, to avoid fresh postage, a letter which has been redirected must be reposted within one day after delivery.

For some time past it has been possible to post ordinary letters on Sundays at certain offices in London, for despatch by the same night's provincial and Continental mails, on the payment of an extra fee of one halfpenny in the case of inland letters and of one penny in the case of foreign letters; but hitherto the registration of letters posted on Sunday has not been practicable. Arrangements have now been made whereby registered letters intended for despatch by the mails leaving London for the provinces and the Continent on Sunday night can, on payment of an extra fee of one shilling, in addition to the registration fee and the postage, be accepted in the Post Office sorting-vans attached to the mail trains which on Sunday, as on other nights, leave the London termini of the principal railway companies.

The express delivery service introduced a few years ago has become very popular in London, as also in the large provincial towns of the kingdom; and recently a step was taken which is calculated to extend still further the sphere of its usefulness. Previously the charge made for the express delivery of postal packets up to 1lb. was 3d. per mile, while for packets over 1lb. a charge of 1½d. per lb. after the first pound was levied. The weight charge on packets above 1lb. delivered by special messenger all the way has now been reduced to 1d. per lb. for every pound beyond the first, with a *maximum* payment of 1s. The mileage fee, which is in addition to the weight charge, remains at 3d. per mile. The limit of weight for a postal packet to be carried by public conveyance is now 20lb., instead of 15lb., as formerly, but when the sender engages a cab or other special conveyance no weight charge is imposed, and he is called upon to pay only the mileage fee of 3d. per mile. Another change made recently in connexion with the express delivery service is seen in the reduction of the fixed charge of 2d. hitherto payable for each article beyond one when several packets are tendered by the same sender for delivery by the same messenger at different addresses or to different persons at the same address. In respect of such additional packets the charge has been reduced to 1d. per article beyond the ordinary mileage fee. Express parcels can also be sent between this country and France and Algeria, while express letters and parcels are now transmitted between the United Kingdom and the colonies of British Guiana and St. Lucia.

Parcel-post extensions within the past 12 months have been both numerous and important. In January last a parcel post to Peru *via* France was established. Up to that time such parcels had had only one outlet—namely, *via* Germany. A significant indication of the British occupation of the Sudan was afforded in the same month, when arrangements were completed for insuring, up to the amount of £20, parcels sent by post to Wady Halfa and Suakin. At the same time an overland service was established for the parcel post to India, Aden, and Persia. This was in addition to the all-sea route, by which all parcels were previously consigned, and simultaneously an opportunity was taken to effect a slight reduction in the rates for heavy parcels entrusted to the latter service.

At the beginning of June the insurance system became applicable up to the amount of £20 in the case of parcels addressed to Algeria and Tunis. This system of insuring parcels continues to grow in public favour, and it is being gradually extended to countries that have not hitherto enjoyed such protection, while in the case of countries where the system has been in operation the sums for which parcels can be insured are being gradually increased. A very large number of valuable articles are still sent through the post annually by persons who are not able to adopt the precaution of insurance. For instance, not long ago a small packet came to London from Klondike. The wrapper was of the flimsiest character, so fragile, indeed, that it necessitated "treatment" in the Post Office "hospital," and when examined was found to contain a number of virgin gold nuggets which had been made up in the form of scarf-pins intended as presents for the members of a family one of whose representatives had evidently met with a stroke of luck at Klondike. The Post Office authorities themselves insured the precious packet, and it was safely delivered.

Another convenience which is being gradually introduced in connexion with the foreign parcel post system is that under which facilities are given to the sender of a parcel to prepay the Customs duty which it incurs on entering a foreign country, so that the addressee may be relieved of all charges on delivery. This arrangement is particularly valuable in relation to the exchange of presents between persons living in various parts of the world. The scheme has been in operation for some time between this country and a large number of British possessions, as also with the following foreign countries:—Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Holland, Italy, Luxemburg, Montenegro, and Switzerland. In July last the system was extended to Sweden and the Leeward Islands, while a similar arrangement was completed on December 1 with France and the French colonies and possessions. In the case of all these places, senders of parcels are able to ensure delivery without charge to the addressee. The method adopted is for the sender to pay a fee of 6d., and to sign an undertaking that he will meet on demand any further charge which may be made in the country of destination. At the same time he is required to pay a deposit on account of such charge at the rate of 1s. for each 4s. or fraction of 4s. of the value of the parcel consigned. As soon as the exact amount of the total charge has been ascertained from the Post Office authorities of the foreign country to which the parcel has been forwarded an account is rendered to the sender, and the transaction concludes on the payment of whatever balance may be due or the return of any overpayment made.

In August last an alternative route for parcels for Russia was established *via* Germany, and in the same month the amount up to which foreign parcels could be insured was, in the case of most of the important countries of the world, increased from £50 to £120. The arrangement was, of course, reciprocal, senders of parcels from foreign countries being able to insure them up to the larger sum stated. Thus, the amount of insurance in the case of foreign parcels became the same as the limit fixed at the beginning of May last for inland parcels and registered letters, which was then raised from £50 to £120. When the parcel post first came into operation no insurance whatever was undertaken, but experience speedily proved that a system of compensation was necessary in the case of loss or damage, and the limit of insurance has since been gradually increased until at the present time it reaches the sum mentioned in the inland, and to a considerable extent in the foreign, postal service. A further extension of the parcel post took place in August—namely, to the Comoro Islands, Banks and Santa Cruz Islands, Formosa, and Tsin-tau, in China. The rate for the conveyance of parcels to German South-West Africa was reduced in September, and a parcel post to Nigeria was established at the beginning of December.

The extension of the telephone trunk lines has been proceeding apace during the year. In January extensions took place to Banbury, Banff, Elgin, Inverness, Peterhead, Rugby, and Ware; in February to Pentre (South Wales), Spennymoor, Cromer, Buckie, and Newmarket; in April to Coldstream; in May to Weybridge; in June to Hereford and Bradford-on-Avon; in July to Cowbridge; in August to Wexford, Waterford, and Market Harborough; in December to Dunoon, Rothesay, and Nairn. Simultaneously with these extensions there have been a number of improvements in the telegraph service relating especially to foreign countries. For instance, in June last a reduction was effected in the telegraph rates to British Guiana and to certain of the West Indian Islands; in the following month the telegraph was extended to Turk's Island, and an alternative route to Jamaica was provided by means of the cable recently laid from Bermuda to Jamaica *via* Turk's Island. In February a reduction in the telegraph rates to Mexico came into force; in October a number of additional telegraph offices were opened in the British possessions on the West Coast of Africa; in November a similar extension took place to certain of the French possessions on the same coast.

Reference has already been made to the influence of the British occupation in Egypt, as seen in the fact that insured parcels can now be sent to Wady Halfa and Suakin. It is interesting to add that within a few weeks after Lord Kitchener's brilliant victory at Omdurman a telegraph office was opened in that city, followed immediately by one at Khartum, so that it is now possible to communicate by wire with the heart of the Sudan. Telegraph extension to the Italian possessions in East Africa was also accomplished during last month.

During the year 1898 arrangements were likewise completed for further changes, which came into operation on Sunday last, and these may therefore be added to the year's record. Principal among them are the new regulations introduced by the Postal Union Convention concluded at Washington in June, 1897. The alterations made under that convention relate, of course, exclusively to foreign mails, and only the more important of them need here be mentioned. Unpaid post-cards from abroad, which under the Vienna Convention were treated as unpaid letters and charged 5d. on delivery, will henceforth be regarded as unpaid post-cards, and charged only 2d. on delivery. The limit of weight for the foreign sample post, the *maximum* of which has until now ranged, according to the country of destination, from 8oz. to 5lb., will in future be fixed generally at 12oz. for all countries included in the Postal Union. This change has been called forth by the persistent abuse of the sample post by traders, who have taken advantage of its agency for the execution of orders rather than for the transmission of samples, the object in view being, of course, to avoid the higher charges of the parcel post.

A new regulation is also made in relation to registered letters. When a person has expected a registered letter and has not received it, or when another has despatched such a letter to an address abroad and has not received an acknowledgment of its delivery, the practice heretofore has been, on the complaint of either, to institute official inquiry. In a large number of such cases the result has been to show either that the expected registered letter has not been posted at all or that the letter sent has been delivered in due course to the addressee, who has neglected to acknowledge it. These inquiries have necessarily caused considerable trouble to the Post Office authorities concerned, and the Washington Congress therefore decided that, unless *prima facie* evidence is produced that a registered letter has actually failed to reach the addressee, no inquiry concerning it shall be undertaken until a fee of 2½d. for the acknowledgment of the delivery of the letter has been paid.

Another rule which came into force on the 1st inst. affects post-cards passing between foreign countries. The use of private post-cards has been allowed for such correspondence on condition that the words "Post card" have been printed on the address side of the card; but in future it will be sufficient, in the case of foreign post-cards, to write on the address side the words "Post card," or their French equivalent, "Carte postale." At the same time, post-cards which, when sent to places abroad, do not comply with the regulations as regards size, &c., will, as at present, be treated as letters, and surcharged accordingly. Albums containing photographs will now be transmissible abroad at the printed paper rates. Certain alterations have likewise been effected in the rules which forbid the insertion of MS. in documents transmissible at the printed paper rates; and live bees, natural history and geological specimens, glass, liquids, and powders will be forwarded through the post, at the sample post rate, to all the countries in the Postal Union, provided they comply with the conditions of the sample post and are packed in accordance with the regulations set forth in the Post Office Guide.

Finally, two more changes, already recorded in the *The Times*, have been brought into operation. By the first of these, registered letters for a number of foreign countries can be insured at any post-office up to £120. Letters intended for such insurance have to be presented at the counter of a post-office, even in rural districts where a registered inland letter can be handed to the rural postman and a receipt obtained from him. Registered letters for abroad must not contain coin, gold, silver, jewelry, or anything liable to Customs duty in the country of destination; they must be enclosed in a strong cover, sealed with wax over each flap or seam of the cover, and, provided these conditions are observed, compensation will be paid, in the event of loss, to the full value of the contents up to the limit stated. Thus the *maximum* amount of insurance given in the case of parcels is extended to letters for abroad. The rates of postage for parcels to a number of British colonies and protectorates and postal agencies have also been revised and simplified.

A STRANGE FIND.

7.2.97. Telegraph.

It was stated yesterday that an important discovery of stamps had been made at the General Post Office in the department occupied by the secretary and his chief officials. The story was to the effect that while the premises were being overhauled and placed in a state of repair for the new secretary, the men came upon a great number of stamps, many of them of comparatively ancient date—1841 for example. Amongst them were a number of the black penny variety so dear to the heart of the juvenile philatelist, and now becoming somewhat difficult of acquisition. There were, it is said, other varieties of equal interest, also some Mulready envelopes. One authority placed the value of the stamps at several thousands of pounds. Yesterday afternoon our representative made a special inquiry on the subject at the office of the chief of the stamps department. The only information, however, which the officials would furnish was, "We have no communication to make on the matter." At the same time no denial was given to the specific statement that an important discovery of stamps of considerable value had recently been made.

In regard to the question raised in the House of Commons, yesterday, by Mr. Henniker Heaton, as to the necessity of paying postage upon communications relating to public business addressed to Ministers of the Crown, permanent officials, and heads of Government departments, it transpires that about 700 Government officials are authorized to send and receive letters free of postage, and that there are a number of others in the list, including the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Agents-General of the colonies, and the High Commissioner of Canada, who do not pay postage direct, but are charged by the Postal Department for the number of letters sent yearly. 28.2.97

28.2.97 POST OFFICE BUILDINGS.

LORD STANLEY of ALDERLEY asked her Majesty's Government to explain why it was necessary that the General Post Office should be, in respect of the erection of Post Office buildings, under the control of the Board of Works as well as of the Treasury; and whether the Postmaster-General might not be allowed some discretion as to a portion of the Post Office revenue for Post Office improvements.

The DUKE of NORFOLK said that as regarded the class of site and character of building the Board of Works was, of course, the architect and builder for the Government. The Post Office buildings came under the care and direction of the Board in the same way as other Government buildings, but beyond that there was no control. It was possible there were delays, but he was afraid there were delays in many building operations unconnected with the Government.

The MARQUIS of SALISBURY said it did not seem to him to require any special distrust of his noble friend the noble duke that he had to submit to the same rules as applied to all other departments of the Government. It was a very horrible burden, but they all had to go to the Treasury for sanction. The particular *régime* which the noble lord desired to introduce had already been tried and had been given up. It used to be the rule that the Post Office paid its own expenses out of gross receipts—that was to say, it was allowed to build anything it wanted, and in the use of that power it built St. Martin's-le-Grand. That was such a shock to the financiers of the day that nothing of the kind had been allowed since. (A laugh.)

The subject then dropped.

NEW POSTAGE STAMPS OF THE CONGO FREE STATE.—Messrs. Waterlow Brothers and Layton are printing two new issues of postage stamps for the Government of the Congo Free State. The stamps, which are two of the highest value issued by the Free State—namely, 3f. 50c. and 10f.—are expected to be of use chiefly for the parcel post service. The lower value is in vermilion with a black vignette depicting a native village, and the other is in green with a black vignette representing a stern-wheel steamer on the Congo river. The stamps are printed direct from the steel plates, and are good examples of the results of the improved engraving machinery used in this country.

LETTERS ON PUBLIC BUSINESS.

Replying to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury), Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said,—No letter is entitled to pass without prepayment of postage unless it is sent exclusively upon the public business. Letters upon public business may be sent to members of the Government at their respective departments without prepayment, but not elsewhere; and also to certain of the chief permanent officers in each department who are authorized to receive service letters. 28.2.97

THE POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK AT WEST KENSINGTON.

24.6.99.

The Prince of Wales to-day gives proof of his interest in all that concerns the welfare of the people by attending on behalf of the Queen to lay the foundation-stone of the new central offices of the Post Office Savings Bank. This ceremony marks an epoch in the history of the bank. Founded in 1861, it so quickly won the confidence of the thrifty that a separate building for the accommodation of its headquarters staff soon became necessary. The substantial pile which rises in Queen Victoria-street was opened in 1880, but in a few years was found totally inadequate to the housing of the ever-increasing army of ledger-keepers and correspondence-clerks which the business of the bank called into existence. Large premises lying at the back of the new building and stretching to St. Paul's churchyard were acquired between 1885 and 1888. It might have been thought that provision was thus made for a long future. But the additional buildings were scarcely ready for use before they were fully occupied, and scarcely occupied before they were found too small. The acquisition of land under the shadow of St. Paul's, at a price per foot, is an expensive process; and it was inevitable that the question should arise whether the chief office of the Bank need be in the heart of the City. It does not require official knowledge to answer this question. The Post Office Savings Bank is not a bank where current accounts are kept; there is no payment of cheques over the counter; no customer can enter into any confidential relations with the bank—in fact, there is no bank management in the ordinary sense of the term. For the receipt of money the bank has an office in every town and village of the kingdom; there are now over 12,000. The withdrawal of money is a leisurely affair and must be conducted by correspondence; consequently the direct relations of the head office with the public are of the slightest character. The business of that office is to keep accounts—for it has been a distinguishing feature of the bank from the first that all accounts should be kept in London, and every payment made from there—to issue warrants for the repayment of deposits, and to conduct a voluminous correspondence. It is obvious that, so long as the office can be kept in touch with its pecuniary supplies, all its work can be transacted just as well on the outskirts as in the centre of London. It was reserved for the present Postmaster-General, under the pressure of the constant demands of the bank for space, to realize this fact, and the removal to West Kensington, which the Prince of Wales will inaugurate to-day, is the result.

There cannot be a doubt that the new site is well chosen. Comprising five acres, it will give scope for many years' expansion, even though the present extraordinary rate of increase of more than a hundred clerks a year should be maintained; a portion only of the site is to be covered by the building of which the first stone is to be laid to-day. It is not easy, even on the fringe of the metropolis, to find five acres of unoccupied ground; and it is a serious matter to clear away a little town of villas, terraces, or shops. The new site owes its undeveloped condition to the fact that it was at one time used for the great displays conducted at Olympia. It was known as the Olympia Annexe, and at one time was the nightly scene of exciting episodes of mimic warfare. Its surroundings are very open, for, while it has large frontages to roads, on another side it is flanked by the spacious gardens of establishments in Hammersmith. The site is within a stone's throw of the Addison-road Station, from which most places can be reached, while it is sufficiently on the outside of "the West-end" of London to supply houses at moderate rentals for those of the staff who prefer to live near their work. On the other hand, the existence of a handsome series of buildings devoted to public purposes—and there is no reason why, on so spacious a site, really handsome buildings should not be erected—should tend to improve the immediate neighbourhood and to save it from the ugly monotony which too often afflicts the suburbs.

The growth of the Post Office Savings Bank is a notable example of the scale which any transactions may assume when they touch the interests of the whole population and not merely of the well-to-do classes. The bank opened its doors in September, 1861, and at the end of 1862 it had 180,000 accounts, amounting to a million and three-quarters of money. In the five years from 1863 to 1868 the total sum deposited stood on the average at £7,000,000, in the succeeding five years at £18,000,000, and from 1875 to 1880 at £29,000,000. Then came Mr. Fawcett's *régime* at the Post Office. The Savings Bank appealed to him as an institution which helped the labouring classes to help themselves, and he became its apostle. He brought the bank within the reach of children by providing the penny stamp slip, and thus enabling the schoolboy to make up the *minimum* deposit of a shilling by pennies put by from time to time. At the other end of the scale he enabled a depositor who was approaching the *maximum* to buy Consols through the bank, and thus to recommence his deposits of cash. And by his power of popular exposition he made all who were interested in practising or encouraging thrift familiar with the advantages of the bank. The result soon became apparent in the accounts. The deposits rose to an average of 42 millions between 1881 and 1885; and in 1890 they had risen to 67 millions. But during the last decade the business of the bank has made perhaps the most gigantic strides, for at the end of 1897 the deposits reached the astonishing sum of nearly 110 millions, and by this time they have doubtless exceeded £120,000,000. In an old report of the Postmaster-General's there is a forecast that for some time the annual increase in the Savings Bank business would be from 130,000 to 140,000 in the number of depositors and about £1,500,000 in the amount of the deposits. Between 1896 and 1897 the number of depositors increased by 577,000, and the amount deposited by nearly eight millions. The vast sum held by the bank is made up of a great multitude of small savings; there are more than seven millions of depositors, and the average sum standing to their account only slightly exceeds £16. One in every five persons in England and Wales has an account in the bank. In Scotland the bank has never been so popular, not because the population is less thrifty, but because the ordinary banks invite the deposit of small sums; both there and in Ireland one in every fourteen persons is a depositor.

It is not only by taking care of the savings of the individual that the Post Office assists thrift. It is the banker of friendly societies, penny banks, and small charitable funds of all sorts. It is used by the War Office for the savings of soldiers abroad and for the deposit of deferred pay; while the Technical Education Board of the London County Council pays its scholarships through the books of the bank. When schoolpence were abolished the Post Office and the Education Department co-operated in an attempt to capture for the benefit of the children the small sums previously paid for their education, and it is estimated that £40,000 was deposited through elementary schools in the first year after the change. Nor has the bank destroyed the older agencies for the encouragement of thrift, the trustee savings banks. Very many of the smaller banks have been closed, and this is not to be regretted, as the difficulties of voluntary management not infrequently lead to disasters. But the larger and sounder banks are in a better condition to-day than they ever have been, and the total sum deposited in trustee banks exceeds by several millions the amount which they held when the Post Office entered the field in 1861. Nor have all the benefits conferred by this great agency for thrift entailed any loss upon the nation. Though at the present moment there is a slight deficiency on the working of the bank, owing to the limited range of investments allowed to it and the high price of Consols, the national exchequer has in the past benefited to the extent of a million and a half by the savings entrusted to the Post Office. The Chancellor of the Exchequer lately promised a committee to inquire into the financial arrangements of the bank. Whatever changes may be recommended by such a committee, it is certain that nothing will be done to impair the efficiency of the institution, which the Heir-Apparent launches to-day on a new stage of its beneficent career.

24.6.99.

THE POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK AT WEST KENSINGTON.

26.6.99

Ideal midsummer weather favoured the proceedings connected with the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of the new Post Office Savings Bank at West Kensington on Saturday. The occasion was one of exceptional importance, and the presence of the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of York, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, and the Duke of Cambridge sufficiently testified to the interest felt by the Royal Family in the great national undertaking the success of which has necessitated the erection of these new and extensive buildings. An article published in *The Times* on Saturday gave a concise history of the Post Office Savings Bank, and described the situation which the new buildings will occupy. On the space henceforth to be devoted to them, which is quite close to Addison-road Station, a marquee capable of holding some 1,100 persons had been erected. It was filled on Saturday by a large and representative assemblage, in which all departments of the Post Office and the Post Office Savings Bank were represented. Even the critics of the Postal Service were not excluded, for among those present was descried Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., whose attendance as an interested spectator was a piquant feature in a company so largely official in its character.

Upholstered in red and white, the inside of the marquee presented a very gay appearance. The audience were seated in tiers, while the centre of the construction was like the arena of a circus, having in its middle the massive foundation-stone, around which some handsome flowers and foliage plants had been tastefully arranged. Within this reserved space the Duke of Norfolk, Postmaster-General, awaited the arrival of the Royal visitors, surrounded by some of his predecessors in office and by the heads of the various departments of the Postal Service. His Grace wore the uniform of Earl Marshal, together with the Order of the Garter. The former holders of the office of Postmaster-General present were the Duke of Rutland, Mr. G. J. Shaw Lefevre, and Mr. Arnold Morley. The Post Office officials privileged to take part in the proceedings, as distinguished from the lookers-on, included Sir George Murray (Secretary), Mr. J. C. Lamb, C.B., Colonel J. J. Cardin, C.B., Sir R. Hunter, Mr. G. W. Smyth, Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B., Mr. E. Geld, Mr. J. Ardron, Mr. J. C. Badcock, Mr. C. D. Lang (Controller of the Savings Bank Department), Mr. F. A. R. Langton, Mr. A. M. J. Ogilvie, and Mr. J. F. Hope. Among others present were the Home Secretary, Mr. Akers-Douglas, M.P. (Chief Commissioner of Works), Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P. (Secretary to the Local Government Board), Mr. Hayes Fisher, M.P. (Junior Lord of the Treasury), Sir Francis Mowatt (Permanent Secretary to the Treasury), and Sir Spencer Ponsonby Fane. The Earl of Hopetoun (Lord Chamberlain), the Earl of Pembroke (Lord Steward), the Duke of Portland (Master of the Horse), and Lord Colville of Culross were also in attendance. All of the foregoing were attired either in uniform or levée dress.

The Duke of Norfolk approached his Royal Highness and read the address prepared for the occasion. It was in the following terms :—26.6.99

May it please your Royal Highness,—The building of which your Royal Highness has graciously consented to lay the first stone to-day has been rendered necessary by the continued development of the Post Office Savings Bank, which was first established in 1861, and the growth of which may be regarded as one of the most notable features in the history of the country during the latter half of the present century. Although the idea of utilizing the organization of the Post Office for the purpose of receiving deposits had engaged the attention of many persons since the year 1807, it was mainly through the exertions of Sir Charles Sikes, of Huddersfield, that the scheme was first brought prominently before the Government and the public. It was urged that, in order to promote habits of thrift, it was necessary not only to bring to every man's door facilities for depositing even the smallest sums of money, but to provide him with unquestionable security for his investment; and it was felt that few agencies could attain these objects so easily and so efficiently as a Government Department which had offices and officers in almost every town and village throughout the United Kingdom. It was not, however, until the support of Mr. Gladstone had been enlisted in favour of the idea that any substantial progress was made towards its realization. Even then many serious difficulties remained to be overcome; but eventually, with the aid of the practical experience of Mr. Scudamore and Mr. Chetwynd, at that time two of the principal officers of the Post Office, a plan was elaborated. The scheme of these officers formed the basis of a Bill which was introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in February, 1861. With a few trifling alterations the Bill was accepted and became law in May, and the business of the bank was commenced in the following September. From the outset the system has worked with perfect smoothness and precision. Though slight improvements in detail have been made from time to time, no serious fault has ever been found in the machinery of the bank as originally devised, and in its main features that machinery is the same now as on the day when the first deposit was received. So conspicuous an example of successful organization has attracted the attention of other countries, and savings banks on identical principles have been established in many parts of the world, both in her Majesty's dominions and in foreign countries. The growth of the business of the Post Office Savings Bank has been remarkable. At the end of the first ten years there were 1,500,000 depositors, with a balance of £19,000,000 to their credit. At the end of 20 years the figures had doubled, and now, after 37 years, there are nearly 8,000,000 of depositors, with a balance of £123,000,000. The number of offices at which deposits can be made or withdrawn is upwards of 12,000; and it may be mentioned, as an illustration of the strong hold which the institution has gained upon the population, that one out of every five persons in the United Kingdom is now a depositor. It has been calculated that about four-fifths of the depositors belong to the working classes. One of the most striking features of the business is the number of small transactions with which the Department has to deal. Since the bank was started as many as 200,000,000 of deposits have been received, a great proportion being under 5s. Every transaction is recorded in the books of the Central Office and involves a direct communication with the depositor. While the main outlines of the system remain the same as at the beginning, the scope of the business has been extended in several ways, the most important additions being the provisions for making investments in Government stock on behalf of depositors and for enabling depositors to insure their lives and purchase Government annuities through the agency of the Post Office. The staff of the Central Office now numbers 2,650, of whom no less than 1,100 are women; and the continued growth of the business has rendered an enlargement of the building necessary on several occasions. The existing premises in Queen Victoria-street are incapable of further extension, save at a very heavy expenditure; and efforts have therefore been made to secure space in some other part of the metropolis. The site on which your Royal Highness now stands will permit of the erection of a building not only adequate for the present needs of the Department, but capable of such extension as will suffice for all probable requirements for many years to come. The interest which her Majesty the Queen has been pleased to evince in the Savings Bank by authorizing your Royal Highness, accompanied by her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, to lay the first stone of this building on her Majesty's behalf will render the occasion memorable in the history of the institution; and the honour which your Royal Highness has conferred upon the Post Office by graciously consenting to attend to-day is highly appreciated by myself and the whole staff of the Department.

The Prince of Wales in reply said :—

It gives me sincere pleasure to be present as the representative of the Queen, my dear mother, to receive your loyal address, and to lay the first stone of the new Savings Bank buildings. Her Majesty desires me to express the great interest she has always taken in the Post Office Savings Bank and the gratification with which she has watched the business it transacts attain to its present proportion. She rejoices at the stimulus to thrift, commerce, and industry conferred by a system which has throughout worked so admirably and reflected the highest credit on those connected with its administration, and which, while it brings, as you have said, facilities for economy to every man's door, is based on the firmest security. She trusts that the inauguration of these buildings will yet further increase the popularity of the Post Office Savings Bank and lead to a corresponding benefit to those who invest in this bank, and especially to the working classes. I thank you for your kind expressions towards the Princess of Wales and myself, and for the cordial welcome you have given us. (Cheers.)

Having finished his reply, the Prince of Wales proceeded to the stone, and placed in the cavity prepared for its reception a box containing a specimen copy of a depositor's Savings Bank book and other documents, together with some of the current coins of the realm. The inscription on the stone runs :—"This stone was laid by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on behalf of her Majesty the Queen, on the 24th day of June, 1899." The Duke of Norfolk handed to his Royal Highness the trowel and mallet to which reference has already been made. In doing so he said :—

In presenting this trowel and mallet I beg leave to inform your Royal Highness that they have been provided at the cost of the *employés* of the Savings Bank, who desire to assure your Royal Highness that they are very anxious to show their appreciation of your Royal Highness's presence here to-day. 26.6.99.

The Prince of Wales in response said :—

I shall value this gift all the more in that it has been subscribed to by all the *employés*. (Cheers.)

His Royal Highness then spread the mortar in that businesslike way which never fails to elicit complimentary remarks on his aptitude for masonry. The stone having been lowered with the assistance of Mr. Henry Tanner, the architect, the Prince gave it three taps with the mallet and said in a clear, resonant voice—"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost I declare this stone well and truly laid." ~~A prayer suited to the ceremony was~~

NEWFOUNDLAND POSTAGE STAMPS.——Messrs. Whitfield King and Co., of Ipswich, send us a specimen of a new five-cent Newfoundland postage stamp, which bears the likeness of the Duke of York. This is the fifth of a series of stamps bearing Royal portraits which have been issued by Newfoundland during the past 12 months, the others of the series being—½ cent (Prince Edward of York), 1 cent (the Queen), 2 cents (the Prince of Wales), and 3 cents (the Princess of Wales). The portrait of the Duke of York is a fairly good one, and will no doubt be the more interesting to those who give their attention to the collection of postage stamps, from the fact that his Royal Highness himself is a prominent stamp collector.

26.6.99.

POSTAGE STAMP EXHIBITION.—There is now on view at the City Art Gallery, Mosley-street, Manchester, probably the best collection of postage stamps ever brought together. The contents are of the estimated value of over a quarter of a million. The exhibition is international, and is held under the auspices of the Manchester Philatelic Society. Awards of gold, silver, and bronze medals are to be given for the best collections in 11 classes. The judges will be Mr. E. D. Bacon (London), M. Jules Bernichon (Paris), Mr. F. Breitfuss (St. Petersburg), Mr. M. P. Castle (Brighton), Dr. Drena (Rome), Major E. B. Evans (London), and Dr. Vedel (Copenhagen). The first gallery is devoted principally to the stamps of Great Britain, one of the exhibitors being Mr. H. J. White, who took the gold medal of the London exhibition of 1897. The classes in the British colonial group take up nearly the whole of two galleries. Here the most prominent exhibitors are Baron A. de Worms, Mr. C. Stewart Wilson (Postmaster-General of the Punjab), Mr. Harvey R. G. Clarke (New South Wales), and Mr H. J. Duveen, the Bond-street art dealer. The European class includes collections of Mrs. Baynes (Grecian stamps), Lieutenant George Dumont (France and Spain), Mr. W. Grunewald, of Cheadle, and Mr. W. B. Avery. Mr. K. B. Aylward, of Warrington, has a frame of envelopes despatched from different parts of the world on December 25, the date of the inauguration of the Imperial system. Another frame from Mr. Aylward contains envelopes postmarked Berber, and dated before the battle of Omdurman, two from Khartum, and others from the Philippines, franked with United States stamps, and bearing Spanish postmarks; while six frames contain envelopes addressed by Royal personages to the Queen. Mr. M. F. H. Gibson, the hon. secretary of the exhibition, shows envelopes containing messages despatched by balloon post during the siege of Paris. The exhibition was formally opened to the public by Mr. J. Henniker Heaton, M.P. The exhibition will close on July 5. 1.7.99.

"WANTED CHEAP IMPERIAL TELEGRAPHS."

24.7.99.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Although Mr. Henniker Heaton's proposals on the subject of international telegraphy have been confuted again and again, I purpose, with your permission, once more to point out their elementary absurdity and appeal to you, Sir, to "hear the other side," relying upon your well-known desire to have accurate statement of fact as to matters treated of in your columns. I do not ask that any statement of mine should be taken, as Mr. Heaton's are, *ex cathedra*, but only for that intelligent examination of the arguments advanced which any man of the world, without experience of telegraphs, is quite competent to give.

Mr. Heaton continually harps upon the injustice of high rates to the poor in regard to social messages. Now, if the tariff to Australia were only 6d. per word, how many messages such as the following, which would cost 5s. 6d.—involving, to follow Mr. Heaton's style, three days fasting for, say, an agricultural labourer and his family—would be sent by working folks?

"Smith, 25, West-street, Melbourne. Was Bill hurt mining accident?—TOM."

Are Mr. Heaton's views on this subject sound sense, or are they quite unnecessary sentimentalism? If such a message were sent would Smith spend 5s. on a reply? Those who know the poor know also that they will not send telegrams containing bad news which cannot serve any useful purpose, nor will they wire half round the world to wish each other many happy returns of the day.

The member for Canterbury gives an abstract of what he calls the Eastern Telegraph Company's rates; but he does not point out—does not even apparently know—that in most cases that company is only one of many Government and other Administrations concerned, and why all the blame should be cast upon one section of the whole route it is difficult to see. Perhaps it may be news to him that Government telegraph departments are as unwilling as private enterprise to reduce rates without considering their effect upon revenue, expenses, and carrying capacity. It is evident that the company named is King Charles's head to Mr. Heaton.

One sentence may be quoted from his article in your issue of the 13th inst. to illustrate his smug egotism. "Before I entered on a crusade against these extortions there were even charges of 16s. to 27s. a word." Well, there are still rates by roundabout routes of 18s. per word to parts of South America, but those who have any acquaintance with the facts know that Mr. Heaton has had just as much to do with reductions of cable rates as last year's snows.

Then Mr. Heaton gives his particular mare's nest, which he calls "The Remedy." It is the old one of setting up cheaper rates on foreign land lines. That, then, is his idea of Imperial telegraphs. Now, for the last quarter of a century there have been proposals from time to time to make an effective international land line to Egypt *via* Turkey and Syria. Why has nothing come of them? Because an international land line, unless wires are set apart exclusively for through traffic and unless it is worked under one management throughout by specially trained operators, can never compete with lines which fulfil these conditions.

To any one who telegraphs, first accuracy and then speed are obviously even more important than cheap rates. What correctness and quickness of transmission can be expected if messages pass through the hands of clerks of various nationalities and are mixed with internal traffic? It may be argued that the Indo-European and Great Northern Telegraph Companies' systems of land lines are not open to these objections, but then they comply with the requirements above enumerated. Then will foreign Governments lease through wires and allow them to be worked from London for British Imperial traffic? Twenty-five years have not been enough to induce Turkey to do this, and it is more than doubtful if Germany and Russia, for instance, would now do so in the case of a new line. As we all know, international jealousy, especially in matters telegraphic, is much greater than it was 30 years ago.

Another sentence of Mr. Heaton's is so delightful that I ask your permission to quote it. "Collectively they" (*i.e.*, directors of cable companies) "are as impervious to sentiment—philanthropic, patriotic, or moral considerations—as a leech, a vampire bat, a Bengal tiger, or a zygæna." The last named, *vide* dictionary, is a hammer-headed shark. Mr. Heaton, "I thank thee for the word."

The answer to this rhodomontade (so far as it is true), which one rubs one's eyes to see in *The Times*, is simply—directors are trustees for shareholders.

Then Mr. Heaton says a Transatlantic rate of 3d. per word would yield a large profit, which would certainly be trebled if the rates were reduced to 1d. A large number of people in the world, of whom Mr. Heaton is the most conspicuous example, think that the applications of electricity are not subject—as, for instance, they know steam is—to limitations. If you can send one word through an Atlantic cable you can, according to them, send a hundred thousand in a working day. But one can no more get a quart into a pint pot than get the idea into Mr. Heaton's mind that if you largely increase telegraphic traffic you must have additional lines, clerks, &c., to transmit it; and then what becomes of that rainbow-gold—Mr. Heaton's paper profits? Telegraphic rates have been, and will no doubt continue to be, substantially reduced, but it is obvious that no board of directors would be justified in making wild experiments at the expense of their shareholders.

As an amazing instance of fatuous argument may I quote again? "It is needless to insist upon the inexpensiveness of the electric agency as compared with, for instance, the laborious transmission of written messages by post." Now, letters throughout,

except in sorting and during delivery, being handled in bulk, it matters little whether there is one bag or a hundred sacks of mails to Australia. Is it not evident that the champion of postal reform has not even mastered the elements of his pet subject? On the other hand, every telegram from start to finish has to be dealt with individually at one station after another; and not only so, but every signal of every letter of every long-distance telegram has to be many times separately transmitted and received. We are not likely to sink a P. and O. boat with mails, but every operator knows that it is not difficult to swamp the carrying capacity of a long telegraph line.

If Mr. Heaton were to post, say, a Bible to Australia, it would not overtax the resources of her Majesty's Post Office: if he were to telegraph its contents to the Antipodes, it would block all the existing lines for a fortnight, to the exclusion of all other traffic. After this is it wise to take Mr. Heaton seriously?

Again, he has several times advocated a sixpenny rate to Australia. It is passing strange that before agitating for this he should not have done a little arithmetic. Let me set a little sum which Macaulay's schoolboy's younger brother would treat with contempt. The present average rate to Australia being, say, 5s. per word, and two cables being sufficient for the present correspondence—there are actually three cables—how many cables will be required to carry the traffic necessary to produce the same gross revenue at 6d. per word. Obviously, as 6d. is one-tenth of 5s., 20 cables will be necessary—deduct three existing cables, and 17 new cables must be laid from England to Australia. To say nothing of the fact that there is not sufficient gutta-percha in the world for even two such cables to be laid simultaneously, the companies would have the same gross revenue, with 17 extra cables to lay, maintain, work, and replace in time.

I think this entitles me to say that Mr. Heaton brings two important qualifications, which ought to make for impartiality, to the study of matters telegraphic. His ignorance of the subject as a whole is intense, and his inability or unwillingness to learn is invincible. For him to send such fustian for publication is an insult to the Press.

Much more could be written, but *cui bono?* Apologies are due for the length of this letter. The subject is, however, an important one, and *The Times* wishes for sound deductions from correct *data*.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

London, July 14. G. R. N.

THE HALFPENNY POST.

7.8.99.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Believing that, usually, the real control of Government Departments rests not with the Ministers but with the permanent officials, I did not expect that even a question in the House of Lords would secure the removal of "unsatisfactory anomalies," the euphuism framed by the General Post Office to cover the surcharges which they have been inflicting on me.

The reply of the Duke of Norfolk on July 24th is evidently divisible into two portions. In the first, his Grace was discharging the ordinary function of a Minister by paraphrasing the reply prepared by the permanent officials. It was the stereotyped *non possumus* with which we are all familiar; it was also incorrect, but, at present, I do not wish to point out the errors.

In the latter portion of the speech, I think that his Grace was allowing his own kindness and common sense a freer hand. Those, however, who have studied the obstructive resistance to progress and to the suggestions of outsiders which has characterized the administration of the Post Office for the last 25 years will be astonished to see his Grace's statement that "any practical suggestion would be welcomed from any quarter." The convenient way to shelve any suggestion will be to describe it as not "practical." I am old enough to have seen scores of "impracticable" schemes carried out, many of them by the very persons who had declined to entertain them.

To prophesy is proverbially unsafe, and I have no doubt that the following suggestion will be described as "unpractical," "visionary"; but should I live another five years I expect to read in the "Postal Guide" the following rates as applicable to all matter, written, printed, lithographed, plain, or any mixture of them:—Under 2oz. (provided the packet be open), ½d.; under 4oz. (open or closed), 1d.

When we get that I shall feel that the trumpery, petty tyranny exercised upon me has done good to my country, and I shall be content.

Your obedient servant,

G. J. SYMONS, F.R.S.

62, Camden-square, N.W.

THE METEOROLOGISTS AND THE POST OFFICE.

21.8.99.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Recently in the House of Lords I called attention to the grievance of the meteorologists against the Post Office, but my observations were crowded out by other matter; so I hope, as the dull letter-writing season has set in, you will kindly accord to me the hospitality of your columns.

Shortly stated, the grievance is this. In 1867 Mr. G. J. Symons, then as now the leading meteorologist in the kingdom, distributed among his correspondents certain printed forms for noting down rainfall statistics. These forms, when filled in, were returned to him by the halfpenny post. For nine years, down to 1876, the postal authorities were satisfied with this arrangement. In 1876 Mr. Symons was surcharged on the ground that these filled in forms were in the nature of letters and ought to have a penny stamp. Mr. Symons remonstrated, demanded an apology and the repayment of the surcharge, and obtained both.

Thenceforward till August, 1898, the Post Office, which does not readily learn from experience, continued from time to time the practice of surcharging, but these incidents always closed with the despatch of a postman bearing in his hand a penny, being the amount of the surcharge. Any one acquainted with the interior working of a Government office will appreciate the trouble, correspondence, and friction involved in these sporadic and futile attempts to make an illegal charge.

In August, 1898, however, an organized system of surcharges was resorted to, and Mr. Symons's remonstrances were met by the plea that under new regulations promulgated in 1897 the surcharge was justified.

Now, according to the statement of the Postmaster-General in the House of Lords, the regulations of 1897 were not intended to introduce any new principle, but were the belated product of an agitation in 1893 for an intelligible pronouncement of the views of the Post Office on the subject of the halfpenny post; and indeed it is quite clear that the Department did not frame these regulations with an eye to a raid on Mr. Symons, because for many months after their issue Mr. Symons continued unmolested in the receipt of his forms at the halfpenny rate.

These regulations, then, if the official view of their legal purport is correct, have had an unexpected and, to judge from the apologetic tone of the Postmaster-General, a regrettable result. He said he was obliged to put the regulations in force; I would suggest that his duty is to amend them.

And in this connexion let me observe that the demand of the meteorologist is modesty itself. All he asks is that his communications, which are acknowledged to be of great public interest, should not be placed on a less-favoured footing than the touting circulars of the outside stockbroker. Indeed this demand is so far short of the obvious justice of the case that I hope the Postmaster-General will, after due reflection, decide to relieve the authorized rainfall collector from all contribution to the Exchequer through the Post Office. These patriotic persons contribute something in money and a great deal more in time and trouble in collecting statistics of inestimable value in the solution of the great problem of water supply, and I am sure the Postmaster-General will agree with me in thinking that it is not just and, in spite of the heavy demands on the Exchequer made and threatened, not necessary to supplement the three millions of net revenue contributed by the Post Office by the few pounds it is now sought to squeeze out of the meteorologist who is performing without fee or reward a great public service.

Rather will he, I am persuaded, issue to all persons properly vouched for rainfall envelopes stamped with the legend "On her Majesty's Service," bearing free of charge those meteorological returns which may make or mar very important engineering schemes for the water supply of our great towns.

There are other matters connected with the halfpenny post regulations that merit the attention of the public, and, if you allow me, I propose to recur to the subject at an early date.

Faithfully yours, MONKSWELL.

Rosenlani, Meiringen, Switzerland, Aug. 17.

AN IMPERIAL TELEGRAPH SYSTEM.

22.8.99.

The following letter has been addressed to the Secretary of State for India by Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., on behalf of the Imperial Telegraph Committee of the House of Commons :—

"Osborne Villa, Carlsbad, Austria, Aug. 19, 1899.

"Dear Lord George Hamilton,—The question of reducing the present high telegraph charges to India is, I know, engaging your attention.

"I beg that you will not come to any decision on the matter until you have heard Sir Edward Sassoon and myself. We take the ground that any subsidy given by the Indian Government will considerably hamper competition and block the way of really cheap telegraph rates to India, Australia, and the East for many years.

"I have shown in articles in the *Nineteenth Century* and in *The Times* that all that is necessary is to link up the present land lines in order to have sixpenny rates to India ; I have pointed out that land lines can be constructed at a fourth of the cost and will carry five times more messages than cables ; I have pointed out that to-day the cost of a telegram from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok, nearly 6,000 miles, is about 2½d. per word, whereas from London to India by land the charge is 4s. per word by the Indo-European Telegraph Company's lines ; finally, I have indicated four different land routes to India where 'linking up' can be effected. The only reply to these statements is that the Ameer of Afghanistan will not consent to our constructing a telegraph line into or through his territory. It appears incredible that the enlightened Ameer, who receives a very large sum of money every year, from England or India, in the shape of a subsidy, declines to allow us to construct a telegraph line. He is surely aware that a telegraph line will not steal even the air or injure him in any way. My information, however, is that the permission of the Ameer can be obtained. [A statement of mine (questioned by a correspondent of *The Times*) that the Ameer had allowed telegraph lines to be laid to Kandahar and Kabul is borne out by the enclosed map issued by the Eastern Telegraph Company, in which you will see such wires are duly marked.] At all events we (with your sanction) intend to make an effort through other agencies to get the Ameer's consent. Even if it cannot be obtained, there are three alternative lines open to us.

"You are aware that both the Eastern Telegraph Company, its joint purse partner the Indo-European Company, and the Imperial Telegraph Committee of the House of Commons recognize that it will take many millions of money to secure an entirely round the world all-British telegraph cable line. It was alleged by representatives of the first-named company that, as everything is disarranged in times of war, it is better to depend on fast cruisers than on cables, because it is impossible to patrol a cable 2,500 miles across the ocean. We send our English mails to India and Australia every week through two foreign countries, France and Italy ; then why object to telegrams (for 98 years in 100 we are at peace) going through foreign countries ?

"We are now struggling on behalf of the merchants, traders, and social classes against a great monopoly—a monopoly condemned in the strongest terms by your colleagues. Our work will be seriously impeded and we shall be crippled for another generation if you give your sanction to a further subsidy to these cable companies.

"I am your faithful servant,

"J. HENNIKER HEATON."

The new stamps which are to be issued on New Year's-day will show no alteration in the head of the Queen. As regards colour the halfpenny stamp is to be green, the penny stamp red, and the twopenny-halfpenny blue. The shilling stamp will probably remain as at present. It is her Majesty's own desire that the design should not be altered. 16.10.99.

ISSUE OF LARGER POST-CARDS.—A notice issued by order of the Postmaster-General says :—"On November 1, 1899, a new inland and a new foreign post-card, 5½in. by 3½in. in size, will be issued. These cards (single and reply) will be sold at the same prices respectively as the present inland thin cards and the present foreign cards. The issue of the oblong stout cards (single and reply) will be discontinued when the present stocks are exhausted, and cards (single and reply) of the present court size, 4½in. by 3½in., will be the only stout cards on sale in future. The price of these stout cards will remain unaltered. From the date mentioned the maximum size of private cards will be increased to 5½in. by 3½in., to correspond with the size of the new cards."

25.10.99.

COMMERCE AND THE HALFPENNY POST.

2.9.99

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—A few days ago you were kind enough to allow me to lay before your readers the hard case of the meteorologists, who after 30 years' use of the halfpenny rate is told that his filled-in rainfall forms are, under the new rules, held to be communications "in the nature of a letter," and charged accordingly at the penny rate.

In penalizing the meteorologist the action of the Post Office may have been, and I think was, in a high degree both injudicious and unjust, but it was no doubt open to the department in its capacity of carrier to alter, if thought fit, its tariff regulations. The alteration, however regrettable, at all events dealt with matter connected with the business of a carrier.

I now propose to call attention to regulations affecting the halfpenny post which seem to me to indicate that the department hold peculiar views as to what constitute the functions of a carrier, regulations in which, turn them about as I may, I can discover no shadow of a pretence for the assertion that they are in the remotest degree connected with any of the functions commonly understood to belong to the carrying trade.

Let me explain that I am far from condemning indiscriminately the distinctions drawn by the Post Office as to what communications may or may not be sent at the halfpenny rate. The department is well advised in permitting common trade forms, such as invoices and receipts, to pass at the lower rate. My quarrel is not with the regulation which, on the face of it, is excellent, but with the interpretation, which is conceived in the true official spirit, a spirit that animates even the best public servants—that spirit of interference in other people's business in a manner calculated to produce the greatest possible amount of friction and annoyance.

Accordingly, it has been decreed that through the medium of the halfpenny post the common forms of all commercial transactions are to be recast. Ordinary terms of commercial politeness must be protected by a penny stamp. It is customary with tradesmen on receiving their money to decorate the face of the bill with the polite words "received with thanks." The Post Office will have none of this nonsense. The Post Office gets on without politeness, so the authorities at St. Martin's-le-Grand have decreed that the words "with thanks" are mere surplusage "in the nature of a letter" and must be paid for at the higher rate. Similarly a tradesman may announce for a halfpenny that he has received your "order," but if he says in the ordinary language of commerce that he has received your "esteemed favour" the halfpenny rate is not available.

It may be a good thing to reform the language of commerce. "Esteemed favour" is perhaps a form of expression that ought to be severely commented upon in Board schools and put by the Education Department in the *index expurgatorius*. But that is a matter which concerns the Education Department, and not the Post Office. It may well be that the present Postmaster-General would manage the Education Department as efficiently as the Duke of Devonshire or Sir John Gorst, or both of them together, but I submit that education is one thing and the business of a carrier another, and that it is not within the province of the Post Office to dictate to the world of commerce the exact terms in which receipts should be made out or orders acknowledged. Hundreds of thousands of printed forms have been rendered useless, and much irritation caused to a very large number of deserving persons endeavouring to carry on their business in the manner they believe to be most satisfactory to their customers, by the high-handed action of a few officials who with excess of zeal arrogate to themselves the right to interfere in matters that do not concern them.

Faithfully yours,

MONKSWELL.

Rosenlaui, Meiringen, Switzerland. Aug. 28.

SALE OF FOREIGN POSTAGE STAMPS.—Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper concluded a sale of foreign postage stamps at the St. Martin's Town-hall, Charing-cross, on Friday, and the following were some of the principal prices realized :—Moldavia, 1st issue, 54 paras, blue on green, £13 10s. ; Spain, 1851, 2 reales, red, unused, £25 10s. ; ditto, Madrid, 3 cuartos, unused, £13 10s. ; Geneva, the double stamp, (2) £17 and £17 10s. ; Tuscany, 2 soldi, unused, £22 ; ditto, 2 soldi, strip of 5 on envelope, £27 ; ditto, 3 lire, yellow, (2) £35 and £43 10s. ; Ceylon, 4d. rose, imperforate, £14 10s. ; Cape of Good Hope, the error, 4d. red, damaged, £34 ; Mauritius, 2d. blue error, Pence, £15 ; Barbados, prov., 1d. on half 5s., a pair, £21 5s. ; British Guiana, 1st issue, 4c. orange, £30 10s. ; ditto, 8c. green, £25 7s. 6d. ; ditto, 1852, 1c. magenta, strip of 4, £16 ; ditto, 1856, 4c. black on magenta, £19 5s. ; Queensland, 1st issue, 6d. green, a pair, £14. The total amount realized was about £1,700. 2.10.99.

THE HISTORY OF THE POST-CARD.

1.11.99. (FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

The issue of larger post-cards to-day is a concession by the Post-office which will be hailed with great satisfaction by post-card writers, whose number is legion. It is one that has for some time been widely agitated for in this country. Both the inland and the foreign cards will be increased in size to 5½in. by 3½in., and these cards will eventually displace the present thin inland and stout oblong cards, and the present foreign cards. They will be sold at the same prices as those for the cards they supersede and the stout "court" cards will continue to be issued. Likewise, the *maximum* size of private cards will be increased to 5½in. by 3½in. to correspond with the size of the new cards. These changes may not seem in themselves of vast importance, but when the number of persons whom they will effect is taken into account they certainly appear deserving of notice. The Postmaster-General states that the number of postcards used in the year is at the present time at the rate of 382,200,000, which means that if the whole population were given to post-card writing the average number of cards used by each person would be 9·5. So rapid, indeed, has been the growth of correspondence by post-card that the number now used annually is more than double the number used 12 years ago. These are interesting and noteworthy facts, and the change which takes place to-day in the size of the cards will without question mark a further important development in the history of the post-card, a brief glance at which may not be inopportune at the present moment.

This humble, though very useful, factor in the social economy of this country dates back nearly 30 years. It was on October 1, 1870, that post-cards were introduced here. The idea, however, was not due to native ingenuity, for similar cards had been brought into use in Austria just one year previously, being sold at two kreutzers each. But the merit of inventing the idea is really due to Dr. Stephan, the late indefatigable German Postmaster-General, who in 1865 submitted to the delegates of a German postal congress, held at Carlsruhe in that year, a new kind of letter in the shape of an open post-card (*offenes postblatt*), on one side of which were to be written the name and address, and on the other side the communication. These cards were to be sold at a very low rate of postage. The plan, however, was not adopted owing to the fact that the German postal service had not at that time the necessary uniform organization, and also to a fear that its adoption would tend to decrease the revenue. Whether or not this scheme was known to Dr. Emanuel Herrman, of Vienna, is not recorded, but it is the fact that that gentleman made a similar suggestion in 1869 to the Austrian Post-office. It appears that Dr. Herrman was forcibly struck by the fact that a large number of letters were sent, the importance of whose contents was in no proportion to the waste of trouble and polite sentences involved, and which might as well have been forwarded without covers. One-third of all the letters, he reckoned, contained merely simple information which might easily have been posted open at a lower rate of postage. So imbued was he with the idea that he forthwith suggested it, in an article to the *Neue Freie Presse*, to the Austrian Post-office authorities, who recognized the value and importance of the proposition so promptly that it was carried into effect on October 1 of the same year. The plan met with immediate popular favour, as may be judged by the fact that in the first month of their use as many as 2,926,102 cards were sold. The success of the system soon attracted the attention of other countries, and six months later was brought into use by the North-German Confederation. The Southern German States soon followed suit, as did also Belgium, Britain, and France, and within less than five years post-cards were being sold in every civilized country in the world.

In our own country the subject was brought to the notice of the postal authorities by means of an article published in the *Scotsman* of September 17, 1869. There was also considerable agitation by private individuals, but the idea was at first rejected. On February 17, 1870, however, Dr. Lyon Playfair (afterwards Lord Playfair) presented an extensively-signed memorial in favour of what was termed a "card-post," with the result that inquiries were instituted in Austria. The investigation would appear to have been quite satisfactory, for a proposal to issue post-cards formed part of the Newspaper Postage Bill of 1870, and the system came into actual operation, as already stated, on October 1 of that year. It is curious to recall at the present day the ridicule and even hostility with which the post-card was met on its introduction. The main argument against the post-card was that it would afford an opening for the ill-directed efforts of those who indulge in public libel and defamation of character for the purposes of venting their spite and malice. The argument was, of course, not without reason, for the moral assassin is unhappily one of the evils of the age. Fortunately, however, conviction of such a misdemeanour carries with it penalties of a sufficiently deterrent character to depress the number of cases of the kind to a very low average. Some people, too, urged that the use of a post-card was little short of an insult to the recipient, inasmuch as if the communication were not worth a penny it was not worth sending at all. This somewhat foolish idea became dispelled as the use of the post-card rapidly increased. No one helped more in this direction, perhaps, than the late Mr. Gladstone, who has made countless numbers happy by the receipt of a card bearing his well-known writing. There was yet another class of persons who resented the introduction of post-cards. They were those who still regarded letter-writing as a fine art. This old school of letter-writers naturally looked upon the innovation as the death-blow to the carefully written epistles of the past. That the post-card may have had some such effect is not perhaps to be altogether disputed, but in an eminently utilitarian age like the present the fact that post-cards have become a most useful and indeed indispensable adjunct of social and commercial intercourse must far outweigh any disadvantage which the old-world letter-writer ascribes to its use.

Notwithstanding all the objections urged against the system of post-cards, their use in this country spread very rapidly. On the very first day of their introduction 575,000 cards passed through the office at St. Martin's-le-Grand alone, while the weekly number of cards posted throughout the country averaged 2,000,000. In the first year of their use the number of cards sent was 75 millions, and since then they have increased each year at an extraordinarily rapid rate, until the present almost fabulous number of 382,200,000, as already quoted, has been reached.

The system has not attained its existing huge proportions without undergoing many changes and improvements. At the outset only cards issued by the Post Office were allowed to be used, and these were sold at their face value. Curiously enough, this fact gave rise to as much agitation as there is now against the charge made for the cost of material. The stationers, who complained of unfair competition on the part of the Government, took up the question vigorously, but it was not until 1872, after many fruitless negotiations, that they succeeded in bringing about a change. In the year named it was decided to make a slight charge for the materials, and the price of 12 cards was raised from 6d. to 6½d. At the same time the use of private cards was permitted, provided they were stamped at Somerset House, for which, at first, the Inland Revenue authorities made no charge. In 1883, however, on the ground of protecting the official cards from competition and also of paying the cost of stamping, they deemed it necessary to impose a charge of 1s. for a thousand, which was subsequently raised to 1s. 6d., and still later to 2s. 6d., per thousand. The use of private cards with the ordinary adhesive half-penny postage-stamp was a concession which the public agitated for with conspicuous tenacity for many years, and the agitation was not wanting in vigorous supporters in Parliament. The chief objections to their use were breach of uniformity and the endangering of the penny letter-rate, by the inclusion of cards of invitation and the like. The question passed through many vicissitudes and, although it was favourably regarded by Mr. Fawcett, the Post Office officials, and a committee of inquiry, it was not, owing to the opposition of the Treasury, until September 1, 1894,

that private cards (under certain conditions as to weight and size) were at length allowed to be used with the adhesive label. The concession has proved, needless almost to remark, an immense boon to all classes of post-card writers.

The question of charging only face value for post-cards is still a debated one. Since 1881 the matter has been keenly ventilated in and out of Parliament. A Select Committee in 1888 considered fully the merits of the case, but with the result only of causing a slight reduction to be made in post-card prices. The ground of objection on the part of the Government is that, if post-cards were sold at face value, it would be doing a wrong to the paper-makers and would involve a loss of revenue, it being stated that a heavy cost has to be paid to the contractors. On the other hand, it is to be remembered that in other countries post-cards are sold for their face value, and even in our own such is the case as regards the foreign post-card. The matter is not, perhaps, a very important one, but it is just one of those petty, irksome inconveniences, if not inconsistencies, for the removal of which the public will never cease to clamour.

The post-card has undergone many little changes during its 30 years' career, which, while beneficial in themselves, need hardly be adverted to at length. Senders of cards may now sign the address side, a concession granted at the suggestion of Mr. Gladstone, who was also responsible for the "stout" card which was brought into use in 1874. The court. or correspondence cards were not introduced until over 20 years later, namely, on January 21, 1895, and these will now take the place of the "stout" cards which are to be allowed to become exhausted. The foreign post-card was introduced in 1874, being one of the results of the first convention of the Universal Postal Union, the 25th anniversary of whose establishment has just occurred. Perhaps the most useful of all the changes that have taken place in connexion with the post-card system was the introduction of reply post-cards in October, 1882. The salient feature of these cards is of course that they go far towards ensuring an answer. The advantages of such a card are too obvious to require comment and it need hardly be said that their sale has been rapid and has now reached a high figure. Similar cards for foreign correspondence have been brought into use under the auspices of the Postal Union, and, as may be imagined, they have been still more appreciated.

The latest change as regards post-cards, as recorded at the outset, is not of a startling nature, but, nevertheless, it will be received with much public appreciation. The post-card, with its entire freedom from all ceremony of formality, is such an obvious boon to thousands, if not millions, of correspondents in these days, that anything which tends in any degree to enhance its advantages must be hailed with satisfaction. 1.11.99

THE NEW POST-CARDS.

9.11.99

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your statement, made on the 1st inst., with regard to the new post-cards, appears to require some additional explanation. You stated that the size both of home and foreign post-cards would be enlarged. On the strength of that statement I ventured to ask for some of the new foreign post-cards at the St. James'-street post-office, but was informed by the young lady in office that there were none. There were only new 1d. cards. I concluded that the new foreign post-cards had not yet arrived, and said I would call again in a day or two. After two days I asked again, at the same post-office. This time the young lady very curtly repeated that there were none, and turned to the next customer, as much as to say that she had done with me, and I must not ask the same question again. Thereupon I wrote to the Postmaster-General begging him kindly to cause me to be advised where the new foreign post-cards are to be obtained, or else, should your information be incorrect, to have it publicly contradicted. My letter has not brought me even the formal acknowledgment which I have invariably received in answer to similar requests for information (as well as very civil replies) from former Postmasters-General, from the present Duke of Devonshire downward. Then what am I to do about these foreign post-cards?

Your obedient servant

November 8. H. W. W.

THE NEW POSTCARDS.

11.11.99

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I wrote you this morning about the new foreign postcards. This evening's post has at length brought me a reply from the Postmaster-General explaining the omission to supply the St. James's-street office with foreign postcards as an oversight.

I thought I had given his Grace sufficient time to reply, and the oversight committed by his office, in any case, does not justify the curt haughtiness with which the girl-clerk turned away from me as if I were asking an unreasonable and almost impertinent question.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

November 8. H.W.W.

MOURNING ENVELOPES IN FRANCE.

The "Newcastle Chronicle" says that a strange order has just been issued by the French Post Office, and a strange justification given for it. Henceforth mourning envelopes are not to pass through the post. The note-paper may have as deep an edge as the sender desires, but the cover must be white, or may be tinted, but at least is not to have a black edge. It is not that the department is out of sympathy with the expression of mourning by means of stationery. On the contrary, the sending of mourning cards is a decided source of revenue. It is that experience has shown the Post Office authorities that mourning envelopes are easily tampered with. They can be opened, and if the gummed edge is torn or frayed in the process, a little ink rubbed over the black surface makes everything look right. A white envelope so intertered with tells its own tale. 20.11.99.

OPEN ENVELOPES IN THE POST.—Mr. J. E. Vincent writes from 4, Swan-walk, Chelsea:—"At this time of year everybody is receiving a large number of circulars, charitable appeals and the like in open envelopes, and probably many persons, like myself, are in the habit of destroying a circular as soon as they have ascertained that it is a circular. In these circumstances I think it worth while to recount a small personal experience which shows that it is necessary to open these circulars. In the course of the past week I received a large envelope with the flap open and turned down and a certain amount of printed matter in it. On opening it I found included also a stamped letter, directed to the chief clerk of Westminster Police-court, which I duly posted. I gather from a letter received from the chief clerk that if I had failed to discover the enclosed letter or to post it, the writer might have suffered inconvenience. Personally, I have never been able to understand the regulation which compels these circulars, as a condition of cheap postage, to be inserted in unsealed envelopes. These cannot be lighter than sealed; they must be more cumbrous, and the case which I quote distinctly shows that they act as a kind of trap for other letters." 15.12.99.

POSTAGE STAMPS.—A two days' sale has just been held by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, at their rooms in Leicester-square, of the stock of postage stamps, &c., of Messrs. Harry Hilckes and Co., late of Cheapside, now in liquidation. Mr. Hilckes was the founder and editor of the *Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly*. The attendance was very large, and high prices were obtained for the various lots, which were chiefly of a wholesale nature. The total realized, including the copyright and effects of the *Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly* was £1,504. The following are among the prices realized at Messrs. Ventom, Bull, and Cooper's sale of British, foreign, and colonial postage stamps, held at the St. Martin's Town-hall, Charing-cross, and concluded last evening:—Moldavia, first issue, 54 paras, £11 10s.; ditto, first issue, 108 paras, unused, £48; ditto, another used, £19; Naples, ½ tornese blue "Arms." £9; Spain, 1851, 2 reales, red, £16; Vaud, 4c. black and red, defective, £12; Tuscany, 2 soldi, unused, £14; ditto, 60 crazie, unused, £14 15s.; ditto, 3 lire yellow, unused, £62; Ceylon, 8d. brown imperforate, £9 5s.; Labuan, provl., 6 on 16c. blue, £9; Cape of Good Hope, 4d. error, defective, £10 10s.; Transvaal, the error Transval, damaged, £11; British Columbia, $1 green, unused, £10; Canada, 12d. black, £51; New Brunswick, 1s. violet, unused, £40; Newfoundland, 4d. carmine, unused, £10 10s.; ditto, 1s. carmine, unused, £61; ditto, 1s. orange, unused, £62; Nova Scotia, 1s. violet, unused, £35; ditto, 1s. cold violet, £11 15s.; Barbados, provl., 1d. on half 5s., a pair, £12; British Guiana, first issue, 8c. green, £12; British Guiana, 1856, 4c. black on magenta, £11; St. Vincent, provl., 1d. on half 6d., a pair, £17 10s.; Trinidad, the Lady MacLeod, £12 15s.; Turks Island, 1s. lilac, £12 12s.; Virgin Island, 1s. error, Virgin omitted, £21; New South Wales, Sydney view, 1d. unused, £11; ditto, ditto, 2d. unused, £12 5s.; Victoria, 5s. blue on yellow, unused, £9 5s.; Western Australia, first issue, 2d. unused, £9 5s.; ditto, 1861, 6d. purple, unused, £10 2s. 6d. 20.1.1900.

THE ARMY POST OFFICE.

27.12.99.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

The postal system has become so closely interwoven with the varying interests of every section of the community that it may almost be said to be part and parcel of our daily life. It will be readily understood, therefore, that the letter-post is as much a necessity to the soldier, more especially when on active service, as it is to the civilian. The military authorities, recognizing this fact, now regard a Post Office corps as an indispensable factor of the Army when in action, and the little band of a hundred Post Office men now with the expeditionary force in South Africa is an important as well as an interesting feature of the present war.

This is not, however, the first occasion on which the corps has been under fire, so to speak, for, being formed in 1882, it accompanied the expeditionary forces which were sent to Egypt in that year, and subsequently in 1885. But even that was not the first experience of Post Office men in active warfare, as some attempt was made to provide for letter traffic during the Crimean war. On that occasion, however, the whole of the necessary arrangements were left in the hands of the Post Office, no military organization whatever being attempted. The staff was selected from among members of the Post Office, and consisted of six officers and 11 sorters, who were assisted by a certain number of non-commissioned officers from the Army and some native (Levantine) clerks. The work performed by this small force was connected entirely with letters, and the service they rendered appears to have been much appreciated. No doubt it was the experience of that campaign which suggested to the War Office the advisability of attaching a postal corps permanently to the Army. The subject remained dormant, however, for a considerable number of years, and it was not until 1876 that any active steps were taken in the matter.

In that year the War Office appears to have become alive to the fact that much assistance could be rendered by the Post Office in the postal and telegraphic arrangements pertaining to an army in the field operating outside the United Kingdom. It also naturally occurred to the military authorities that such duties could probably best be performed by Volunteers connected with the Post Office, and as the 49th Middlesex Regiment of Volunteers was composed wholly of Post Office men that department was accordingly approached on the subject, with the result that a committee of War Office and Post Office experts was appointed to inquire into the matter. But, although the matter was fully gone into, and a plan on the basis of the Crimean experience formulated, no result seems to have followed the inquiry, and for the time being the subject dropped, not to be revived until 1882.

The question was once more brought up in connexion with the expeditionary force which the War Office authorities had in July of the year just mentioned decided on sending to Egypt. Lieutenant-Colonel du Plat Taylor, once a member of the Post Office, had long had in his mind a plan for the formation of an Army postal corps, to be raised from the Post Office Volunteers, which should undertake all the postal duties connected with the Army in the field, and as a matter of fact it was his scheme that was submitted to the committee of 1876 already mentioned. This plan Colonel du Plat Taylor again brought under the notice of the authorities, and he advocated it so energetically and with such good effect that a Treasury warrant authorizing the formation of such a corps was issued on July 22, 1882. It was announced that the Army Postal Corps would consist of two officers and 100 rank and file, of which one-half were to be prepared at once for foreign service. Some difficulty arose as to the statutory legalization of the corps, but this was overcome by the simple expedient of enlisting all the men in the Regular Army for a period of six years, three being in the Army service and three in the Reserve. It was arranged, however, that the men should not be kept in the Army longer than six months after the cessation of hostilities during time of peace, and, of course, they were to retain their position in the London Post Office. The plan seems to have found much favour amongst the Post Office Volunteers; so much so, indeed, that all the officers and 350 of the men volunteered their services. This number was, however, narrowed down by subsequent regulations, which rendered married men and men over 30 years of age ineligible, while some of the men were medically disqualified, and in the course of a few days the required strength—100—of the corps was attained and the Volunteers duly enlisted. Of the number, two officers and 43 men were immediately got ready for active service, the establishment comprising an Army postmaster and an assistant Army postmaster, ranking respectively as captain and lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, and 35 privates. The usual military allowances were made to the officers and the men while on active service, in addition, of course, to their Post Office pay. As may be supposed, active preparations had to be made for providing the necessary equipment and apparatus, including sorting tents and appliances for five camp post-offices. All was ready, however, by July 26, 1882, when the company was paraded at the General Post Office before the Postmaster-General, and 13 days later they embarked for Egypt on board the British Prince at Portsmouth. The corps arrived in Egypt on August 21 and an Army post-office was at once established at the Tribunal, Alexandria, a field post-office being shortly afterwards opened at Ramleh. A detachment being left at Alexandria, the corps proceeded to Port Said, where another post-office was established, and thence to Ismailia, where the men and stores were disembarked and the sorting and other tents were pitched in the public gardens. The Army postmaster, with one sergeant and three men, and the necessary field tent and appliances, proceeded then at once to Tel-el-Mahuta, and from that time a daily service to and from the front was maintained, tent parties being moved forward with the advance, and men from the Reserve at Ismailia placed at the various stations along the line according to the strength of the detachments left at each place. Post-offices were established at both Kassassin and Tell-el-Kebir, and at the former place several members of the Post Office Corps were during the battle exposed to the enemy's shell fire, this being the first occasion on which English Volunteers have been under fire. As soon as the campaign was at an end every outlying party, except that at Alexandria, was called in, and soon afterwards the corps, with the exception of a small detachment left with the portion of the Army remaining at Cairo, returned to London, where they naturally received an enthusiastic public welcome.

The success of the experiment was unqualified, as may be gathered from the high terms of praise bestowed upon it by Sir Garnet Wolseley, as he then was. The manner in which all the members of the Post Office corps carried out the important duties entrusted to them "left nothing to be desired," wrote Sir Garnet in one of his despatches. "Their services have been so valuable," he added, "that I hope a similar corps may be employed on any future occasion on which it may be necessary to despatch an expeditionary force from this country." These brave Post Office officials did not, of course, go unrewarded, and the officer in command of the corps, Captain Sturgeon—the Army postmaster—was promoted to the rank of major in the Reserve of Officers and received the Egyptian medal from the hands of the Queen. The honour of receiving this medal from the Sovereign was also conferred on one non-commissioned officer—Sergeant Sherwin—and one private, while the remaining members of the corps received their medals from the Duke of Teck, their honorary colonel. Medals in recognition of the occasion were also bestowed on the members of the corps by the Khedive. It is not to be doubted that these honours were thoroughly well deserved by the corps, for it is to be remembered that the members who went abroad endured all the hardships of the campaign, and cheerfully underwent all the privations and dangers necessarily accompanying the expedition. The complete success of the scheme must have been a source of much gratification to Lieutenant-Colonel du Plat Taylor, who for so many years had advocated a trial of the plan. It met with a further trial three years later, when, in 1885, an expeditionary force under General Graham was sent to Suakin. One officer (Major Sturgeon) and 20 non-commissioned officers and men were ordered to accompany the forces, and accordingly embarked for Suakin on March 3, 1885, returning in July the same year. The plan proved in every way as successful as on the former occasion, General Graham expressing his satisfaction at the manner in which the postal duties had been performed by the Army post-office.

The whole strength of the Army Post Office Corps has been called into requisition in the present war, and three officers and 100 men are now in South Africa for military postal duties. The corps is composed of men who are members of the Post Office Volunteer Corps (24th—formerly 49th—Middlesex) and who are experienced in some of the various duties required of Post Office officials. On volunteering to join the Army Reserve, they are medically

examined, and if found physically qualified are duly enlisted in the orthodox manner. For the purposes of drill and discipline the Army Post Office Corps is attached to the 24th Middlesex Rifle Volunteers. The great usefulness of the corps in connexion with the Egyptian campaigns having demonstrated the high importance of such a corps is an accompaniment of every military expedition, the War Office have wisely taken every opportunity of giving the corps experience of postal work in the field. Thus their services have always been utilized for duty on the occasion of the manœuvres which have been held of late years at Aldershot and Salisbury Plain. The Post Office men who are now with the forces in South Africa have thereby gained much valuable experience, which will, no doubt, stand them in good stead in the present campaign, and, the three officers having been favourably reported on for the marked ability they have displayed in the manœuvres at home, there is every ground for anticipating that the corps will distinguish itself, as on former occasions, in South Africa.

Without going into the details of the organization and arrangements of the Army post-office, it may very briefly be said that the duty of the corps is to establish and maintain postal communication between the base and the several detached portions of the Army in the field. Thus at the base of each column there will be what is practically a head post-office, while field or subordinate offices will be established with all the different divisions of the column. All incoming correspondence will be received at the respective head offices, and there sorted and conveyed to the various sub or field offices, where the letters will be handed over to the orderlies of the regiments and corps, no postmen being employed. In like manner the outgoing correspondence will be collected at the field offices and thence transmitted to the head offices, whence it will be despatched to the places of destination. The respective postmasters have, as may be gathered, to be in constant communication with the field offices, and it is, no doubt, in view of this fact that these officers are mounted. At all the post-offices stamps, registered letter covers, post-cards, &c., are sold, and postal orders are issued and paid. The issuing of postal orders is found to be a great convenience to the soldiers, who like to transmit their money home as soon as it is received. Parcel-post business is also conducted, and it falls to the duty of the postmasters to keep all the records and accounts in connexion with the various branches of post-office business in the orthodox manner. In the transaction of this business all the necessary appliances are, of course, employed, and amongst other articles in use ingenious collapsible sorting-tables have been designed for the purpose. 27.12.99.

PARCEL POST BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE.

13.2.96

An agreement, the text of which has just been published in a Parliamentary Paper, has been entered into by the postal authorities of Great Britain and France respecting the admission of parcels to be delivered free of all charges into the Parcel Post Exchange between the two countries.

The agreement states that the sender of a parcel from the United Kingdom to France, or from France to the United Kingdom, may, if he makes a request so to do, take upon himself the payment of all charges due upon it in the country of destination, provided that he pays in advance sufficient earnest-money to the despatching office. The sender must undertake besides to pay on demand the sum of the charges in question. The sender of a parcel which is to be delivered free of charge may be made to pay in advance, in addition to the ordinary postage, a special fee not exceeding 6d. (60 centimes). This fee will be retained by the office of origin, if that office decides to levy it. Parcels which are to be delivered free of charge must bear on the cover, and also on the despatch-note, a very conspicuous label with the words "franc de droit" or "à remettre francs de droits." The present agreement came into operation on December 1, 1898, and will have the same duration as the Parcel Post Convention concluded on June 18, 1886, between Great Britain and France.

POST OFFICE IMPROVEMENTS IN 1899.

10.1.1900.

Although no very striking improvement can be recorded, the Post Office has during the year just closed made steady and continuous progress in many directions. The year has, in the first place, witnessed the extension of penny postage to Malta, Jamaica, Mauritius, British North Borneo, Labuan, and the Cape of Good Hope, so that now the only British colonies which have not, as yet, availed themselves of the reduced rate of transmission are those of Australia, New Zealand, and Rhodesia. In the past year the orbit of the telegraph has been extended to Swakopmund and Walfisch Bay; and simultaneously telegraph rates have been reduced to Korea, Denmark, French and Dutch Guiana, Venezuela, Portuguese East Africa, certain places in South and East Africa, Formosa, British Guiana, the West Indies, and Key West.

It is anticipated that in the hands of the Post Office the development of the trunk telephone system will be considerable. It is four years since the department took over the trunk system of telephones, and in the interval great progress has been made in the spreading of its network. A large amount of work of the kind was performed in 1898-99, when the trunk system was extended to the following places in the order given:—Cirencester, Dunoon, Nairn, Penzance, Rothesay, St. Austell, Truro, North Berwick, Salisbury, Huntingdon, Peterborough, Stamford, Newquay, Arklow, Wicklow, Boston, King's Lynn, Redruth, Settle, Stratford-on-Avon, Lanark, Louth, Tiverton, Wellington (Salop), Llantwit Major, and Wallsend.

Early last year arrangements were made whereby letters marked "Express delivery on Sunday," and prepaid the necessary express fee, were carried on Sundays from the General Post Office to any address in the London postal district. In the course of 45 weeks 3,200 letters were so delivered, giving an average of 71 per week. The express fee is 3d. per mile according to the distance of the address from the General Post Office, and the average fee paid on the letters delivered was 9d., so that on an average each letter was carried three miles, the longest distance travelled by an express messenger on Sunday being 11 miles—namely, to Hanwell, which is one of the extreme points of the district. This Sunday express delivery includes letters from abroad as well as inland letters, and it has been found of great convenience lately in connexion with letters coming to hand in the mails from the Cape after the last delivery on Saturday night. The wives of officers and others serving with the South African Field Force have, in numerous instances, lodged applications that any letters arriving too late for distribution on Saturday may be conveyed by special messenger on Sunday, and quite recently when the Cape mail reached London too late for distribution the same evening 15 such letters were taken out by express messenger. It may be added that express messengers may be sent to any place outside London regardless of distance, the only condition being that, in addition to the ordinary postage, the express delivery fee of 3d. per mile shall be paid. Messages of this kind have been delivered at Ascot, Chatham, and Aldershot.

The war has affected the Post Office in many ways, more especially by the withdrawal of a large number of its servants who were in the Army Reserve, and who have been called to rejoin the colours. The number of men who have left the London Letter and Parcel Post Service to fight is 231, in addition to whom 160 others have gone to form the Army Postal and Telegraph Corps at the front, so that altogether the metropolis has temporarily given up nearly 400 of its Post Office workers; and this number does not include men who have gone out from the Post Office Stores Department, the Central Telegraph Office, the Savings Bank Department, and the Money Order Office in London.

News from the seat of war coming officially has, since the first Sunday in November, been regularly forwarded to every telegraph office in the country open for the delivery of telegrams on Sunday morning, and been exhibited in the window of the office, where it can be read by the public. The Post Office is being utilized in another respect in connexion with the war—namely, for the payment of separation allowances to married Reservists in the employment of the department, and of compassionate allowances granted by the Receiver of the Metropolitan Police to such Reservists as belong to the Metropolitan Police; while as soon as it was decided, in the early part of October, to mobilize the First Class Army Reserve, arrangements were made whereby the Post Office, on presentation at any money order office in the United Kingdom of an Army form headed "Notice to join the Army for permanent service," has paid to each Reservist the sum of 3s. as mobilized Reserve pay.

TMAS POSTAL TRAFFIC.—The enormous formed in London by the Post Office authori- connexion with the Christmas season was to in *The Times* on Monday. In every branch work the records of Christmas in the present exceeded those of any corresponding period. able difficulty was experienced in obtaining the of supernumaries needed to augment the per- taff of the London postal service. The calling e Reserves has naturally produced a marked pon the labour market, more especially as the large class of persons who at the close of are usually anxious to obtain casual employ- This year such men were found to be very few; rtunately, the Post Office has an increasing of officials who hold dual appointments, and the of these persons were therefore particularly , more especially as the men had had experience em for the postal work of the season. It has been stated in *The Times* that in all auxiliaries were employed in the letter and parcel s of the London postal service, and that the two-thirds of that force, added to the per- staff, was concentrated upon the work of col- sorting, and distributing letters, Christmas and book packets, the remainder being engaged to clusively with parcel traffic. A total force g 20,000 men and boys—no females being in these branches of work—was thus made up. Christmas postings by charitable institutions and cial firms again exhibited a marked increase. In hese postings reached a total of 2,588,455; in er were 2,747,086; and on the present occasion rly 3,494,000. Last year one charitable institu- ns sent out 1,949,696 printed appeals asking for This year the same institution posted 2,358,000 appeals, three large printing firms being employed the circulars. Another institution, which in ented itself with 183,600 circulars, this year el by post 294,000, a third sent out 95,000, fourth 52,000. The Christmas and New Year spatches to the colonies were, as anticipated, ably heavy, and it is thought that penny postage war in South Africa were sufficient to account increased traffic. The expansion was noticeable y direction—to New Zealand, Australia, India, Ceylon, Canada, the United States, and the On December 2 the outgoing Cape mail con- 318,000 articles, including 92,000 for officers n engaged in the South African Field Force. The ail on the 2th was the largest ever despatched, ing of 336,000 articles, among which were for the troops. 30.12.99

IGN POSTAGE STAMPS.—The following are the principal prices realized at Messrs. Ventom, d Cooper's sale of foreign postage stamps, held Martin's Town-hall last week and concluded on —Canada, 12d. black, unused—£101; Naples, e blue "Arms"—£10; Naples, ½ tornese blue , unused—£11; Spain, 1851, 2 reales, a pair Switzerland, Neufchatel, 5c., unused—£11; , 2 soldi, two on piece—£18 10s.; Tuscany, a strip of five—£56; Tuscany, 60 crazie, un- 1s; Tuscany, another, used—£11; Cape of e, 1d red woodblock, a pair—£14; Mauri- st-paid, 1d. and 2d. on piece—£34; Mauritius, id, 1d, two on piece—£26 5s.; Mauritius, post- d., a pair—£15; Mauritius, post-paid, 2d. blue e—£13; New Brunswick, 1s. violet—£14 10s.; unswick, the Connell, unused—£28; United of America, 1869, 24c. green and purple, with inverted—£24; United States of America, 1869, and carmine, with centre inverted—£96; States of America, 1869, the reissued set, un- United States of America, State, $5, —£14; British Guiana, 1856, 4c. magenta— t Vincent, 4d. on 1s. vermilion—£13; Buenos Jesus vermilion, unused—£21; Victoria, 5s. yellow, unused—£11 2s. 6d. The total amount by the sale was £1,300. 10.2.1900

KNOTS OF RED TAPE AT THE POST OFFICE

16.1.1900. St James Gazette

Experience proves that not even the barbed wire entanglements with which the Boers strengthen the front of their "impregnable positions" are so difficult to break through as the stoutly knotted bands of red tape which in public departments ward off attack on abuses and baffle the suggestions of common sense. No one denies that orderly routine and adherence to established practice are conducive to the despatch of business. But some care should be taken to secure that the practice is at least reasonable before it becomes so established as to justify its protection by the *aes triplex* of departmental red tape.

The enthusiastic advocates of the nationalisation or the municipalisation of everything under the sun are in the habit of pointing the finger of admiration at the British post office as the *ne plus ultra* of wise administration for the public benefit and convenience. How little such people know of the innumerable exasperating provisions in force in that department—provisions so utterly devoid of method or common sense, so meaningless, so unintelligible, and yet so inconvenient, and in some cases so dishonest—it is not too strong a word—as to suggest that their author, whoever he may be, "only does it to annoy, because he knows it teases"! Mr. Henniker Heaton has done good service many a time in ferreting out these abuses, but a world of unexplored country still lies waiting for anyone ambitious of treading in his steps. All we desire to do for the present is to point out the direction in which such a one will find plenty of game.

It is not quite an unknown thing at the present day for telegrams to be exchanged between the Continent and this country. In the commercial world such a proceeding is not infrequent. Let us suppose that a merchant living, say, in Dorset-square wishes to communicate with an agent looking after commodities "made in Germany." The first knot of red tape with which he is confronted and which is sure to spoil his temper, and in the long run—if he has a large business—to cost him a pretty penny, is the rule governing the payment for his address. Now, according to the rule which obtains in Germany, the agent telegraphing to his principal will pay the charge for a single word only in respect of the words "Dorset-square"; and having regard to the fact that there is no "clearing-house" arrangement between the two countries, but that each pockets the full amount paid for messages handed in by the sender, it might have been supposed that this German rule in no way concerned the English Department. But what does our Post Office do in the case supposed? It would be bad enough if a halfpenny were charged for the extra word, as would be done in the case of an inland telegram. But our officials actually have the face to demand *twopence*—*i.e.*, the amount chargeable per word on the scale for foreign telegrams—before the red envelope is handed to the addressee. Let this be made perfectly clear. On a message from Germany addressed to "Salisbury, Hatfield, Hertfordshire," the English Post Office gets nothing at all. On a message sent to the Premier in London and addressed "Salisbury, Arlington-street, London," the English Post Office exacts twopence, because they know—though it is no business of theirs—that the German authorities have allowed "Arlington-street" to pass as a single word. Have they the right to do this? They have the right conferred by might, and no other. In the case supposed the sender cannot pay in advance, and, even if he did, there is no arrangement by which the receiver of the message would be thereby relieved from the imposition; so that the Post Office makes a considerable revenue by fining English recipients of foreign telegrams on account of a foreign regulation which they have nothing to do with. The fact is that the postal officials make their own laws, promulgate them in the "Post Office Guide," and proceed to administer them as if the public were merely Uitlanders to be fleeced and flouted with impunity. The absurd inconsistency and want of method in the rules which commend themselves to the junta reigning in St. Martin's-le-Grand become more apparent still when we discover that we can send a telegram from here to Germany addressed to the German equivalent of "Dorset-square"—say, "Julichsplatz"—without paying for two words. Thus, the Englishman pays fourpence for the two words "Julichsplatz, Cologne," in the address of his message, and when he gets a reply addressed to him at "Grosvenor-place, London"—fully prepaid in Cologne—he has to pay a further twopence in respect of the word "place."

The whole method of dealing with double and compound words in telegrams in this country is in a truly parlous condition—a welter of confusion. The absurdities which a little practical experience of the telegraph regulations brings to light are really funny, and would suggest that the "Post Office Guide" had been compiled by Lewis Carroll; but it must be confessed that these practical jokes are a little out of place in a great department controlling the business of the commercial capital of the civilised world. It is curious, after what we have already said as to "Dorset-square," "Arlington-street," "Grosvenor-place," to find that "Kinloch Rannoch" and "Moreton-in-the-Marsh" are a single word each.

There are other examples no less [illegible] Saint Giles" is one word, but "All Saints" are two. "High Barnet" is a single word, but if "High" is replaced by "New" two words are immediately charged for at the Telegraph Office. A "commerchant" is, as we should expect, a single word, and so is a "coachmaker" and a "gunmaker"; but a "flour-merchant," a "soapmaker," and a "swordmaker" are differently treated [illegible] Martin's-le-Grand, where analogies seem to present difficulties to the official mind. It is cheaper to send a wire to the "Stock Exchange" or [illegible] "Corn Exchange" than to the "Royal Exchange," or the "Coal Exchange"; and "West Derby" is a word less than "West Kensington." Again, if a shipper makes a contract by telegram, and uses the word "free," he pays for a single word fairly enough. If, however, he writes it in the more usual form, f.o.b., to express the condition "free on board," he has to pay for three words. A line of five figures goes for a halfpenny, but a single figure followed by a letter—e.g., "8a"—is two words, and costs a penny. The symbol a/c is treated as a single word, but a/l has the dignity (and the cost) of three forced upon it. Perhaps the strangest anomaly of all is to find that people happy enough to live at such a place as "Crossmakeelan, Bailie, Borough," or "McAdam's Cross Roads, Dromore," enjoy these high-sounding addresses at the telegraphic cost of one halfpenny, while the correspondents of tradesmen and others having the misfortune to live at "Charing Cross" are required to pay the penalty exacted for the two words of that address.

But examples of this sort might be endlessly multiplied, and there is another matter to which attention must be directed. We believe that among the many good deeds of Mr. Henniker-Heaton with respect to Post Office reform, we have to credit him with the introduction of "registered telegraphic addresses." This was obviously a boon to people with a very long address who have to send a large number of telegrams in the year, and they were glad to pay a guinea for a registered address, which is in fact, a cypher code applied to the address only. But there are numbers of people who, before that reform was introduced, and long since also, have been in the habit of using an address, which, though abbreviated, is quite sufficient to secure delivery. If it does that, nothing more can be reasonably necessary. Even Smith, Jones, or Robinson may be sufficiently a prophet in his own country to need nothing beyond his name and his village on the address of a telegram. "Bass, Burton-on-Trent," or "Armstrong, Elswick," is not an insufficiently addressed telegram. But the Post Office now endeavour to force people to register addresses by refusing to accept abbreviated forms like these, and if met by a refusal, threatens them with non-delivery on the ground of insufficient address. In the case of letters it is different. The Post Office officials pride themselves upon the skill with which they follow the most meagre clues to discovery of an insufficiently indicated addressee of a letter. And the only reason why the same care is not taken in the case of a telegram is that the Post Office, which already derives a revenue of £30,000 a year from registered addresses, wants to increase this source of income. In other words it is nothing more or less than an unjust tax on the public, and it is a discreditable and dishonest practice. There have recently been flagrant cases of this manœuvre on the part of the Post Office. "Hornby Blackburn" is as sufficient an address for the famous firm of Sir W. Hornby as "The Queen, Windsor," would be. Yet an attempt was made to compel the registration of an address by the firm—an attempt which had to be ignominiously abandoned. In another case recently brought to our knowledge the Department actually succeeded in forcing registration on a firm which had been established for half a century opposite a country Post Office, and which had always used a short telegraphic address. This address had never failed to secure prompt delivery of the firm's telegrams, which was not surprising, since every man, woman, and child in and around the Post Office knew them perfectly well. In the Department's own rules published in the Post Office Guide it is laid down that "if the addressee is known to the messenger, the telegram may be delivered wherever on the road the messenger may meet him." It is therefore in direct and flagrant violation of the spirit of their own rules, as well as a gross imposition on the public, that an attempt is being made to compel people to abandon the use of a sufficient but abbreviated address in order to pour some extra guineas into the coffers of the Post Office. Senders of telegrams should absolutely refuse to put more than they know to be enough by way of address, those who have a short address free from all ambiguity should refuse to register, and the department should be compelled to take not less trouble to discover the addressee of a telegram than in the case of a letter.

If the sort of abuse to which we are referring were detected in the case of private business firms or companies there would be an outcry about robbery and dishonest practices. But a Government Department, it appears, may be as "slim" as it likes without offence. And it is especially discreditable that the advancement of the employees of a great service like the Post Office should depend, as it very largely does, on the zeal and ability they display in assisting to impose these exactions on the public. We have heard a good deal lately about the ignorant and irrational methods of a "tyrannical oligarchy." It is to be feared that some of them are to be found not a hundred miles from St. Paul's Cathedral.

POST OFFICE STATIONERY AND STAMPS.

27.2.1900.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—On March 31, 1890, I asked the Postmaster-General whether the new contract with Messrs. De La Rue and Co. for the supply of stationery and stamps had been signed; and whether he had any objection to lay the contract upon the table of the House of Commons.

The Postmaster-General replied that the contract had been signed and was in full effect. He added, "No public advantage would be derived from laying it on the table."

Let us now quote "Hansard," March 19,1888:—

"Mr. Hanbury gave notice that he would call attention to Messrs. De La Rue's contracts on going into Committee of Supply and move for correspondence."

This afternoon in the House of Commons I asked "the Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Hanbury) if he would state to the House what is the cost per 1,000 of the postage stamps, the halfpenny and the penny value, supplied to the Post Office; and what is the total number and the cost of the postage stamps supplied to the Post Office last year."

Mr. Hanbury replied:—"I must decline to disclose particulars of the schedules of prices attached to contracts for the supply of goods for the public service."

I now beg to give the reason for my action. I served on a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1888 really to inquire into the contracts of De La Rue and Co., in which I alleged they had charged £500,000 more than market prices in their stationery contract with the Post Office.

Before that Committee had completed its labours it was announced that De La Rue and Co. had agreed to accept a new contract at a reduction of something between £30,000 and £40,000 a year on their previous prices.

On February 24, 1896, I asked the representative of the Postmaster-General in the House of Commons to supply the public with postal orders bearing counterfoils on the plan adopted in certain foreign countries, each counterfoil being marked with the number of the attached order, as well as the amount and office stamp, so as to facilitate detection in case of theft, to relieve the transmitters of small sums from the task of noting these particulars, and to encourage the use of postal orders.

Mr. Hanbury replied that larger paper and new and expensive machinery would be required, and the Postmaster-General, would not, therefore, be justified in incurring the expense. An Edinburgh firm of printers thereupon offered to print and supply the postal orders at a reduction of at least 25 per cent. on the present prices. On the same day an able Post Office *employé* submitted to the Postmaster-General a neater postal order, which, with a counterfoil, occupied no more space than the postal order now in use, and would cost less money. The Duke of Norfolk declined both proposals.

I have recently been informed that Messrs. De La Rue and Co. were being paid between £16 and £20 per million (including cost of paper) for supplying postage stamps.

The Postmaster-General of the United States of America has just sent me his annual report for 1898-99. He states that he paid last year only £10 per million for the supply of postage stamps; and I challenge comparison between those issued in America and the ones supplied to the British public. The former are immensely superior.

A very much more serious charge I have now also to direct attention to. Before doing so let me state that I entirely acquit De La Rue and Co. of all blame. It is their duty to get all the money they possibly can out of the officials at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Everybody is aware that the postmarks dating and cancelling British letters are smudgy, sludgy abominations. Few of them are clear or clean. I have been in correspondence with the Postmaster-General on this subject for many years.

I now give the exact words of the American Postmaster-General on this question from his annual report on page 159:—

"Realizing the great importance to the business world and the revenues of the postal service of securing the best quality of cancelling ink, a request was made of the officials of the General Post Office of London to furnish this office with a sample of the cancelling ink in use in the postal service in Great Britain. The following reply was duly received:—

"'General Post Office, London, November 16, 1898.

"'Sir,—In compliance with the request made in your letter of the 17th of last month, addressed to Mr. Lewin Hill, the Postmaster-General has much pleasure in sending to you herewith a sample of the stamping composition used in this office for date and cancelling stamps. The composition is supplied by Messrs. De La Rue and Co., of Bunhill-row, London, E.C., and the cost is 3s. 4d. per pound. The price is, however, dependent upon the quantity supplied, and the contractors state that if a smaller quantity than is supplied to this Department were required it might be necessary to charge from 1d. to 2d. per pound extra.

"'No special tests are applied to the composition before it is accepted; but if it were found at any time not to fulfil the particular purposes for which it is obtained it would be rejected.

"'I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

"'H. BUXTON FORMAN.

"'Perry S. Heath, Esq., First Assistant Postmaster-General, Washington.'

"A sample of ink transmitted with the foregoing letter was submitted to the test established by the supply division, and it was found not to be superior to the ink now being supplied by this office, although the cost of the same is more than three times as great."

It therefore appears that for an inferior ink we are paying De La Rue and Co. three times the price of a superior ink supplied to the American Post Office. Writing without passion and in the position of one who has gained a very large number of postal reforms, I appeal to my right hon. friend Mr. Hanbury whether there is not here a strong case for inquiry.

When I am told that the Post Office cannot afford the smallest expenditure (such as charging as one word in telegrams the name of each place in the United Kingdom) I have reason to strongly complain of the want of wisdom or honesty on the part of the mandarins at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

House of Commons, Feb. 23. 1900.

ADDING MACHINES FOR THE POST OFFICE.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether his attention had been called by his officials to the fact that a registering and adding machine, thoroughly reliable and complete in itself, was now in use in the principle banking houses in London and other European capitals; whether he was aware that, though several of these registering machines were on trial in the Money Order Office, opposition is offered to their general use by a high official in the Savings Bank; and whether he would examine for himself the machine and consult the leading bankers as to their doing the work effectively as asserted. 14.3.1900.

Mr. HANBURY.—The use of these machines affects not only the Post Office but other departments, such as the Inland Revenue and the Customs. I am afraid that public departments do not always avail themselves of modern improvements as early as private firms, and I will make inquiry as to how far the machines are really calculated to save labour and expense in particular departments, and how far they are proving useful in the case of private firms doing similar work. As regards the Savings Bank, I am informed that the machines have been tried there, and that they have been found to be of little or no advantage in that particular department, as so small a portion of its work consists in merely adding up columns of figures. Six were some months ago purchased by the Post Office for use in the accountant's offices in Edinburgh and Dublin and at the Money Order Office in London, and further trials are about to be made at the larger provincial post-offices. The results so far have been very satisfactory.

MESSRS. DE LA RUE AND THE POST OFFICE.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether any fresh contract had been made or renewed with Messrs. De la Rue and Co. for the supply of stamps, inks, or post-cards; if so, for what period, and when the present contracts with Messrs. De la Rue and Co. will terminate. 24.3.1900.

Mr. HANBURY.—A fresh contract has been made with Messrs. De la Rue and Co. for the supply of stamps and post-cards and runs for ten years from the 1st of January last. The contract, which would have run up to the end of 1901, was cancelled, and a very large reduction on the cost of that contract was affected, to commence from October 1, 1899. We were also able under the new contract to supply a larger commercial post-card. The present contract for ink has been in existence since 1882 and is terminable at any time on giving 12 months' notice. I may state that I think the hon. member for Canterbury has done a great public service in calling attention to the contract for inks. (Hear.)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF REGISTERED LETTERS.—"C. E. P." writes:—"It is not, I think, sufficiently well known that the sender of a registered article addressed to any foreign country or British colony in the Postal Union can obtain an acknowledgment of its delivery on paying a fee of 2½d. as well as the registration fee, in advance or subsequently. This is not a greater protection against loss, but the writer has the satisfaction of knowing whether the letter has been actually received or not, a form signed by the addressee being returned to the sender if the packet reaches its destination. The regulations appear in the Post Office Guide under the heading 'Acknowledgment of Delivery of Registered Letters.' This information may possibly be of special value to those having friends or relations in South Africa." 29.3.1900

Allusion has already been made to the proposals of the late Mr. W. H. Smith, when Secretary to the Treasury, for abolishing the position of Postmaster-General, and placing the Post Office under the control of a permanent board, after the manner of the Customs and Inland Revenue Departments. Every word penned by the deceased statesman is quite as applicable to-day as it was twenty-three years ago, and it may, therefore, be interesting to reproduce the memorandum which, on Feb. 11, 1877, he addressed to Sir Stafford Northcote, then Chancellor of the Exchequer:

7.4.1900. Daily Telegraph. Feb. 11, 1877.

My dear Northcote—Will you consider whether the moment is opportune for entertaining suggestions for a change in the present system of administering the Post Office?

It is a department of infinite detail. The gross revenue of upwards of seven millions sterling is collected by pennies and shillings, at a cost of more than five millions; but every letter and telegram brings the servants of the Post Office into contact with the public in some shape or way. There are 40,000 of these servants, and the Government is made responsible for all their errors and shortcomings.

It is a vast Government carrying-trade, protected as a monopoly by Act of Parliament, but requiring the most careful watchfulness in management—more so than either the Customs or Inland Revenue, which collect revenue without giving back anything in return.

The Postmaster-General has been frequently changed. He is regarded as a high political officer, and is expected to give assistance in Parliament to his Government. In the past it is notorious that Postmasters-General have not controlled or directed the policy and really managed the business of the department. It has been open to able and ambitious officers in the department to do practically what they pleased in the name of their chief, whose nominal responsibility completely covered their acts.

The whole of the —— scandal arose in this way. He was daring and skilful, and, not being responsible himself, he had no hesitation in setting the law at defiance behind the back of his chief, who was absolutely ignorant of his acts. I do not think he would have taken this course if he had been a Commissioner, responsible to his colleagues and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There is reason to believe that there is, for the time, a more general sense of responsibility at the Post Office, but the system which produced these evils remains.

It is beyond the power of a Postmaster-General to obtain, during his short term of office, a sufficient grasp of detail and of principle really to direct and control his department. Is it worth while to examine whether a permanent board, similar to those of the Customs and Inland Revenue, would not be a desirable substitution for the office of Postmaster-General? The relations between the Treasury and the Post Office are anomalous and difficult. The Postmaster-General cannot change the organisation of his department, or do any act tending to increase the cost of the service without coming to the Treasury for approval. It is a revenue department (which, however, must be managed with a view to the public convenience), presided over by a Cabinet Minister, and his recommendations are challenged by members of the Government of lower official rank than himself. The Treasury can, and often does, check the Postmaster-General in the course he is advised by his subordinates to pursue, but in the House of Commons he answers for his department as if he had no such responsibility. If there were a board in his place, there would be continuity of management and of policy; there would be real subordination of departmental officers, and the relations between the Treasury and the Post Office would be as free from strain and difficulty as they are with the boards of Customs and Inland Revenue.

In the columns of a contemporary Mr. H. S. R. Hayne gives three instances of Post Office delay to which Lord Londonderry might well devote his attention. On the 10th inst. he received at Surbiton two letters, one of which was posted in Jersey on August 2 and the other in Kingston-on-Thames (distant one mile) on August 3. On the other hand, he sent from his own office a letter covering a valuable cheque on July 21, and it has not even yet reached its destination. It seems to us that Lord Londonderry would be a good deal better occupied in looking into failures of this sort than in devising schemes for the destruction of the District Messenger Service. 13.8.00.

NEWSPAPERS AND THE MAILS.

6.4.1900.

Messrs. W. H. Everett and Son, of Salisbury-square, have received the following letter from the Post Office on the subject of the complaints they have made in our columns as to the loss and delay of newspapers, &c., posted by them in the course of their business to different parts of the world:—

"With reference to your letter of March 24 adverting to communications which you had addressed to *The Times* newspaper on the subject of the loss and delay of newspapers sent by you to your customers abroad, I am directed by the Postmaster-General to state that there is, in his opinion, no justification of the charges which you bring against this office of 'pilfering' and of intentional concealment of delay. As regards newspapers and periodicals said to have been lost in the post, there is no reason whatever for supposing that any missives posted by you in wrappers properly secured have not been forwarded to their destination, or that any of which the torn wrappers only have been delivered have been wilfully abstracted. So far as the delay of your newspapers is concerned, there can, it is feared, be little doubt that these were among other papers which have had to be held over here from time to time in consequence of extreme pressure of work. It will be obvious to you that in cases of such pressure, if it is impossible to despatch all the correspondence in time, preference must be given to letters over printed matter. It is, of course, unfortunate that any portion of the mails should be left behind. It is not, however, always possible to estimate the extra force which will be required to deal with extra work; and there is a further difficulty in the fact that the rate of increase in the work gradually tends to exceed that which it is possible to apply to the space at the Postmaster-General's disposal. But steps are being taken to provide both additional space and force estimated to be fully adequate to the requirements of the case; and it is hoped that from deficiencies in that respect, at any rate, no further delay will arise. It is perhaps worth while to observe that if, as you appear to desire, the same elaborate system of date-stamping applied to letters were also used for printed matter, the risk of delay would be not diminished but augmented by the increase of the time needed for handling each article. The adoption of your alternative suggestion that a special stamp should be applied to printed matter held over would obviously tend to increase the general pressure of work. Nevertheless, the Postmaster-General will carefully consider whether, upon the whole, it is desirable to adopt it."

In reply Messrs. Everett wrote:—"You place a limit on our charge of 'pilfering' which our letters do not warrant. We stated that magazines, &c., posted by us 'were never received,' but did not say where they vanished, which, they having passed from our control, we obviously were unable to do. That our statement is true we have from time to time given you abundant proof. Only to cite two instances—papers on check, stated by you to have been 'seen,' have afterwards been reported to us as failing to arrive; while in one flagrant case of a valuable magazine, having coloured illustrations, which failed to arrive month after month, you sent an official to receive it at our hands, yet still it 'vanished'! The 'wilful abstraction' must, we think, be admitted in the face of these facts. With regard to 'intentional concealment of delay,' we think we were fully justified in what we said, having regard to the fact that you have again and again stated that newspapers, respecting which we made complaints, had been forwarded, yet you have, since our letters appeared, admitted delay, when we were in a position, through the returned wrappers bearing our dating stamp, to prove the date of posting; but, where the wrappers were not forthcoming, you denied it, and now in your present letter you admit that such delays have occurred. . . . We have never asked that an elaborate system of date-stamping should be employed; what we have said is that you should, by using felt stampers of different design, be enabled to say by what mail the package was despatched, and not, as you have admitted, be unable to determine whether it was last or any preceding month. We certainly fail to see where the additional work of cancelling with a stamper, with the letters D. T. P. (delayed through pressure) in place of those usually used, comes in, and are glad to learn there is a possibility of your adopting our suggestion."

George Squire Boutall, chemist, was summoned for selling, at his Strand depot, a bottle of patent cough medicine, to which no duty stamp was affixed.—Mr. Simpson supported the summons on behalf of the Inland Revenue.—Mr. Albert Osborn, who defended, said the offence was admitted, although the Defendant was not personally to blame. The Defendant had many shops in London, and always instructed his assistants never to sell patent medicines unless an Inland Revenue stamp was affixed to each bottle. In this instance, an unstamped bottle was sold to an Inland Revenue officer, although there were stamped bottles in the shop, and about £5 worth of stamps on the premises. The matter arose through the carelessness of an assistant, who was at once discharged when the matter was brought to the notice of the Defendant.—Sir F. Lushington imposed the reduced penalty of £4 and 2s. costs. 20.4.00.

THE COLLECTION OF LETTERS FROM STREET POST BOXES.—"A Scribe" writes to us :—"I have been unfortunate enough to lose three cheques, two of considerable value, which at different times were posted by myself in the same street letter-box. Though the losses caused inconvenience they were limited to this, as the cheques were promptly stopped. Nothing further has been heard of them. I should like to ask whether our method of letter collection in the streets is the best and most conducive to safety. Being naturally interested I watched the process the other day at the box I am referring to. It consisted in the collector, having opened it, sweeping its contents (about a dozen packages in number), with his hand, into a bag he was carrying round for this purpose. Before he did so, and as the box was opened, I could distinctly recognize from the place where I stood one letter lying on the others, addressed in my handwriting to the bank interested in this matter, and saw it swept safely into the bag with the others. What was to prevent a dishonest collector consigning a letter obviously intended for a banker or any other one likely to contain money into his pocket for future examination, instead of into his bag? I happened casually to watch the process of collecting from somewhat similar boxes in Berlin a couple of years ago. There it was done by merely substituting an empty bag for a more or less full one without giving the collector an opportunity of seeing the contents of the latter. I submit that the German method of collecting from post-boxes, as compared with the English, is more on the side of safety, so far as the public is concerned, than the latter." 20.4.1900

POST OFFICE BOXES.—Shortly before resigning office, the Duke of Norfolk sent the following reply to a memorial from the Association of Chambers of Commerce, advocating the introduction of a system of locked private boxes, similar to that in force in Switzerland and the United States :—"The suggestion offered by the association is not a new one, and some years ago inquiry was made in many of the larger towns in the United Kingdom to ascertain whether there was any demand on the part of the public for such a system; but it was then found that in only a very few instances was any desire expressed for the change. On the contrary, the almost unanimous feeling of the private-box holders appeared to be in preference of having their letters delivered over the office counter, whether in locked bags or otherwise, as at present. Since that time no application has reached this office from the public on the subject, but his Grace has thought it well to make some further inquiry, both in London and at others of the largest offices. He finds, however, that there has apparently been little change in the feeling of the box and bag renters in the matter, and that few, if any, of those who now use locked private bags would be willing to give up their bags in exchange for locked boxes, seeing that one of their main objects in sending for their correspondence in such bags—viz., to prevent any person except the officers of the Post Office from having access to it, would be frustrated. It is clear, therefore, that if locked boxes were introduced it would still be necessary to retain the present system; but the Postmaster-General is advised that it would neither be practicable nor expedient to work the two systems concurrently, even if the necessary accommodation could be spared for it in existing post offices, which is far from being the case." 9.4.00

BOOK-PACKETS FOR THE EAST.

20.4.1900.

Messrs. Richardson and Co. write from the East India, Army, and Colonial Agency, 25, Suffolk-street, Pall-mall east, under date April 18, enclosing the following letter which they have received from the Postmaster-General :—

"General Post Office, London, April 11, 1900.

"Gentlemen,—In continuation of the letter from this department of February 21 on the subject of the delay of packets of newspapers posted by you addressed to India, I am directed by the Postmaster-General to state that exhaustive inquiries have been made into the circumstances under which such packets have been delayed. For a variety of reasons—among others the reduction of postage—the quantity of correspondence which passes through this office has of late considerably increased, and the consequent pressure of work culminates on Friday evenings, when, in addition to the ordinary daily despatches to the Continent of Europe, the mails for India and the East are despatched, and a large amount of correspondence intended for inclusion in the mails for South Africa, which leave on the following day, is also received. During the last few months the mails for South Africa have been abnormally heavy in consequence of the large number of British troops on active service there.

"The extreme pressure of work on Friday evenings has rendered inadequate the space which the Postmaster-General is able to allot to the sorting of foreign correspondence; and, as a result, on many occasions it has been found impossible to sort the whole of the correspondence for the East before the despatch of the outgoing mails. On those occasions, the letter portion of the mails had, of course, been dealt with first; and it is feared that the packets to which you refer have been delayed through being unavoidably left over in this office.

"Arrangements are now being made to transfer to another building the work of sorting inland newspapers. It is expected that this alteration will be carried out shortly; and, as soon as it is effected, considerably more space will be available for the sorting of foreign correspondence. There will then be adequate facilities for dealing with the enormous mass of postal matter which reaches this office on Fridays. In the meantime, such structural alterations as were possible have been made in the sorting rooms; and additional men are being employed. The effect of these changes was that on Friday, the 30th ult., no correspondence intended for inclusion in the Eastern mails was left over. The Postmaster-General fears, however, that it will not be possible invariably to secure this result until the transfer to which reference has been made has been carried out, although every effort will be made to do so. I am to express regret for the inconvenience and annoyance to which you have lately been put in consequence of the delay in the correspondence.

"I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

"H. BUXTON FORMAN."

Messrs. Richardson add by way of comment :—

"It is apparently quite a matter of chance whether book-packets posted in time for the Eastern mails go by the mail for which they are intended or are kept over till the following week. As we pay postage to the tune of over £3,000 a year, we think we and our customers are entitled to a little more consideration than we get. We feel sure very few of the public are aware in what a chaotic state our Post Office is."

POSTAGE STAMPS IN THE ORANGE FREE STATE.

20.4.00

Lord Roberts's Provisional Government has, of course, commandeered the Post Office of the Republic, and with this operation has come a necessary change in the issue of postage stamps, which is exciting great interest among stamp collectors. All the existing issue of the stamps of President Steyn's Republic are now surfaced with the letters "V.R.I.," printed in black ink, and marked with the amounts at which they will henceforth be recognised by the Imperial Government. Except in the case of the threepenny stamps, no change has been made in their face value, but the threepennys have been written down to a nominal value of twopence halfpenny, to correspond with the twenty-five centimes of the Postal Union. When the stock which Lord Roberts's Provisional Government has seized is exhausted another issue will be made, the exact design of which is not yet settled. Stamp collectors are, however, already on the alert, and the remaining stock of Orange Free State stamps, like most other things connected with the late Bloemfontein Government, will have very soon something a good deal more than their face value.

A NEW POSTAGE STAMP.

19.4.00.

Half-penny postage came into operation in 1870. Since that time, including the change which came into force this week, there have been five half-penny stamps. The latest edition was issued on Tuesday morning. It is not a material change on its predecessor—in fact, it is the same stamp, only printed in green instead of the vermilion which used to make it such a pretty addition to the tokens of the Post Office. The change has been brought about in consequence of a decision of the Postal Union Congress at Washington last year. This Congress, in which all the countries of the Union are represented, came to the conclusion that it would tend to universal convenience, if not to universal amity, if the postage stamps of equivalent denominations in the various nationalities were of the same colour. Most of the nations have adopted green for the colour of the equivalent of our half-penny stamp, and for this, and no other reason, green it is henceforth to be. Of course, the remaining stock of red stamps has to be disposed of, and both red and green will remain current till the red are exhausted. Meanwhile, anyone wanting a half-penny stamp can suit himself as to the colour.

PARCELS FOR THE TROOPS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—While the ladies of England are working their fingers to the bone making clothing comforts for the troops, and servant girls are pinching themselves to send out packets of tobacco for brother or lover, it may be useful to inquire, Is it probable that the gifts will ever get to the front?

As an old parcel postman, I do not think that it is at all certain that the true answer would be in the affirmative. My own belief is that a large proportion will fail in delivery altogether and the bulk of the remainder sustain a delay, measurable by months, for want of a carefully thought out system for public guidance.

There are at least three methods of conveyance—viz., (1) by colonial parcel post to destination (practically a safe way to any postal terminus, but one that costs 9d. per pound, and limits weight to 11 pounds); (2) by inland parcel post, or railway parcel, to the port of embarcation, whence who knows how or when they will get on? and (3) by private shipping agency, as to the whereabouts and responsibilities of which little can be generally known. So, on the whole, (2) would seem likely to be the most popular method, if one could but be sure that the parcels delivered in shoals—nay, even in tons—to the embarcation office can be despatched and distributed with any approach to regularity.

Then as to the other end. The capable and energetic Postmaster-General at the Cape of Good Hope (Mr. French) may be trusted to do all that mortal can, but even he is powerless beyond a certain point; and whether there is any trained agency at the Cape, outside the Post Office, to distribute systematically the masses of parcels which, arriving by many channels, would swamp any scratch organization, and whether there is any system by which parcels sent (singly or in bulk) to a South African port are consigned to the right point or undergo even the roughest preliminary assortment before despatch, who can say?

Knowing something of what Christmas time is in the highly organized and amply forced Post Office at home, I can figure to myself what may be the situation out there.

It would be doing the public a good turn if the War Office and Post Office would jointly send a roving commission to the embarcation ports to see how troop parcels, in whatever way they reach those ports, are dealt with there. As to the other end—well, one must not presume to offer even a suggestion.

An element of difficulty at both ends is the fact that the same public which has the government of empires at its fingers' ends is quite incompetent to make up a secure parcel and write upon it a legible, plain, and comprehensible address. Board schools might teach the art to the rising generation. Twine, flimsy paper, and loose ends are snares and pitfalls which the unaccustomed parcel-sender falls into headlong, and his parcel too, whether its destination be Clapham-common or the Cape.

Your obedient servant,

F. E. RAINES, sometime Inspector-General of Mails.

Bournemouth, April 2.

NEW HALFPENNY AND ONE SHILLING STAMPS.—A notice issued from the General Post Office says:—The present halfpenny postage and revenue stamp will shortly be replaced by one of the same design, but green instead of red. No precise date can be given for the discontinuance of the issue of the present red stamp, but the new stamp will be on sale at some post-offices on April 17 and at most post-offices throughout the country shortly after that date. The red stamps will continue to be sold until the supply is exhausted, and will be available for use so long as any remain in the hands of the public. About Midsummer next the present one shilling green stamp will be replaced by a bi-coloured stamp of that value. The latter will be printed in a combination of green and red colours. After the introduction of the new stamp the present green stamp will still be available for use. 6.4.1900.

THE BURNING OF MAILS BY BOERS.—"J. C. M." writes:—"I forward you the accompanying extract from a letter of an officer at Pretoria, dated June 29:—'It is most awkward having had three mails burnt, as one does not know who wrote by them, and people will think one so rude not answering their letters. I hope they put it in all the papers. They were the mails due to leave England on April 21 and 28 and May 5.'" 11.7.00.

PARCELS FOR THE TROOPS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your correspondent "L. G." is a trifle hard on the Post Office. As I am referred to perhaps I may put in a word of reply.

A postal parcel for "Colonel Plumer, near Mafeking" would unhappily appear to require an army corps for its delivery *via* Kimberley, the cost of which would probably be more than 5s. 8d., the postage actually paid.

As an economy of money and time the alternative proposed seems to have been to send the parcel *via* Rhodesia, because, as the Boers barred the way from the south to the north, it might reach its destination by travelling (possibly by Beira) a few thousand miles eastward and north, so as to come westward and south. For a 7lb. parcel a charge of 14s., with all this in view, does not seem exorbitant.

A charitable view of the outrage on humanity committed by the Post Office in demanding, as its perquisite, the canvas wrapper of the parcel might lie in the fact that this is a usual, if playful, preliminary to the refunding of postage.

I may add that I did not "recommend," in particular, any one of the several methods of sending parcels to the Cape. I have misgivings about all of them.

Your obedient servant,

F. E. RAINES.

Bournemouth, April 6.

THE POST OFFICE UNDER THE DUKE OF NORFOLK.

13.4.1900.

Of the many Peers and Commoners who have administered her Majesty's Post Office—the number must be about fourscore—some have resigned for official reasons, many have gone out with the Government of the day, and some have died in harness; of late years we have seen both Mr. Fawcett and Mr. Raikes struck down by fatal illness while actually in office. But it may safely be said that the Duke of Norfolk is the first Postmaster-General who has vacated his office to take service—and that in a subordinate position—with her Majesty's forces in the field. It is no secret that this step is not the outcome of hasty impulse. When Volunteers were first invited for South Africa, the Duke offered his services. Naturally, they were not accepted. It argues no little pertinacity on the part of his Grace that his wish has, after some months, been gratified. The public will regret the loss of a popular Minister, of one whose singularly frank, unassuming manner and obvious kindliness never failed to charm; but they cannot but admire the chivalrous self-sacrifice with which the head of one of the estates of the realm, the Earl Marshal of England, puts his life, for the sake of his country, in the danger of any stray bullet. It is to be hoped that the fortunes of war will prove kind, and that it may not be long before the Duke returns to the high personal position which he has temporarily abandoned.

The Duke's tenure of the Post Office has been remarkable for many changes and a continuous expansion of business. Under the Duke's *régime* Mr. Henniker Heaton's dream of an Imperial penny post has become a reality; the State has provided the means of telephoning messages between all the more important centres of population and business; and the ordinary penny post has penetrated, in fact, to numberless rural districts where it was previously little more than a name. Reforms always stimulate business; and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that, while the Duke was at St. Martin's-le-Grand, the circulation of postal missives increased by nearly 500 millions, an increase equivalent to the whole circulation of the country 50 years ago! This result, too, has been accomplished without any appreciable burden to the taxpayers. The Post Office still contributes nearly three millions and a half in diminution of the taxation of the country; and that notwithstanding that there has been an improvement in the wages of postmen, sorters, and telegraphists, which will eventually cost the country nearly £400,000 a year. These results speak for themselves. They testify, not only to the continued prosperity of the country, but to a wise administration, which has known how to improve facilities of communication without injuring the earning power of what is in reality a huge commercial undertaking.

The most conspicuous and far-reaching reforms of the Duke of Norfolk's time are those connected with the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen. With a sagacious appreciation of the public interests, Sir Michael Hicks Beach placed a large portion of his surplus for 1897 at the disposal of the Duke. The effect must have been rather like that produced upon a person in humble life by the sudden accession of a large fortune. It is one thing to be constantly advocating reforms, on condition that they must entail no loss, and quite another to be told that you are to do something which is to cost a large sum of money. There is, indeed, considerable danger in the situation. The young man who is suddenly told by his father that he is expected to spend some thousands a year may set up a racing stud or take to betting, with the result that the expenditure is greatly in excess of his parent's desires. The Post Office might have proposed something very bold and striking—a halfpenny postage for letters, for instance—which would have been hailed with acclaim, but would have very shortly swept away the whole profit now made for the tax-payer. But the Duke and his advisers rose to the occasion. They did nothing rash, and yet conferred great benefits. They resolved, while maintaining the penny letter as the sheet anchor of the Post Office, to proceed on the lines Rowland Hill would himself have advocated, and to bring the penny letter into every home throughout the land. Most persons probably thought this was already done; but the Postmaster-General tells us that in 1897 there were at least 20 millions of letters which every year fell short in their journey through the post of the house to which they were addressed. Left at some post office, or with some neighbour at the nearest town or village possessing a free delivery, such letters were delivered by private hands or fetched by those for whom they were intended, and meantime ran all those risks which formerly furnished many a novelist and dramatist with the *motif* for a plot. Such a state of things is in reality inconsistent with the existence of a postal monopoly, for it is the justification of such a monopoly that, if it precludes competition in crowded centres, it secures the service of districts where no one would for private profit deliver a letter once a year. The Duke of Norfolk therefore gladly availed himself of the opportunity of removing this blot on the postal system, and in his Budget speech of 1897 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Government intended to give a regular delivery of letters to every house in the United Kingdom. The Post Office at once entered on the work, which was one that could not be accomplished by a stroke of the pen. In his report for the following year, the Postmaster-General points out that "it is no easy matter to combine, in suitable posts, the scattered houses which, until now, have been excluded, because of their remoteness from main roads and villages. Such new service involves local inquiry, and in extending the postman's visits to houses hitherto unserved, care has to be taken that letters for houses already on the men's routes are not unduly delayed by reason of deviations to new places, and also that the men themselves are not overworked." Between June, 1897 and April, 1898 no fewer than 3,800 sets of rural posts were established or revised, at an average additional cost of £10 a year each. The work was steadily continued during the succeeding year, and in 1899, the Duke was able to announce that few houses in England or Wales remained unserved. The number of letters thus brought to the hands of the proper recipient was, on a revised estimate, put at no less than forty millions.

Another Jubilee reform has come home to everyone. Up to June 1897 a penny stamp carried 1oz. of letter matter; for 1½d. one could send 2oz.; and for 2d. 4oz. Since the Queen's Jubilee 1d. has franked 4oz. This change cannot be said to have been forced on the Post Office. Most persons were content with the weight permissible in a penny letter; and those ever vigilant champions of the corresponding public, the Chambers of Commerce, had not ventured to ask for more. Moreover, at first sight, the change may have seemed a rash one—quadrupling the possible contents of a penny letter might quite dislocate the relations of payment to services performed. The Duke, however, saw good reasons for the change. Before the Jubilee there were no fewer than three scales for postal matter running side by side. The letter scale after 4oz. ascended uniformly by ½d. for every 2oz. The scale for book-packets was ½d. for 2oz. from the commencement. The scale for samples or patterns was the same as that for book packets, but commenced at 1d. for 4oz. and stopped at 2d. for 8oz. Consequently the difference between the letter post and book post after 2oz. was only a penny at every stage, while the sample post was the same, within limits, as the book post, but was, on account of its variance from the letter post, hedged round with many troublesome conditions. The increase of the penny letter to 4oz. removed all these fine distinctions. The sample post was absorbed in the letter post, since its rates became the same; any sample can now be sent as a letter without liability to examination in the post, and consequently with all such precautions as the sender cares to devise. Book post rates and letter rates also became the same, except at the initial stage of a halfpenny for 2oz. Thus the book post has also ceased to exist except as a halfpenny post. To the public the convenience of this simplification is great, and is more appreciated every year. To be able to add to a letter some relevant paper without increasing postage or resorting to a separate halfpenny cover, and to be relieved from the use of wrappers as distinguished from envelopes, are advantages which seem unimportant in themselves, but which unquestionably make civilized life more easy. That the changes were justified from the point of view of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is shown by the fact that the gross revenue of the Post Office has steadily increased year by year, despite all rural posts and heavy letters.

There are now, apart from newspapers, three inland posts—the halfpenny post for book packets, the letter post, and the parcel post. It was amongst the Jubilee reforms to cheapen the carriage of parcels. The initial charge of 3d. for a pound parcel was not touched, but the scale, which formerly rose by three halfpence per pound, was abolished in favour of one rising by a penny per pound; and in order to close the scale at 1s., whereas 11d. is the charge for 9lb., 1s. only is charged for 11lb. The result of this change has been greatly to increase the use of the parcel post, and especially for heavier parcels. In the financial year 1898-99 the Post Office carried nearly 72 millions of parcels, whereas in the year ended March 31 1897, only 63,715,000 were delivered. The public have reason to thank Mr. Fawcett, the author of the parcel post, for an institution which is not only in itself of great service, but has indefinitely improved the means of sending parcels by private agencies.

The Jubilee reforms were not limited to the remunerative side of the Post Office; they extended also to the telegraphs. It was a special feature of these reforms that rural districts were to be benefited; and no boon could have been more readily and fully appreciated than the abolition of porterage charges on telegrams up to a distance of three miles, and their reduction beyond that distance. Many a country house used to smart under the tax of a shilling for a telegram, perhaps announcing that the sender had missed his train, and arriving a few minutes in advance of the belated guest. Still more serious was the demand of 4s. for a telegram delivered by a mounted messenger a short distance outside the three-mile limit. Now porterage has in most cases ceased to exist, and telegrams may be sent to remote places without fear of entailing disastrous expense on the recipient. Even when some charge is still made, it is at the moderate rate of 3d. a mile.

Side by side with this cheapening of delivery came the multiplication of rural telegraph offices. It is obvious that, in dealing with such capital outlay and continuous expense as are involved in the construction and working of telegraphs, some rule must be adopted with reference to extensions. Before the Jubilee the Postmaster-General required from a rural district, which asked for a telegraph office without showing any probability that the office would be self-supporting, a guarantee of the annual income necessary to recoup the capital outlay and to pay for the current expenses. If the telegrams actually sent from the new office supplied the necessary revenue, the guarantors lost nothing; otherwise they made up the deficiency. Since the Jubilee the Post Office has shared the risk with the guarantors; a guarantee of half only of the estimated necessary annual return has been asked for. At the same time parish councils and district councils have been enabled to give the

necessary guarantee and have shown themselves eager to exercise the power thus given them. The telegraph offices opened under guarantee increased by more than 50 per cent. in the year 1898-99, as compared with the last financial year before the Jubilee.

The introduction of Imperial penny postage was not a Jubilee reform. It was the result of a conference of representatives of the Imperial Government, India, and the colonies, which was held, under the auspices of the Duke of Norfolk, in London during the summer of 1898. It must be remembered that the colonies have been by no means unanimously in favour of the reduction. In Australia, in particular, where the inland rate is mostly more than a penny, there are obvious difficulties in accepting a penny Imperial rate. In the result, however, the duke was able to persuade India, Canada, and all the more important parts of the Empire, except the Australian group and New Zealand, to accept the proposal.

In reviewing the official career of the Duke of Norfolk it would be out of place to discuss the vexed question of the Post Office administration of the telephone. The arrangement by which the trunk telephone work of the country was assumed by the Post Office, and the National Telephone Company was confined to the development of exchange business, though taking effect in the duke's time, was made by his predecessor. It is, however, to be noticed that under the duke's supervision the public telephone service has made rapid strides. In the year 1897-98 nearly six million conversations took place over the trunk lines of the Post Office, and in the following year the number exceeded seven millions. The gross revenue in the latter year amounted to £167,505, giving an average charge for conversation of 5·68d. It is interesting to compare the corresponding figures for written telegrams. Over 72 million telegrams were sent in 1898-99, yielding £2,216,681, or an average charge of 7·38d. per telegram. The mileage of telephone wire with which the Post Office started business in 1896 considerably exceeded the mileage of wire taken over from the telegraph companies in 1870.

The Postmaster-General controls a staff of about 160,000 men and women, a staff which increased by some 20,000 while the Duke of Norfolk was in office. It is a testimony to the duke's judgment, tact, and kindliness of feeling that he was personally popular throughout this large body of *employés*. At the time of his accession to office the committee of inquiry into Post Office wages, over which Lord Tweedmouth presided, was sitting. This committee, which reported in December, 1896, made many recommendations for the modification of the conditions of both indoor and outdoor work in the Post Office, recommendations which involved a large immediate annual outlay, and an ultimate expenditure of nearly £308,000 a year. Although the Postmaster-General and the Government accepted these recommendations, dissatisfaction still prevailed in some quarters, and eventually the Duke of Norfolk and Mr. Hanbury met in conference certain members of Parliament, who advocated the case of the *employés*, and discussed at length the several grievances alleged. In the result further concessions were made involving an additional cost to the public of £80,000. Having thus taken means to probe every grievance, and having adopted such measures as seemed justified, the duke adopted the wise course of refusing to reopen his decisions. This firmness, as well as the openness of mind displayed in the previous inquiries, appears to have been appreciated; and good order prevailed in the service during the duke's *régime*. The knowledge that he had done his utmost to arrive at sound conclusions, and that he was prepared at all times to give the most careful consideration to all questions affecting the *personnel* of his staff, even though they concerned the humblest rural postman, endeared the duke to those who served him, and the conspicuous example of gallant and self-forgetful patriotism which he has now set will keep his memory green amongst the large postal army of the United Kingdom.

After to-day the halfpenny vermilion postage-stamps of the United Kingdom will cease to be issued from St. Martin's-le-Grand. According to the circular recently sent out to the postmasters throughout the country, the new green "Queen's head" should be on sale this morning at offices where the old stock is exhausted, but the red sort is to be issued until the whole supply on hand is used up. This is not the first occasion on which the British halfpenny stamp has been printed in green, that being the colour in use in 1880. The return to that hue is the result of a resolution of the Postal Union, that all stamps which pay a halfpenny—or its equivalent in the postage charges of the nations—should be coloured green. It is not every official in the London, Paris, or Berlin Post Offices who can determine the amount which has been paid for transmission by the printed figure or word on foreign stamps, and so the Union determined that the colour, which is the same for all nationalities, should be the sign of the value of the stamp. 1.4.00

28.4.1900 **SUPPLY.**

CIVIL SERVICE ESTIMATES.

The House then went into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. W. Lowther (Cumberland, Penrith) in the chair.

On the vote to complete the sum of £8,843,605 for the Post Office,

SIR H. FOWLER (Wolverhampton) said that he wished to bring forward a question which he had tried to bring forward during the last three Sessions. His point was that, in view of the administration and expenditure of this large sum of money, the representation of the Post Office in the House of Commons was unsatisfactory—he might almost go to the length of saying unconstitutional. (Opposition cheers.) He must at once disclaim any personal consideration in the matter; he wished to make the question a purely impersonal one. Since 1866, when the Postmaster-General was empowered to sit in the House of Commons, there had been 11 Postmasters-General, of whom nine had been members of the House of Commons and two members of the House of Lords. Of the nine members of the House of Commons, four had been members of the Cabinet, and it was a fact that for a long succession of years Cabinet rank was attached to the office of Postmaster-General. In the two cases in which the Postmaster-General had not been a member of that House, it had devolved upon the Secretary of the Treasury to represent him there. He might say at once, to prevent any misconception, that this was not a necessary consequence. He remembered distinctly that in 1886 it was an open question as to the representation of the Post Office in the House of Commons, and that duty was not imposed upon him except with his full consent, and at the request of the then Postmaster-General, Lord Wolverton. Of course this was a purely academical question. Since the Postmaster-General had been eligible for a seat in the House of Commons, only two Postmasters-General had not sat in that House, and those two had been represented by the Secretary of the Treasury. He objected to the Secretary of the Treasury representing the Post Office in that House because the result was an endeavour to discharge the duties of two incompatible offices. (Opposition cheers.) The Secretary of the Treasury, as representing the Treasury, was, in Mr. Gladstone's phrase, "one of the guardians of the public purse." The Postmaster-General, on the other hand, was the head of a great administrative department. He raised a revenue, which, this year, could not, he thought, be much short of £17,000,000; he spent nearly £13,000,000, and he had a staff of 160,000 *employes* under his control. His department affected all classes of the community. It was not a mere revenue department for extracting so much money from the taxpayer. It was not, and he would be sorry to see it put, on a level with the Inland Revenue, the Excise, or the Customs. The Post Office was a great administration affecting all classes of the community, and it was the duty of the Postmaster-General, subject to the control which the Treasury exercised with reference to public expenditure, to make his department as effective, as convenient to the public, and as generally advantageous as he possibly could. Then, the Post Office was a department which had special responsibilities to the House of Commons. He could not conceive of any department in which the House had not merely a greater right to interfere, but a greater capacity to interfere, than in reference to the carrying on of this huge commercial enterprise, full of details of universal importance, with which the House of Commons was pre-eminently qualified to deal. When the Postmaster-General had a seat in the House the control of the House was effective. (Opposition cheers.) How were other departments represented in the House? The five Secretaries of State were every one either in

the House or represented by an under-secretary, and some departments had more than one representative.

4.0 The advantage of that was that the House of Commons was brought into touch with the department. (Hear, hear.) There were times and occasions in the House of Commons when in dealing with votes and administrative questions a man was wanted who could deal with them at once on broad and public grounds. His right hon. friend the Secretary of the Treasury would ask, "Why cannot I do that?" Because he was unfamiliar with the working of the department, and must represent the Postmaster-General. As a rule answers to questions were submitted to heads of departments before they were given in the House. That was not the position in the Post Office.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston) said that when he undertook the representation of the Post Office in the House the first thing he laid down was that he would take no answer from a permanent official. Each answer was to be seen and approved by the Postmaster-General. He also reserved to himself a full discretion to alter those answers if he thought it necessary. 20.4.00.

SIR H. FOWLER said his right hon. friend declared that though he was not in the department he reserved to himself a discretion to alter answers to questions which he gave on behalf of the department. (Cheers.) Nothing could better illustrate his contention. But he would give his right hon. friend another reason, and that was that he was physically incapable of discharging the two offices. He was the hardest worked officer in the House, and if he did his duty to the Treasury it was absolutely impossible for him to do his duty to the Post Office. A statement had appeared in a Government organ, which he supposed was inspired, to the effect that the position of the Secretary of the Treasury was due to the fact that his was a controlling department. He had already indicated his doubts as to the justification of that control, but surely a strong Postmaster-General would not allow the Secretary of the Treasury to control him. (Cheers.) He admitted that there should be control over expenditure, but the Treasury had nothing to do with administration, and he warned the House not to allow the Treasury to get in the thin end of the wedge of administrative control. (Hear, hear.) The administrative control of every department was in the hands of its responsible head, subject to the review of the Prime Minister, and the ultimate control of the Cabinet. He submitted that the Postmaster-General ought, in the public interest, to be put on the same footing as the heads of other departments. He was not a child to be led by the Treasury in the administration of his great department and in deciding upon the numerous applications that were made to him for reforms, innovations, and concessions. (Hear, hear.) He did not undervalue what had been done by the late Postmaster-General and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to promote Post Office efficiency, but he did not think his right hon. friend would maintain that the Post Office was in line with public demands or that it displayed that progress which was to be found in the administration of a great railway company. (Hear, hear.) There was an economy which was most extravagant and an expenditure which was most economical. What was wanted in the administration of the Post Office was more expedition, less delay, and, where possible, less charge, and the House of Commons was the ultimate tribunal by which such questions ought to be settled. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. HANBURY.—Less charge in what respect?

SIR H. FOWLER said that an enormous amount of taxation was levied on the public through the instrumentality of the Post Office. Sir Robert Peel maintained that the Post Office was not a revenue-producing department, though it ought to be a paying department, and a Postmaster-General of recent years had proposed that a fixed sum of £3,000,000 should be taken as the amount of the revenue to be derived from the department, all sums beyond that amount being spent in improving postal facilities. He contended that where a letter on which he had to place a penny stamp was carried for three farthings he was taxed to the extent of a farthing. Details of this kind ought to be brought before the House and the House should determine where concessions should be made. His point was that at the present time the House of Commons had not the control over this great department that it ought to have. He had carefully guarded himself against any personal allusion to the present head of that department. He wished to say nothing against him, nor against his appointment. He wished to say nothing against Lord Londonderry, or against the Secretary of the Treasury. What he did say was that they were entitled to have a responsible head of that department in that House, or a Minister responsible to him to represent him in that House. There was a growing feeling of dissatisfaction, in Chambers of Commerce and elsewhere, with the present working of the Post Office, and he thought there could be no better cure for that dissatisfaction, whether it was real or imaginary, than the control of the House of Commons. He had no intention of making a hostile motion, because this was not a party question. (Hear, hear.) He only wished to invite the attention of the House and of the Government to the present state of affairs with reference to the representation of the Post Office.

Mr. HANBURY said as the right hon. gentleman had for six months occupied the position of Secretary of the Treasury, and had represented the Post Office in that House, he was somewhat surprised to hear him argue so strongly against the principle. The right hon. gentleman's short experience had led him rather to underestimate the responsibility and the knowledge of the Treasury with regard to Post Office matters. Everybody would agree that the Post Office ought to be adequately represented in that House, that it ought to be represented by somebody who could speak with full responsibility, and he was astonished when the right hon. gentleman told them that in 1886 there actually was a division of opinion in the Government of that day as to whether the Post Office, if it had to be represented in that House at all by any one not directly connected with that department, should be represented by the Secretary of the Treasury, or by the representative of some other department.

SIR H. FOWLER said his right hon. friend had misunderstood him. There was not a division of opinion in the Government. He said that after the Government was formed it was felt that the duty of representing the Post Office should not be imposed upon the Secretary of the Treasury, except with his distinct and separate consent.

Mr. HANBURY said he agreed that the Secretary of the Treasury ought not to be called upon as a matter of necessity to undertake that duty, but there was nobody else in that House who could properly undertake that duty, unless it was some one connected with the Treasury. It would be ridiculous to have the Inland Revenue represented by the War Office, or the Customs by the Admiralty, or the Post Office by the Board of Agriculture. That would be unconstitutional; but when the right hon. gentleman talked as if it was unconstitutional that the Post Office should be represented by the Treasury he was at issue with him. The Treasury always represented two out of the three Revenue Departments, and the responsibility and the knowledge of the Treasury with regard to the Inland Revenue and Customs were no greater, he maintained, than their responsibility with regard to the Post Office. The right hon. gentleman had tried to draw a distinction between the Post Office as a revenue department and the Customs and Inland Revenue. That was a distinction that was drawn for the first time. He had never yet heard any question raised as to the Post Office not being a revenue department. The right hon. gentleman said that this representation was not constitutional, but the law distinctly put all the revenue departments absolutely under the orders and control of her Majesty's Treasury. He, however, admitted that there ought to be a great distinction between the action of the Treasury with regard to the Inland Revenue and the Customs and their treatment of the Post Office. The greatest deference ought to be paid to a high officer of State like the Postmaster-General. But when the right hon. gentleman talked of the Treasury interfering with the administration of the Post Office he could not know what was the position of the Treasury, not only with regard to Post Office administration, but with regard to the administration of Inland Revenue and Customs also. The Treasury left to the heads of these departments full responsibility for the whole of their administration, and did not interfere with the patronage of the heads of those departments. In not interfering with those matters, he was not in any way putting himself in a false position as regarded the representation of those departments in that House. When he explained the position he took up with regard to questions in that House the right hon. gentleman at once said:—"There you have an instance of the Secretary of the Treasury attempting to control the Postmaster-General." It was nothing of the sort. It was utterly impossible for him to act in two wholly distinct capacities. (Opposition cheers.) They were not distinct. That was exactly what he had explained to the House, but hon. members opposite still asserted that they were distinct, and therefore maintained that the position was impossible. He took the opposite point of view. The Post Office had to consult the Treasury as to three-fourths of the questions connected with that department. In giving in that House answers to questions concerning finance or any departure of policy, on which the Treasury ought to be consulted, he had to see that he was not doing something which would place him in a false position as Secretary of the Treasury. (Opposition laughter.) He was surprised to hear the right hon. gentleman say that there was a certain antagonism between the interests of the Treasury and the interests of the Post Office. He implied that it was the interest of the Post Office to spend and the interest of the Treasury to prevent the Post Office from spending. That was not a very wise proposition. The control of the Treasury over the Post Office as regarded finance was in fact less when the Post Office was represented in that House by the Secretary of the Treasury than when it was represented by the Postmaster-General, because the pressure on the Treasury was much more direct. Another thing was that both the Post Office and the Treasury gained, because the Treasury had a great deal more knowledge of the working of the Post Office than it could possibly have in the ordinary course of events.

4.30 During the last five years the Post Office had been represented in that House by the Treasury, and he ventured to say that never before had so many concessions been made by the Treasury to the Post Office as during that time, owing largely to the Treasury having more intimate knowledge of the work of the Post Office. In the first year the Government were in office a committee recommended large additions to the pay of the staff. The Treasury accepted the whole of the recommendations without demur and sanctioned an extra expenditure in pay of £350,000 a year. It was said that the case of some of the servants of the Post Office had been overlooked. The Duke of Norfolk and himself inquired into their case; the expenditure of £90,000 a year more was sanctioned, and, in all, more than £500,000 a year was obtained for the Post Office. Then there was the Budget concession of cheaper post-

age. The right hon. gentleman said the Post Office ought to reduce its charges. The penny postage realized an enormous revenue and trought in a profit, but every other part of Post Office work was carried on at a loss. We had not only cheaper postage, but the extension of the free delivery of telegrams in the country districts. Then Imperial penny postage had been established. So far as London was concerned they had taken charge of a new department of the Post Office—the telephone service. He hoped that, by the end of the year, they would have the telephone service extended all over the metropolis. So far, therefore, from the Treasury acting as a drag on the Post Office, he had done his best to spur it on and would like to see it work more vigorously. In 1866, when a Bill was introduced to enable the Postmaster-General to sit in the House of Commons, no less an authority than the late Mr. Gladstone said the Post Office was a Revenue department, and he did not see why it should not be used as a means of earning revenue for the benefit of the taxpayers of the country. When the Postmaster-General was in the House of Lords, could the Treasury fully represent him here? He contended that the Treasury was entitled to represent the Post Office as fully and efficiently as it represented the Inland Revenue or the Customs. By 56 Geo. III., c. 98, the Treasury was empowered to represent the Post Office. What had been the history of Post Office representation? Up to 1866 the Postmaster-General invariably sat in the House of Lords and was represented in the House of Commons by the Secretary of the Treasury. That was a strong historical precedent. No complaint of the Postmaster-General sitting in the House of Lords and being represented in the Commons was ever made. In 1866 a Bill was passed enabling the Postmaster-General to sit in the House of Commons. It was introduced by a private member and accepted by the Government, not because of any complaint of the existing system, but simply because it was not thought right that the choice of the Crown with regard to the Postmaster-General should be limited to one House of Parliament. The late Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Childers, and Mr. Ward Hunt supported the representation of the Postmaster-General in the House of Commons by the Secretary of the Treasury. In dealing with a business department, they could have no higher authority than the late Mr. W. H. Smith, and he distinctly said that the arrangement by which the Post Office should be represented by the Treasury ought to be a permanent one. The reasons given by Mr. W. H. Smith for this were, amongst others, the great amount of work entailed in administering such an enormous department, which had a staff of 160,000 men, and the necessity of being able to grapple with difficulties as they arose. In other revenue departments, where there was nothing like so large a staff, they had boards, but in the Post Office they had nothing of the kind. As soon as the head of the department had learnt his work he left. If a Postmaster-General remained in office for four or five years it might be assumed that he would take up the first two or three years in learning his business. And why was it that Mr. W. H. Smith suggested that there should be a more permanent arrangement? It was that owing to the enormous responsibility far too much of the work of the Post Office fell into the hands of even the subordinate permanent officials. (Hear, hear.) That was a state of things which ought not to exist. If the Postmaster-General was to control his department he would have little time for the arduous work of the House of Commons. The right hon. gentleman suggested a compromise. He said, "At any rate let us have a direct representative of the Post Office in both Houses," and he suggested a sort of Under-Secretary to the Postmaster-General. The result would be that they would create an entirely new office; they would have the Postmaster-General in that House and a sub-Postmaster-General in the House of Lords with no work to do. (Ironical cheers.) He contended that was a reason for having the Postmaster-General in the House of Lords. (Laughter.) At the Treasury they did not pretend to go into all details: they did not pretend to do that with regard to the details of this or any other department. It would be wrong to tie the hands of those who were the legitimate administrators of the department, but he confessed the amount of knowledge acquired by any one who did the work at the Treasury was very considerable. He instanced his own duties; the number of documents from the Post Office which passed through his hands and the number of questions which he had to answer in Parliament necessarily gave him a great deal of information indeed. He had to examine the questions put to him from all points of view, and this widened his horizon considerably, and he might venture to say that he probably knew as much of the working of the Post Office as the Postmaster-General himself. He hoped he had made it clear that, whether the arrangement was bad or good, there was nothing unconstitutional in the course they had taken. He admitted fully that the work might have been better done by a direct representative than by himself ("No"), but that was not the fault of the system. What he said was that the system of representation as far as the Treasury was concerned was absolutely complete.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) believed that if the First Lord of the Treasury would permit this to be a non-party question the view held by himself and others would be carried by an enormous majority. (Hear, hear.)

5.0 The view of the entire House was when the last vacancy occurred that the Secretary of the Treasury should be appointed Postmaster-General. (Cheers.) During the five years of the present Administration only two questions had been addressed to the Postmaster-General in the House of Lords; while thousands of questions had been asked about Post Office matters in the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.) To make some one who had never been inside the Post Office the representative of the Post Office in the House of Commons was too ridiculous. To test this question, he moved to reduce the vote by £100 in respect of the salary of the Postmaster-General. He hoped that the First Lord of the Treasury would not make it a party question. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. BURNS (Battersea) said that the Secretary of the Treasury had now to assume responsibility for work which could only be dealt with properly by a Cabinet Minister. The right hon. gentleman's energies were divided between being the watch-dog of the Treasury and Lord Londonderry's footman. (Cries of "Oh!" and laughter.) The right hon. gentleman attributed any faults to his own defects; but modesty was only made for those who had no beauty (laughter); and the right hon. gentleman had too many good points as an administrator for the House to believe that he and not the system was to blame. If the Postmaster-General, with his personal influence and full information, were accessible to members, many of the questions which appeared on the paper would never be asked. He himself would like to see the Postmaster-General in the House of Commons, with a small committee of the House permanently sitting to deal with Post Office business. He confessed that he did not like the present system of asking questions across the floor of the House. He preferred to get a Minister in the tea room or lobby and ask him whether such and such a thing, which seemed reasonable, could be done. If it could not, and the Minister gave him the reasons, he was content. He would venture to make a suggestion to the First Lord of the Treasury in the interests of discipline, of good administration, of the public convenience, and of cheaper and better postage. If the right hon. gentleman would not have a Minister sitting in the House of Commons, let him appoint an Under-Secretary for the Post Office to relieve the Secretary of the Treasury of much of the drudgery he now cheerfully performed, but which he could never do so efficiently as it ought to be done in the interests of a great department. He hoped the First Lord would find it possible to comply with the spirit, if not the letter, of the request of the right hon. gentleman the member for Wolverhampton.

Mr. JAMES LOWTHER could not agree with the *dictum* of the right hon. gentleman the member for Wolverhampton that the Postmaster-General ought always to have a seat in that House so that he might be prepared personally to defend his acts and to answer criticisms upon his administration. The right hon. gentleman might have equally said that his former colleague, Lord Spencer, was unfit to preside over the Navy because he could not be called to account across the floor of that House. He might go through a number of the right hon. gentleman's colleagues, and point out that the Government to which he belonged was an absolutely inefficient body on the very grounds he had submitted to the House that evening. In his opinion, each House ought to have an efficient representative, who should be responsible, either in his own person or as representing his chief who sat in another place, for each department. That was, he thought, the old constitutional doctrine. The hon. member for Battersea threw out the suggestion that a new official should be created, who should be charged with the duty of representing the Postmaster-General in that House. He ventured to take great exception to that proposal. A considerable number of members sitting on the Treasury bench had no representative duties assigned to them at all, and one of them might be taken out of the lobby (laughter), conducted to the floor of the House, and employed for the purpose of defending the action of his colleague in another place. That, he thought, would be far more constitutional than to create Ministers, who were sitting upon each other's lap, to represent a department which was fully manned by one person. Could any one say that there was work for two or three people representing the same department in that House? It was perfectly notorious that there was not. (Hear, hear.) Was there work for a number of Junior Lords of the Treasury? They were glad to welcome them as friends as they went in and out of the House (laughter), but he would far sooner see them brought on to the front bench and placed in charge of responsible official duties. This would be a far more constitutional position than that in which they were now engaged.

5.30 He thought the representative of the Post Office in the House of Commons should be one of those numerous Government officials called Junior Lords of the Treasury, who had no work to do, so far as the House of Commons was concerned, rather than the overburdened Secretary of the Treasury. The late Mr. Raikes once said to him, "I am supposed to be her Majesty's Postmaster-General, but I find I am practically a subordinate Treasury clerk." That ought not to be. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. BALFOUR.—My right hon. friend has just made an original suggestion, which I think he has borrowed from no source independent of himself, but which I think is not likely to meet with favour from any side of the House. Whatever may be said against the present system, or in favour of a new Under-Secretary for the Post Office, or for the Postmaster-General having a seat in the House of Commons, nothing can be said for the plan which my right hon. friend suggests and which has never been heard of before. It is that a Lord of the Treasury, who has no direct connexion with the Post Office, who is not brought, like my right hon. friend the Financial Secretary, into contact with Post Office business, is to act in this House as a conduit pipe, and merely as a conduit pipe, to the Postmaster-General, who is responsible for the office. Such a

system would not secure to the House that immediate and direct contact they desire with the head of the department, nor would it even bring them into direct contact with a subordinate official who, though a subordinate, is brought into administrative relation with the multifarious details of that heavily burdened office. (Hear, hear.) A controversy has arisen as to whether the Post Office is or is not a revenue department. Unquestionably it is legally and technically a revenue department. It is so defined in our Estimates and by statute. But it is quite true that there is a difference between the Post Office and the Inland Revenue and Customs Departments. These departments have one function and one function only; and that is to collect the taxes which this House imposes. The Post Office, indeed, collects a great revenue for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but its fundamental and primary duty undoubtedly is to carry out great public services irrespective of revenue. (Hear, hear.) Therefore the position of the Post Office is a unique position, and we are only confusing ourselves in this discussion by saying it is on all fours with any of the other departments. It is more of a revenue department than the Admiralty, the Local Government Board, or the Board of Agriculture. But it is less of a revenue department than either the Inland Revenue or the Customs Department. It stands on special relations with the Treasury, and is subordinate to the Treasury; but it has great administrative functions to perform with which the Treasury is only indirectly connected. But when the right hon. gentleman who initiated this debate said that the Treasury ought not to have any control over the policy of the departments he laid down a principle which can hardly be said to be true of any spending department, and which certainly cannot be said to be true of the Post Office.

SIR H. FOWLER.—I said administration, not policy.

Mr. BALFOUR.—Surely policy is an important side of administration. Administration which does not touch policy is administration shorn of its most important functions and its most important prerogatives. But I say it is impossible for the Treasury to avoid some interference with the policy of any department which is called upon to spend large sums of money. The analogy of the Local Government Board which the right hon. gentleman quoted hardly holds good in this connexion, because the Local Government Board is not a spending department. The Treasury, of course, has to be consulted if the staff of the department is to be increased, but it does not interfere, and it is not called upon to interfere, with the policy of the Local Government Board. But in the case of a great spending department it is inevitable that the Chancellor of the Exchequer must have something to say on questions of policy, because the amount of money which is to be spent is a matter he has to consider and to advise his colleagues upon, and the amount of money which is to be spent must, of course, depend upon the policy, say, of the War Office or the Admiralty. Therefore, it is perfectly vain to cry out against a system that has its difficulties and its objections, which is only practical at all under the all-embracing superintendence of Prime Minister and Cabinet, but which you cannot get rid of unless you allow every department on its own account to plunge into a boundless sea of expenditure, which would undoubtedly land a country, even as wealthy as ours, on the shoals of insolvency. Therefore, it is impossible but that the Treasury must interfere with the spending departments, and so it must interfere with the Post Office. There is no way out of it. The Post Office is a great revenue department as well as a great administrative department, and from day to day it must come to the Treasury for sanction of details of expenditure with which questions of policy and questions of administration are intimately and inextricably bound up; and, therefore, there is in the case of the Post Office, more than in the case of any other department of the State, justification for asking the Secretary of the Treasury to answer for it in the House of Commons. I would point out that there is a distinct advantage in the Treasury thus answering for matters for which the Treasury is responsible. I have known cases in my official experience, and I am perfectly sure the right hon. gentleman opposite has known such cases also, in which the Minister in charge of a department has to defend a course of policy of that department which has been practically forced upon it by the Treasury, and yet it is not the Treasury who is called upon to defend it, but the Minister. That, of course, must always be the case; but it has obvious inconveniences, and these inconveniences are avoided if the Treasury, in the person of the Secretary of the Treasury, is in a position to answer for the department. What objection can there be to that statement?

Mr. MAC NEILL said that the Secretary of the Treasury's position as Secretary of the Treasury was totally inconsistent with his representation of the Postmaster-General. It was like a man being trustee and beneficiary at the same time. Surely the right hon. gentleman saw that.

Mr. BALFOUR.—No; I should require to be much more acute than I am to see that. I do not see it at all. (Laughter.) I can see no objection to the Treasury defending a policy for which they are in part responsible. There seems to be an impression on the part of some hon. gentlemen that there would be an advantage in having an Under-Secretary of the Post Office here. In my view an under-secretary has no advantages as compared with my right hon. friend for dealing with questions of policy connected with the Post Office. It is felt that there ought to be a Minister here capable of taking a lead which the House of Commons may give. But an under-secretary has no more authority to do that, indeed he has less authority to do that, than my right hon. friend has. An under-secretary is not and cannot be responsible for the policy of the department. There are certain branches of the work of the department which he may carry on efficiently; he may be thoroughly acquainted with the general work of the department; he may be able to give the House every information as to the grounds on which this or that line of action has been decided upon; but it is not in his power to announce, in consequence of House of Commons pressure, without consultation with his chief, that some new departure is to be adopted. Some speakers would like it to be laid down as the result of this vote that henceforth and for evermore the head of the Post Office should be a member of the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.) I altogether object to any such limitation upon the discretion of the Prime Minister in giving his advice to the Crown. What reason can be given for insisting that the Postmaster-General should be in this House which cannot with equal or even greater force be urged in favour, say, of the First Lord of the Admiralty being a member of the House of Commons? The First Lord of the Admiralty deals with an annual expenditure of something like £24,000,000, and his duties touch the interests of every member of the House and every member of the community. Would it be wise to lay down a rule that the First Lord of the Admiralty should always be a member of this House? He is a member of this House now with great advantage to the House, but in the last Government he was not a member of this House, and I think that the majority of First Lords of the Admiralty in Liberal Governments since the Reform Bill have been members of the other House. Let me here reply to an observation made by the hon. gentleman the member for Battersea. He explained his own personal practice with regard to questions, and I think that practice is a very excellent one. I wish it were more largely followed (hear, hear); but the hon. gentleman seems to think it impossible to get at any Minister or to have direct communication with any Minister, unless that Minister happens to be in the House of Commons. I assure him he need not feel any such limitation whatever. I am sure my noble friend the new occupant of the Postmaster-Generalship will be as ready as his predecessor, the Duke of Norfolk, was to answer any question which may be put to him and to explain to any member of this House the motives with regard to subjects which might otherwise come before the House in the form of question and answer. I think the House ought to pause before they attempt by a vote of this kind to limit the discretion of the Prime Minister of the day as to the recommendations he may make to the Sovereign in connexion with the allocation of great public offices. All such restrictions must be injurious, must, in the long run, tend to preventing the fittest men being put in the most appropriate places; and it is on that broad ground that I object to a limitation which, so far as I can judge, carries with it no special inconvenience in the case of the Post Office, which carries with it less inconvenience in the case of the Post Office than in the case of those offices which have not got so efficient a representative in this House as my right hon. friend the Secretary of the Treasury. I trust my hon. friend who moved the reduction will accept the wise advice given by the right hon. gentleman opposite and will not press his proposition to a division but be content with the interesting and instructive debate which has taken place.

Mr. MAC NEILL complained that under the present circumstances they had not the power of interrogating the Minister responsible for the Post Office or his acknowledged subordinate. The Secretary of the Treasury performed his duties most satisfactorily but they could never fix upon him ministerial responsibility.

6.0 Ever since 1866, with one exception, the Postmaster-General had sat in the House of Commons until the accession to office of Lord Salisbury, who never missed an opportunity of depreciating the House of Commons. He hoped that a division would be taken on this matter.

Mr. GIBSON BOWLES (King's Lynn) said he believed the appointment of Lord Londonderry was a very good one, but he would point out that this was no enviable post, for he could conceive nothing more disagreeable than to be a high functionary of State and to have no initiative of his own except that which the Treasury chose to allow him. His belief was that the noble lord now appointed, although well able to hold his own, would have a very rough time of it when he came to try falls with his right hon. friend the Secretary of the Treasury. (Laughter.) He did not think this question of Treasury control was so unimportant a matter as the First Lord of the Treasury thought it, for in some cases, as they had lately been informed, it had been too much for the Prime Minister himself. He had listened with great interest to the speech of the Secretary of the Treasury. Those who believed in and admired him when they heard that the Postmaster-General had been driven to South Africa (laughter), of course from patriotic motives, expected the right hon. gentleman to have the succession to the post, and among the speeches he had heard his right hon. friend deliver one of the least successful was that in which he defended his own supersession. (Laughter.) So far from his right hon. friend admitting responsibility to the Postmaster-General, he claimed that the Postmaster-General was responsible to him. The result of the two powers which his right hon. friend claimed on undertaking to answer for the Post Office in the House of Commons was that in the answers he had given the House had had, not the answers of the Postmaster-General at all, but the amended, improved, elongated, shortened, and entirely changed versions of his right hon. friend himself. (Laughter.) They had, in fact, been Treasury answers. His right hon. friend had said that by an Act of 1804 the Post Office was absolutely under the orders of the Treasury. The year 1804 was in the age of heavy postage, franks, and many abuses in the Post Office, a time when the Post Office in the modern sense had not come into existence, and when his right hon. friend quoted the Act of 1804 it must have occurred to him that the

time was pretty well ripe for putting an end to a system which included many inconveniences and some mischiefs. The Post Office was a subordinate department of the Treasury, as were the Customs and Inland Revenue Departments, but that being so, why have a Postmaster-General at all? Surely instead of being a conduit pipe for dictated answers coming presumably from the Postmaster-General the Secretary of the Treasury might give the answers himself. The Customs and Inland Revenue Departments were in an entirely different position, they were under commissioners, and were not headed by a high officer of State. If a deputy Postmaster-General would have no work in the other House, what work could the Postmaster-General have there? In 1877 the late Mr. W. H. Smith in a private letter suggested the abolition of the office of Postmaster-General, substituting a board of management. That might be reasonable, and then the Secretary of the Treasury could act as responsible head, but the present system was a pretence of having a high functionary of State from whom might be expected the initiation of reforms and policy, and yet this official was subject to the small tyrannies of Treasury clerks. Meantime he hoped the amendment would not be pressed to a division, and he would be saved the pain of voting against the Government. Yet he hoped the last word had not been said upon the matter, and that the Government would take into consideration the constitutional propriety of having in the House of Commons a really responsible representative of the Post Office. (Hear, hear.)

SIR J. B. MAPLE (Camberwell, Dulwich) could find no necessity for the presence of the Postmaster-General in the House while the Post Office was a subordinate department of the Treasury. Post Office management much needed reforming, and its business should be conducted like that of a great commercial concern, with capital account and yearly balance-sheets. The Post Office should be a department by itself and then should have a responsible representative in the House.

6.30 SIR H. FOWLER said that he was satisfied with the course of the discussion and with the result which it had achieved. He reminded the Committee, with reference to the views of the late Mr. W. H. Smith, that this right hon. gentleman had only been in office a short time, and that the letter was a private one to Sir Stafford Northcote. He did not know whether any Government had taken practical notice of that letter, but he believed that the idea of turning the Post Office into an Administrative Board practically independent of the House of Commons would be resisted to the utmost. He could conceive no proposition which would be more disastrous for the public service than an attempt to destroy the office of Postmaster-General and to create a reproduction of the Inland Revenue and Customs Board. He suggested that it would now be desirable to withdraw the amendment. He saw no reason why the House should censure Lord Londonderry. To do so would produce a false impression, because a snap division would be taken on the assumed question that this was the laying down of a principle as to whether or not the Postmaster-General should be a member of the House of Commons. His object had been to bring before the House the undesirableness of the present arrangement, and he did not think that it was the duty of the Committee at present to lay down any hard and fast line. Among the offices which ought to be filled by members of the House of Commons the tendency of public opinion clearly indicated that the office of Postmaster-General should be filled by a member of that House. There had been a distinct indication of Parliamentary opinion on this occasion, and he was satisfied with the debate.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON said he had moved the amendment in order to crystallize the discussion and to keep it within bounds.

The amendment was withdrawn.

SIR C. CAMERON (Glasgow, Bridgeton) said that he intended to move a reduction of the vote for the purpose of calling attention to the action of the Post Office, which appeared to him to be contrary to the legislative intentions of Parliament, as being grossly unfair to the municipalities of the country and at variance with the policy connected with the telephone system inaugurated last year. He showed that the object of Parliament had been to safeguard the powers of municipalities controlling the streets and roads as against private trading companies, while at the same time affording facilities for the Post Office. In 1897 the National Telephone Company applied to the Corporation of Glasgow for liberty to lay underground wires along the streets. The corporation had a great objection to allow outside bodies the right of breaking up streets, and it refused the application, although the telephone company offered a considerable sum of money in return for the privilege. In the same year the Post Office made an application for the same power. The city offered to grant the permission on condition that it was not made use of simply for the benefit of the National Telephone Company. In 1898 the Post Office served the corporation with a notice under the Telegraphs Act requiring it to grant the facilities. The corporation said it would do so on condition that the right was not made applicable to the purposes of any private company. The question was referred to the sheriff for decision, and the sheriff, at the beginning of 1899 declared in favour of the Post Office. An appeal was subsequently made to the Railway Commissioners, and the decision was confirmed. Up to this point the policy of the Post Office had been to coddle the National Telephone Company; it had sacrificed everything to the company, even its own offices. Since then the Post Office had taken up a more wholesome attitude. It wished to improve the telephone system by competition; but it was not, in accordance with that policy, for the Post Office to step in and take away a right in public streets which conferred on municipalities a certain advantage over their competitors. He moved the reduction of the salary of the Postmaster-General by £200, in order to mark his disapproval of the steps taken by the Post Office in sacrificing the rights of municipalities in regard to the control of their streets in the manner he had indicated.

Mr. JOHN WILSON (Govan), in seconding the amendment, said the municipality of Glasgow objected to the National Telephone Company or any private company coming in behind the Post Office and getting the benefit of the privileges that Parliament had conferred upon that department. In taking up that attitude the corporation, he contended, were acting in the interests of the community. He was informed that the likelihood was that the charge for telephonic communication to the citizens under the new system would not be much more than half what they had been paying to the National Telephone Company. Why should the citizens put their money into the pockets of the company when they could get a more excellent service from their own local authority?

Mr. URE (Linlithgowshire) also supported the claim of Glasgow in this matter, and stated that there was no community he knew of which had been worse served in regard to telephonic communication than Glasgow. There were ten times more complaints per head from Glasgow than from Birmingham, and seven times more than from any other commercial community in the country, and he denied that this was attributable to the overhead wire system and the absence of the double circuit. He asked whether it was really a 7.0 wise thing for the Government to support this company and damage the interests of a corporation which was a model to every corporation in the country in the management of municipal enterprises. The corporation of Glasgow had not the smallest objection to the Postmaster-General, for public purposes, opening up their streets, but they objected to giving him that power when it was avowedly sought for the benefit of the National Telephone Company. He hoped care would be taken that the powers placed in the Postmaster-General's hands were not abused for the purpose of giving an advantage to a private company.

SIR J. WOODHOUSE (Huddersfield) referred to the apprehension which prevailed on the introduction of the Telegraph Bill of 1892 that the National Telephone Company might be placed in a position in which no other licensee would be placed, and which would prevent any competition whatever. He said that in consequence of representations from the municipalities of the country a proviso was introduced into the Bill, which said that notwithstanding anything in the Telegraph Act of 1878 a licensee should not exercise any powers in the said enactments without the consent of the urban sanitary authority interested, and should be subject to any terms and conditions which the said local authority might attach to any such consent, and should comply with any regulations of such local authority from time to time in force in relation to telegraph lines. That was not a qualified, it was an absolute, veto on the part of the local authority to prevent the exercise of powers in derogation of their rights. He could not help feeling that in the case of Glasgow the Post Office had been doing indirectly what the House by this proviso intended should not be allowed to be done. Further cases might occur throughout the country unless the House expressed its strong repugnance to the action taken by the Post Office.

Mr. STUART WORTLEY (Sheffield, Hallam) thought the claim to refuse all powers to the only telephone organization in existence was an extreme claim. The inability to arrive at an arrangement reflected little credit on either corporation or company, and was injurious to the public interests, which, after all, were mainly the interests of subscribers.

Mr. COLVILLE said the citizens of Glasgow would consider themselves very hardly treated if the Government, after encouraging them to obtain a licence, should grant such special privileges to the National Telephone Company as would practically make it impossible for the corporation successfully to compete.

Mr. HAZELL (Leicester) said that, owing to the triangular duel between the London County Council, the National Telephone Company, and the ground landlords, notices had been distributed in certain areas of London that the service would shortly be discontinued.

Mr. PARKER SMITH (Lanark, Partick) thought there ought to be room in Glasgow both for the company and the municipality; but he hoped that if the municipality desired to try the experiment of running the telephones they might not be unduly restrained in that attempt.

Mr. HANBURY said the question of the telephone service in London which had been raised, although it concerned wayleaves, was, of course, an entirely different one to that which arose in Glasgow. As he understood it, what had happened in London was that, partly owing to the storms and partly to the decision of a certain landlord, the service of the National Telephone Company in certain parts of London necessarily became inadequate. The difficulty arose in connexion with the overhead wires. It was said that it ought to be possible to lay the wires underground, and complaint was made against the London County Council that they would not give permission for this. Under ordinary circumstances, perhaps, the London County Council would be carrying their control over the streets too far to refuse that concession to the public con-

venience, because there was no doubt whatever that a telephone service, whether it were that of the State or of the National Telephone Company, was a great public convenience, and the London County Council would have to take that into consideration. But it must also be remembered that the State itself was engaged in rapidly constructing a system of telephone services all over London, and it was clear that in the interests of the public there should be inter-communication between the two systems. If that could not be brought about then the difficulties of having he two systems working side by side, especially over so large and important an area as London, would be very considerable, and it was in the public interest that everything that was fair and reasonable should be done to enable, he would go further and say to require, the National Telephone Company to work in inter-communication with the Government telephone system. As he understood it, the London County Council were not acting at all unreasonably in the matter; they perfectly recognized that they ought to use their powers for the public benefit, that they ought not to deny the use of these underground wayleaves from any spirit of pique or opposition to the National Telephone Company, or from any high ideas as to their right of control over the streets, and that they ought to use their powers solely and entirely in the best interests of the public. They had the opportunity, if the National Telephone Company was reasonable, of giving that company every inducement to give, in conjunction with the State telephone service, as good a telephone service as existed in any capital in the world. If he were a member of the London County Council he should do exactly the same thing. As he understood it, what had really happened was this—he did not know this officially, but, after all, one could surmise pretty well how things were going—the London County Council, acting entirely in the public interest, said, "No doubt it is in the public interest that you should have underground communication, but it is also equally in the public interest that you should work in inter-communication with the Post Office telephone service, and therefore we will grant facilities in the interests of the public to you if you will recognize that you are not merely a private company, but that you have to establish your service for the general benefit of London." The position the London County Council took up, as far as he understood it, was that they would give the underground communications if the National Telephone Company would consider the public interest by giving inter-communication facilities between the two systems. With regard to Glasgow, the way in which the corporation of Glasgow had availed themselves of the facilities afforded by the Bill of last year had put them in the forefront of corporations, and they had, in his opinion, set a very good example to other municipalities. (Hear, hear.) It was very natural that the corporation should not wish the Post Office to give any undue facilities to a rival service. Although he had always tried to deal fairly with the National Telephone Company, still he thought undue facilities ought not to be given to any one private company. (Hear, hear.) When the National Telephone Company, long before there was any idea of competition, applied to the corporation of Glasgow to be allowed to establish a service the corporation had a perfect right to refuse that permission, but they gave the permission, and, of course, they had to bear the consequences, whatever they might be. The service was started, and an agreement was then entered into between the National Telephone Company and the Post Office by which the company, although they had got permission to work within the boundaries of the city of Glasgow, could not in any way interfere with the streets, and could not lay underground wires. Even although the circumstances had somewhat changed since then, an agreement made by the Post Office ought to be rigidly respected. He thought hon. members were under some misapprehension as to what it was the Post Office had actually done, and he thought the circular of the National Telephone Company, if he rightly understood it, appeared to imply that the Post Office had entered into an agreement with them by which the Post Office was bound to lay wires for them wherever they chose to go. If that was the statement in the circular then the National Telephone Company were entirely wrong; there was no foundation for that statement.

Mr. J. WILSON (Govan) read the circular issued on March 19 last by the National Telephone Company, in which it was stated that the Postmaster-General had entered into an express undertaking with the company to delegate certain powers for running wires underground to the company in any telephone area whenever requested by the company so to do.

7.30 Mr. HANBURY said the National Telephone Company ought to be very careful how it used the name of the Postmaster-General or the Post Office in connexion with a statement of that kind. Undoubtedly it was a most misleading circular, and no doubt it had misled the members for Glasgow. The agreement between the National Telephone Company and the Post Office did not carry out what that circular said. Under that agreement the Post Office were required to lay down wires between exchange and exchange, and nowhere else, and if the agreement, and nothing beyond the agreement, was carried out it would not prejudicially affect the undertaking of the Glasgow Corporation. The corporation would have ground for complaint if the Post Office went beyond the agreement and laid wires between the exchanges and the private supply, but, as he understood, that had not been done, and he did not think there was any likelihood of its being done. That agreement was made long before there was any competition impending, and he was sure that everybody, though they might regret that that agreement had been come to, would agree that that agreement must be faithfully carried out and that it did not operate to the disadvantage of the Corporation of Glasgow.

Mr. T. SHAW (Hawick Burghs) said the House would be very grateful to the right hon. gentleman for the substance of his answer. He perfectly understood the position in which the department found themselves in view of certain Treasury minutes which, in their judgment, constituted an agreement which they must honourably fulfil.

Mr. HANBURY said there was a definite agreement drawn up between the National Telephone Company and the Post Office.

Mr. T. SHAW asked for the date of the agreement.

Mr. HANBURY said he believed the actual date of signing was 1895, but the original heads of agreement were drawn up in 1892.

Mr. T. SHAW said he entirely agreed that the circular made a claim which, upon investigation, could not really be sustained. The history of the Glasgow case was a most startling record of an agreement behind the back of a great corporation at the instance of the central Government. An application was made directly by the National Telephone Company to the Corporation of Glasgow for power to open the streets, and, after mature consideration, the corporation declined to grant that power, notwithstanding the fact that the company offered to pay about £2,000 a year for the privilege. The negotiations ended in January, 1897, and two months afterwards a communication was received from the Post Office to the effect that the Post Office desired to do the very thing, and nothing less, that the National Telephone Company had desired to do. The Corporation of Glasgow then discovered that the National Telephone Company, having been refused these rights as a private trader, had by this wholly wrong procedure got the Government of the day to compel the corporation to do that which they had declined to do. In addition to that, the Post Office was to have a royalty on the messages transmitted through that section, so that Glasgow was in the position of having the Government of the day drawing revenue through the National Telephone Company for the use of its streets, and Glasgow got nothing. That was nothing short of the farming by the Government of the streets of a municipality in the interests of private individuals. In spite of the reply of the Secretary of the Treasury, he hoped a division would be taken because it was time that Parliament should do what it could to assist in the conclusion of any existing agreement which would permit of an arrangement amounting almost to a scandal to be continued.

SIR J. FERGUSSON (Manchester, N.E.) thought that the hon. and learned member who had just spoken would not, in calmer moments, urge the Government to set aside the agreement of 1895. The National Telephone Company expected the Government to do nothing beyond the agreement of 1895, and what the Government proposed to do in Glasgow was to get the trunk wires and save the telegraph revenue.

Mr. BURNS denied that the National Telephone Company had been subjected to unreasonable restrictions by the London County Council. The conditions imposed were reasonable, and the Council would be neglecting their duty to those whom they represented if they granted way-leaves to the company without those conditions. It was the business of an Imperial department to give reasonable facilities to municipal corporations, and he was sure London and Glasgow would give those facilities to a public department without grudging. But when they were asked to confer on a private company like the National Telephone Company, with its history and present conduct of affairs, the same privileges and advantages they might reasonably give to the Post Office, he contended that the Corporation of Glasgow

individual members by Civil servants had become perfectly intolerable. Nothing would induce him personally to agree to such a course as that suggested. No necessity had been shown for it. These grievances had already been inquired into twice, with the result that salaries had been increased by £530,000 a year. The Tweedmouth Committee was thoroughly impartial; and at the time of its appointment no objection was taken to its constitution, except by the hon. member for Shoreditch. Subsequently, from a desire that no real grievance should be left, the Duke of Norfolk and he himself undertook a second inquiry, at which every member of the House of Commons had the right to attend to examine the witnesses. Those members who did take an interest in that committee had never made any objection to what was done by it. When another committee was asked for it should be remembered that these grievances were considered in Committee of the whole House year after year, and that Committee had again and again decided that there were no further grievances to be redressed. The grievances brought forward by the hon. member for Stepney were cases of injustice on the part of the Post Office officials. But such cases might occur in any year. Was a Select Committee of the House of Commons to sit permanently to inquire into such grievances? One of the main allegations made by the hon. member for Stepney was that the recommendations of the Tweedmouth Committee, in certain cases, were not being properly carried out. It was the intention both of the Post Office and of the Treasury to carry out those recommendations to their fullest extent, and if the hon. member was able to show him any case in which, to the fullest extent, they were not being carried out, he would promise that the grievances should be redressed and that the men should have the full benefit of the Tweedmouth Committee. The hon. member, in bringing forward the well-known case of the telegraphists, said that when they entered the service the men were promised that they should reach the maximum of £190 a year, but that, as a result of certain alterations, that promise was no longer carried out. What was held out to these men was that they could rise as telegraphists to a salary of £190 a year. But the senior class was just as limited then as it was now, and, unless these particular men had reached that

stage when they were senior enough to enter that class, they had no possibility of reaching the *maximum*. There had been no new limitations imposed on that class. Indeed it was easier to reach now than it was before the period of the Tweedmouth Committee, inasmuch as one of the barriers to promotion had been removed. As to the complaint that they were not receiving as rapid promotion now as they were a few years ago, he would point out that they were receiving what had always been the normal promotion in the Post Office. When the system of sixpenny telegrams was introduced the rate of promotion was abnormal, but the men could not, with any fairness, compare the normal rate of promotion with that which prevailed for two or three years after the introduction of the new system. The hon. member also drew a piteous picture of the postman with only 18s. a week, and said it was impossible to maintain a wife and family on such wages. (Opposition cheers.) He quite agreed; but then 18s. per week was paid to nobody in the service over 19 years of age, and as a rule a man of 19 had not had time to bring up a large family. (Laughter.) It should be remembered that the postman received, in addition to his weekly wages, many allowances and perquisites, besides sick leave, 14 days' holidays, gratuitous medical assistance, and a pension, so that really even 17s. per week in the postal service represented at least 22s. a week outside the service. It was quite true that it took 30 years' service for a man to obtain the full six stripes, as a stripe was given for each term of five years' good conduct service. He thought the hon. member had exposed a legitimate grievance when he pointed out that if a postman after four years of the term got a black mark his four years of service counted for nothing. He would therefore consult with the Postmaster-General to see whether the punishment could not be distributed a little more justly in such cases. (Hear, hear.) The hon. member had brought forward instances of alleged intimidation, but if the facts were as stated they were not so much cases of intimidation as cases of injustice. The individual cases the hon. member had cited were not of sufficient importance to require a committee, but they were of sufficient importance to bring before the postal authorities, and he would see that they were considered. The last subject the hon. member referred to was not one which could be brought before a committee—namely, the question of the right of combination. The view taken by the Post Office in regard to a combination of their workmen was that the combination should be one of workmen and not of people who were not workmen—that was to say, it should be a combination of people who were employed by the Post Office and employed in a particular branch of the office. If there were a grievance connected with the sorters it would never do that telegraphists and postmen should form part of the deputation which waited upon the Postmaster-General to represent the grievance.

Mr. STEADMAN said that the Post Office refused to see Mr. Cheeseman and Mr. Clery in respect to a sorters' grievance.

Mr. HANBURY said that that was a case of sorters who were interested in the split duties. That was a question no doubt on which there might be two opinions (hear, hear); personally he thought he would have listened to the men's representatives.

11.30 With regard to the question of discharge for sickness, he thought there had been some misapprehension with regard to the circular on this subject issued by the Post Office. All that it was intended to convey was that whereas no adequate check had been kept upon the failure to attend of certain men owing to sickness, a stricter watch would be kept upon them in future, and if it was found that the sick leave was so continuous as to show a chronic illness which would disqualify men permanently for the service then they would no doubt be called upon to retire, and, of course, that was reasonable. But the postal service need not for one moment fear that that circular was going to be used for any other purpose than that he had mentioned. The Treasury, whether it rightly or wrongly took too great an interest in the Post Office service, had at any rate to look after its pensions, and it certainly would be very unwilling to grant pensions to men except in cases where a pension was necessary; but the Treasury would look with great disfavour on that circular being used for the purpose of turning out of the Post Office service men who had on the ground of sickness really qualified for a pension, that was to say, it was not going to be used in any sense to turn men out of the service any more than they were turned out before. With regard to Sunday labour, of course there were certain necessities in the postal service that a certain amount of Sunday labour had to be performed, but he thought they ought to avoid that duty always falling on the same man. He agreed that men ought not to be employed continuously on Sunday work in the Post Office, and if they could have a sufficient number of men who undertook the work voluntarily, and of course they were well paid for it, they certainly ought not to force into Sunday work men who did not desire it. He thought he had dealt with all the cases which had been brought forward, and really they were very small cases, with the great majority of which he had promised to deal and to grant a remedy at once if the complaint was justified. In a service like this a single year could not go by without several cases of alleged injustice cropping up. He promised full inquiry into those cases. The other cases had been thoroughly gone into by Lord Tweedmouth's committee, by the Duke of Norfolk, and himself. These alleged grievances had been ventilated year after year, and, after considering the subject with the anxious desire to be perfectly fair, in his opinion the answer to the telegraphists with regard to the £190 *maximum* was complete, no case having been made out for so extraordinary and unconstitutional a remedy as a committee of the House of Commons. For this reason he was again obliged to refuse the demand.

Mr. MADDISON (Sheffield, Brightside) supported the demand for a committee as a safety valve for widespread discontent, which might otherwise lead to serious public inconvenience. 28.4.1900.

The Committee divided, when the numbers were:—

For the reduction	46
Against	66
Majority	—20

12.0 It being now 12 o'clock, progress was reported, and the House resumed.

OCEAN PENNY POSTAGE PAYS.

The Hon. Wm. Mulock, Postmaster-General of Canada, has written to Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., to express his satisfaction at the operation of the Ocean penny postage.

Owing to an increase of nearly 150 per cent. in the volume of mail, the revenue under the penny rate about equals the old revenue under the 2½d. rate. 25.5.00.

BOER STAMP BOOM.

Daily Mail 25.5.00

GREAT DEMAND FOR "V.R.I." FREE STATE SAMPLES.

There is a big boom in South African stamps. The war has enhanced their value and has enormously increased the demand for them.

Several dealers whom a "Daily Mail" representative consulted yesterday agreed that there had never been such a rush on South African issues. Mr. F. R. Ginn, of the Strand, said:—"The great demand just now is for Free State stamps, commandeered by Lord Roberts when he entered Bloemfontein, and converted with the letters 'V.R.I.' stamped upon them in black. They are rare at present, for the curious reason that most of them were lost in the Mexican.

"The soldiers in Bloemfontein bought them up as soon as they were issued, and were sending them to friends in England. There were all sorts, from halfpenny up to five-shilling stamps. I have sold one of the latter, unused, for £5. The 'Drie Pence Oranje Vrij Staat' converted into a 'V.R.I. 2½d.' fetches 7s. 6d. Possibly these stamps will soon be worth as many pounds.

"So far, no Mafeking stamps have got on to the market but they will fetch high prices when they come here. The V.R.I. Free Staters are in huge demand, and so will the converted Transvaalers be when Lord Roberts issues them.

"A complete set of Transvaal stamps would cost over £1,000, for a great variety has been issued. The Free State, on the other hand, has kept much in the same groove all along."

Some of the old Transvaal stamps, of the British régime of 1877-80, and of the First Republic now fetch from £20 to £50.

THE POST OFFICE AND NEWSPAPERS.—Mr. W. J. Batchelor writes from Brompton Regis Vicarage, Somerset:—"May I call attention in your columns to the great inconvenience caused to residents in country places by the irregular despatch of newspapers from the London Post Office? My newsagent in town posts *The Times* to me daily. The paper of the 13th inst. was delivered on the 16th, that of the 14th on the 17th, that of the 16th on the 20th. Now that Easter is over we may expect our papers to be delivered normally—*i.e.*, the day after publication, but the irregularity of the past week has been very vexing. Folk who live in the country regard the daily paper brought by the post as of greater importance than Easter cards." 28.4.00.

POST OFFICE EXPRESS DELIVERY SERVICE.—A notice issued from the General Post Office says that on and after Monday, July 2, the charge of 1d. for every pound beyond the first pound, which is now made on all packets over 1lb. in weight conveyed by special messenger all the way, will be abolished, and only the express fee of 3d. a mile will be charged for the delivery of such packets. If, however, the packet or packets to be delivered exceed 20lb. in weight (or 15lb. if a public conveyance such as an omnibus, tramcar, or train, &c., be not available), the actual cost of a cab or other special conveyance must be paid in addition to the express fee. 27.6.00.

NEW POST OFFICE BUILDINGS AT MOUNT PLEASANT.

31.5.00.

The *City Press* says :—The removal of a large portion of the sorting business from the old offices in St. Martin's-le-Grand to new and more commodious buildings at Mount Pleasant will be an accomplished fact within the next few days. The enormous increase which has taken place in postal work at the central office has made the extension of urgent necessity. Just half the sorting business will be transferred, in order that the workers in the old office may have more elbow room. After the transfer has been effected, it will remain with the Comptroller, Mr. Badcock, C.B., to rearrange, as far as may be necessary, the interior accommodation of the central office, and there seems little doubt that the interior will be remodelled to a large extent to meet the exigences of the public service. The new offices at Mount Pleasant adjoin those of the parcel post, the staff of which have for several years past been accommodated on the site of the old Coldbath-fields prison. The cost of the new buildings will be about £113,000. The main floor has an undivided area of 57,000ft., being 360ft. long by 150ft. wide. The place is rendered additionally useful by the fact that the walls are lined with glazed brick, while arc lamps are placed at every point. A basement floor offers similar advantages. Above is a large floor devoted to the sorting and general handling of registered letters. In this connexion special arrangements have been made for the safety of the letters, while the responsibilities of those who deal with them are quite as well defined. Wire-work doors and patent locks are the characteristic features of this important branch of the public service. On this floor, also, is a space devoted to the sorting of the Irish, Scotch, Great Eastern, and South-Western mails. Letters and newspapers will be sorted together, and not separately, as has been the case in the past. The public are anxious to have a simultaneous delivery of both newspapers and letters, and there is no reason why a newspaper should not command the attention which is given to the ordinary letter or post-card. The new premises will accommodate some 1,500 workers of all grades, and for their convenience ample arrangements have been made for the provision of creature comforts. Some snug bed rooms for superintending officers are also to be found in the upper storeys, while lifts are provided from floor to roof.

THE SUBMARINE CABLE QUESTION.

30.5.00.

A paper on "Imperial Telegraphic Communication" was read by Sir Edward Sassoon, M.P., on Monday, before a meeting of the colonial section of the Society of Arts. Sir Henry H. Fowler, M.P., occupied the chair, and among those present were Sir W. H. Preece, Sir J. Wolfe-Barry, Sir George Birdwood, Sir G. Scott Robertson, Sir Charles Lawson, Major-General Sir Owen T. Burne Mr. C. E. Pitman (Director-General of Telegraphs, India), and Mr. E. Neel (secretary Public Works Department, India Office).

Sir Edward Sassoon remarked that, if regularity of intercourse and rapidity and security in the exchange of views and wants were the indispensable links in the chain of Imperial federation and Imperial unity, he might hope that he was justified in contending that of all the means calculated to advance these ends, as contributing elements, none approached the aid of the electric spark as assisting in the cementing of those scattered fragments of a nation destined by the imperious force of circumstances to be welded together as the grandest Imperial hegemony that the world had yet seen. Speaking of the origin of the cable system, which had done so much in bringing about the object mentioned, he said that, in view of the costliness of submarine cable lines as compared with land wires, resort was had to Government assistance in the shape of subsidies and special facilities for landing rights. This aid was granted to English companies with no stinted hand, not only by our own Government, but also by the Governments of foreign States. It did not, however, appear to have been foreseen by the department specially concerned in granting the landing concessions material assistance that a demand would inevitably arise for gradually cheapened tariffs. A reduction of all necessary charges incident to modern development of commercial methods had become a vital necessity, and cable charges entered very largely into the laying-down costs of commodities. Where transactions of magnitude were concerned this might be a negligible quantity, but the bulk of business with Oriental countries, and with undeveloped countries especially, partook of the character where the commission receivable did not exceed £5 or £10, so that whether a message, say, of five words relating to such business cost £1 or 10s. became a factor of considerable importance. As regarded the social as apart from the commercial side of the question, the cost of a telegram to India or the Far East might be looked on as prohibitory in almost every case. Hence arose the grievance which the community felt that it suffered under the very unbridled control of the telegraph companies. The impending realization of the Pacific cable scheme had shown those companies that the time for trifling had passed, and they now proposed to lay the Cape to Australia cable, abandoning all claim to the subventions which they previously asked for doing that work, and even going a step further in offering to reduce the rates which they had been charging to Australia. In the case of two of the colonies with which they had come to suitable terms—South and Western Australia—the rate had already been lowered, and at present a message from London to Australia cost 4s. per word, or exactly the same as was charged to Bombay, half the distance, although to reach its destination the message actually passed through Bombay. As showing the benefit derived by the companies themselves from a diminution of their tariff, he pointed out that in 1886 the rate was reduced from 10s. 8d. to 9s. 4d. per word from Australia to England, and the gross revenue of the Eastern Extension, &c., Company then stood at £441,799. In 1891, when the rate came down from 9s. 4d. to 4s. per word, the revenue stood at £508,536, but it was necessary in January, 1893, slightly to increase the figure from 4s. to 4s. 9d. During that year the revenue was £509,684 and in 1899, at the 4s. 9d. rate, the revenue went up to £603,611, an increase of nearly £250,000 over the year 1886, in which the first reduction was made. Thus the Pacific cable scheme had really been a blessing in disguise to those who dreaded it most, and also to those colonies who had proved but lukewarm and shortsighted supporters of it. For some reason the associated companies did not regard with favour the all-British route. That the ultimate possession of submarine cables by the State was only a question of time was his firm belief. As long ago as 1892 the authors of "Imperial Defence" emphasized their conviction as to the imperative necessity of our being connected by a series of purely British cables, with no shore ends on foreign territory, for purposes of the strategic defence of the Empire, and more especially in order to assure in time of war communication between its various portions. It seemed necessary that further stipulations than those enabling the State to assume ownership should be inserted in all future agreements with regard to cables—namely, some sort of scale of charges, based on probable or ascertained gross earnings, and moving on a sliding scale. No extension of any line, whether now existing or prospectively to be laid, should be permitted—except any temporary line to meet exceptional emergencies—that would conflict with, or diverge from, the all-British system. No amalgamation of any new concern by an existing one should be able to be brought about except with the full concurrence of the home Government, and no exclusive privileges or terms should be granted precluding the possibility of competition by other agencies. The most striking illustration of the disadvantages due to the neglect of such stipulations was found in the agreements which had been entered into by the Indian Government with the existing cable companies. It was apparent that there was something wrong in a state of affairs where we found the Indian Government apparently inert and enmeshed in agreements in consequence of which it could make no move to advance the interests of the Indian public by the reduction of rates, which were admitted to be of an exorbitant nature. Some negotiations were assumed to be in progress between the companies and the India Council, but the terms had not transpired. As a shareholder in the Eastern Telegraph Company, and as the spokesman of the Imperial Telegraphic Committee in the House of Commons, he submitted that no reduction of less than 75 per cent., on the Indian tariff at all events, could be regarded as satisfactory. It would probably be unfair to throw the burden of the whole probable temporary deficit on the Eastern Company, and, in his opinion, the Indian Government, as primarily concerned, and the Treasury should conjointly agree to guarantee one-third of any loss on the present revenue, with the proviso that, when the deficit to both parties was eventually recouped through the expansion of traffic, the companies should agree to a further reduction of 3d. per word, bringing the rate down to 9d. In conclusion he said that the cable companies, which had had a fairly long and prosperous innings, would do well to bow to the necessities of the situation and accept with a good grace such necessary reforms as the advance of invention and the increasing commercial rivalry of foreign nations showed could not be longer delayed without depriving our Empire of the unfettered and ample use of that beneficent agency to which she had every legitimate claim. (Cheers.)

The Chairman observed that this submarine cable question was a very difficult one. It had been allowed to grow up, and he felt that it could not be disturbed and settled without a great deal of inquiry and consideration so as to secure what was right and fair both to those who had risked their money in the concerns and to the wider public beyond who, he thought, would arrive at the ultimate conclusion that this was not a matter which should be left in private hands. With Great Britain this was far more than a commercial enterprise, however great our commercial interests might be. It had a social and personal character. We wanted to bring our colonial fellow-subjects into the closest possible communication with us from day to day. That could not be done unless the means of communication were facilitated to the utmost of our power and reduced to the lowest possible cost. (Cheers.) In a great colonial Empire like ours it was worth while paying money to attain such an object, not regarding it simply as a business to be carried on. The telegraph system of this country was not carried on at a profit, but at a loss. There was not a shilling of interest being earned on the £10,000,000 of capital which that enter-

prise represented, but what Government would dare to propose to the House of Commons and the people of this country any increase in the cost of telegraphic communication between different parts of the United Kingdom? (Hear, hear.) The people would say, "No, it is a national service; it is a national advantage, and it is worth while for the nation to pay for it." He thought that argument applied with equal force to our colonies, and not only to our colonies, but to India. He supposed that every intelligent subject of the Queen, either at home or abroad, must be proud of our great Indian Empire and prepared to make any sacrifice to secure the carrying out by this country of the great trust which had been committed to us in respect of India. On the lowest ground, on the highest ground, and on every ground that could be suggested, it was of supreme importance to the interests of this country that our communication with India in every way, whether by the transit of goods, the transit of passengers, or by the facilities and economy of telegraphic communication, should be in daily touch with the mother country. (Cheers.) There was one other point of view which we must not lose sight of—perhaps we had done so too much during the past 25 years, but he did not think that the people of this country would do so any longer—and that was, the military aspect of the question. A great Empire like ours, with colonies in every part of the globe, with our great possessions in Asia, Africa, America, and Australasia, ought to have a communication of its own, under the control of its own Government, independent of all private companies, independent of all foreign nations. To have that would be a powerful element in its equipment for the defence of the Empire against whatever might happen. He thought that Sir Edward Sassoon's able paper had shown that there were a great many questions connected with this topic on which further information was wanted. That being so, he ventured to say that there should be an independent inquiry—not an inquiry conducted by partisans on one side or the other—an impartial inquiry by competent men who should go into the past history of this case, into the present position of these enterprises, into the wisest and best course to be adopted for the future. Such an inquiry would be careful in regarding all fair and legitimate interests concerned, and at the same time would point out to Parliament and the nation at large whether there was any, and, if any, what change should be effected in so important and potent an instrument between the home Government and its Indian Empire and colonial Empire, and in which, he thought, there were at present a good many weak spots and, possibly, dangers against which we should guard. (Cheers.)

The discussion was continued by Sir Patrick Playfair, the Hon. George Peel, Sir John Leng, M.P., Sir M. M. Bhownaggree, M.P., Mr. Charles Bright, Mr. C. E. Pitman, and Mr. R. G. Gray.

A vote of thanks to Sir Edward Sassoon terminated the proceedings. 30.6.00.

LORD LONDONDERRY ON THE POST OFFICE.

9.6.00.

The Marquis of Londonderry, Postmaster-General, yesterday formally opened the new general post office at West Hartlepool, a handsome block of buildings erected at a cost of about £15,000.

In declaring the post-office open his LORDSHIP alluded to the great progress made by West Hartlepool of recent years. In 1845 it was known as the parish of Stranton, and contained some 300 inhabitants. The population now numbered about 60,000 persons. The rateable value had increased from £13,000 a quarter of a century ago to about £215,000, and the gross tonnage of the harbour now amounted to almost 600,000. At the beginning of the century the people of Hartlepool possessed no post-office, and had to send their letters to Stockton, a distance of 13 miles. West Hartlepool was raised to a head office in 1853. Letters delivered weekly had increased from 5,851 in 1855 to 71,825 in 1899, or over 1,100 per cent.; telegrams had since 1872 increased from 61,000 the year to 330,125, or 441 per cent., and parcels, since the establishment of the parcels post, from 16,000 to 73,252. He had been much influenced in accepting the office of Postmaster-General by the fact that it was one which was in touch with the material welfare and prosperity of the people of the United Kingdom. Trade, commerce, and personal convenience owed a considerable amount of their progress to the development of our postal service. The department was a thoroughly well-abused one, and was often blamed most unjustly, for the British public did not seem to realize the powerlessness of the Post Office, which ought to be regarded, not as a spending department, but as one paying revenue. For this reason the department was unable to spend money without the consent of the Treasury. He had also been much struck by the example set by the Duke of Norfolk, who had now so gallantly placed his services at the disposal of his country. He could not allude to his predecessor's action without saying a few words on the reforms that had been carried into law when he was Postmaster-General. His first achievement was to establish a genuine house-to-house delivery throughout the whole of the United Kingdom. Thanks to this reform no less than 40 million letters formerly left at post-offices to be called for now reached their destination. His next step was to do away with the difference between letter and book postage, except so far as the halfpenny book postage was concerned. Four ounces were now carried for a penny. The charges for parcels were also reduced by altering the scale of 1½d. a pound after the first pound to 1d. a pound. The charge for 11lb. was reduced to 1s. The porterage on telegrams was made free for the first three miles, after which only 3d. was charged per mile, instead of 1s., as had previously been the case. Rural telegraph offices were likewise multiplied; for, whilst formerly the whole of the estimated outlay had to be guaranteed, this had ceased to be necessary, as since then the Post Office had shared the risk with the guarantors. Beyond this it became possible to use private post-cards instead of being rigidly restricted to those officially issued. Since then our colonies had been knit still closer to the mother country by the partial establishment of the Imperial penny postage. It would be possible to deal at much greater length with the work of his predecessor, especially with the manner in which the grievances of the *employés* in the postal service had been met. Enough, however, had been said to give some idea of what a debt of gratitude was due to his predecessor the Duke of Norfolk. Of late, however, a new duty of a most responsible character had been cast upon the Post Office. Some idea of the extent to which the war had affected their sphere of action might be gathered from the fact that the mail despatched on May 19 to the Army in South Africa contained no fewer than 313,416 letters, representing a weight of 7,009lb., and 131,508 newspaper packets, representing a weight of 37,632lb. This correspondence filled 643 bags, which was not far short of the 677 bags required to contain the whole of the ordinary mail for South Africa sent on the same occasion. In comparison with the number of letters and parcels sent out to the troops the complaints of loss and delay had been very few, though, owing to the exigencies of the campaign, delays had been unavoidable. The Post Office had also borne its share in the work of fighting. No fewer than 2,000 Reservists had been called up, 424 time-expired Reservists and pensioners had re-enlisted in the Royal Reserve battalions, and 259 Post Office servants had gone to the front as Volunteers; so that if they included the 414 men in the Army Post Office and the 270 telegraphists and 50 linesmen attached to the Royal Engineers the department had sent to the front upwards of 3,400 men. For the postal and telegraph service of the Army a Post Office staff of 400 trained men had been sent out under the superintendence of the postmaster of one of the London districts, and 320 skilled telegraphists and constructors of telegraph lines had been sent out to help the Royal Engineers in the construction, repair, and working of the telegraphic communication of the Army. This showed a startling change since the days of the Crimean War, when the whole staff sent out to deal with the correspondence of the Army amounted to one postmaster, three assistant postmasters, and seven letter-sorters. On the whole this system had worked admirably. He was aware that many complaints had been made, but he believed that those who had made them scarcely realized the vast difficulties that had been overcome. He only trusted that as time went on the postal service would improve as much in the future as it had done in the past. He would do his best to achieve this result with the assistance of those permanent officials whose efficiency and zeal in the discharge of their duties it was impossible for him to overrate.

Subsequently Lord Londonderry was entertained at a public luncheon. 9.6.00.

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE—OLD AND NEW.

12.6.00.

At the beginning of next week the General Post Office will find new quarters. It will be moved from the handsome building in St. Martin's-le-Grand which it has occupied since the early years of this century to Mount Pleasant, otherwise and better known as Coldbath-fields. The removal is significant of the development of postal work. The business which is to be transferred was originally the only business of the Postmaster-General; yet the transfer will not affect the three large buildings in St. Martin's-le-Grand, which will be fully occupied for other purposes. The Post Office was created to convey letters from town to town. From London radiated the six great roads of the country—the Chester road, the Great North road, the Norwich road, the Kent road, the West road, and the road to Bath and Bristol; and it was the special work of the Post Office to secure regularity of correspondence along these roads. Off these trunk lines postal communications grew very slowly; "crop-posts" and "by-posts" were long regarded as quite a separate and insignificant branch of the service. Even to this day the skeleton of the old coach-road system obtrudes itself on the sorting-tables, though postal life really flows along the iron ways of the present day. As to the circulation of letters in the capital itself, so little was this regarded in the 17th century that private adventurers undertook a London post on their own account, and gravely argued that the carriage of letters in London was no function of the State Post Office; and when this attempt had been frustrated, the London post, sometimes a twopenny and sometimes a penny post, survived

as a separate institution down to the time of Rowland Hill. The General Post Office had, strictly, nothing to do with the London post; its function was to despatch letters from the capital to all parts of the country, to receive and distribute all country letters, and to act as intermediary between one part of the United Kingdom and another. Distances were measured from it and letters taxed accordingly.

It is just this branch of the postal service which is about to find new headquarters. There is in fact to be a new General Post Office. From the time of William of Orange till this century was born, the General Post Office had its home in Lombard-street. In a handsome mansion of the Stuart period, formerly the town house of a worthy alderman and Lord Mayor, the two Postmasters-General of William and Mary resided; and in the courtyard, paved with smooth flagstones, the City merchants paced to and fro while awaiting the arrival of the mails. The Lombard-street post-office still occupies part of the premises, but they have been altered beyond recognition. Gradually, despite all enlargements, and rearrangements, the Postmaster-General outgrew his house; and in the early years of the century the Government and the Corporation of London developed a large improvement scheme. At that time St. Martin's-le-Grand was the name, not of a broad street, but of a district of obscure courts and alleys which had grown up on the site of a religious house, once a famous sanctuary where rogues and vagabonds could safely defy the City sheriff. The Corporation conceived the design of abolishing this Alsatia, and connecting Aldersgate by a short thoroughfare with the point where the great Bath and Oxford road, terminating in Newgate-street, joins Cheapside and St. Paul's-churchyard. The Government agreed to co-operate, in order to obtain a spacious and central site for the General Post Office. In 1817 the necessary Improvement Act was passed; and some few years later the building known to all London was erected from designs by Smirke, who was also the architect of the Bank of England. Men still living remember criticisms of the scheme in the House of Commons on the ground that the new building was unnecessarily large and expensive. It was, in fact, built on a liberal scale. It possessed a spacious central hall, open to the public as a place for business appointments, and its rooms were large and lofty. The penny post has altered all this. The public have long since been excluded from the hall, which is now occupied day and night by a throng of busy sorters and postmen. When the State took over the telegraphs and a new building was erected for their accommodation, the Postmaster-General himself and his headquarters staff, the secretariat, and the large body of accountants and bookkeepers necessary to receive and check a gross revenue of twelve millions a year, moved across the way. Parcels, which for a time occupied the basement of the old building, specially prepared and lighted for the purpose, soon found they were edged out by the other and older kinds of mail matter, and migrated to the site of the Coldbath-fields Prison—a timely windfall for the Postmaster-General. The space thus left vacant was soon occupied, the ingenuity of the Government architects made two storeys out of one in many rooms by interposing a floor, and finally—in an evil day—the fair proportions of Smirke's buildings were marred by being raised an extra storey. Something, too, has been done from time to time in the way of decentralization; large sections of London letters now never enter the General Post Office at all. But every effort to adapt the building to the needs of the day has proved insufficient, and some time since it was resolved that the general post letters must follow the parcels to Mount Pleasant. The opportunity of the removal of a large portion of the staff is, we understand, to be taken to reconstruct the interior of the building. Sorting in Smirke's days, when every letter had, for purposes of taxation, to be examined against a strong light to detect the number of sheets of paper it contained, was a very different process from the rapid handling of the present day, and arrangements then appropriate are now inconvenient. It is to be hoped, however, that it will be found possible to maintain the handsome façade. If the obnoxious upper storey could at the same time be demolished, London would be in luck.

If Smirke's building has been more successful in appearance than in internal fitness, exactly the opposite may be said for the new General Post Office at Mount Pleasant. Internally it is, no doubt, all that can be desired—a *maximum* of floor space and a *minimum* of walls, plenty of windows, solid warm floors, a lining of glazed tiles and every arrangement to counteract the dark and smoke of London. But is it necessary that a building, in order to be suitable for the sorting of letters, should be appallingly ugly? Plain red walls of great height pierced with a number of large holes—that is briefly a description of the exterior of the new General Post Office. The design certainly has the merit of simplicity, but its simplicity is not of the kind which gives pleasure to the eye. Perhaps the genius of the place has been too strong for the architect. The frowning walls and bare cells of Coldbath Fields Prison may have entered into his soul and prevented the conception of any beauty of line or dignity of form. It is a pity, for, to say nothing of the 1,500 workers who will spend much of their lives in the place, nothing tends so strongly to improve a neighbourhood as a really handsome building; and the breezy hill where many departments of the Post Office are now assembling might have been made a really attractive quarter of the metropolis. As it is, the new General Post Office must be considered architecturally as a commodious shed—an annexe to the cluster of buildings in the City which will bear their old name. They do things differently abroad. In Germany and Switzerland a post-office where one-tenth of t e business of Mount Pleasant was to be transacted would have been one of the features of the town. Perhaps with the growing sense of the unity of the Empire a desire may be born to make London as a whole—not merely Whitehall and the parks—worthy of its great position as the capital of the Queen's dominions. 12.6.00.

EXCESS CHARGE ON LETTERS.

In answer to Mr. DUCKWORTH (Lancashire, Middleton), 24.7.00.

Mr. HANBURY said,—The Postmaster-General is not aware how many letters are charged 2d. on delivery because they do not bear a 1d. stamp. No records of such letters are kept, and it cannot be stated, therefore, whether the number of charges has increased or diminished since the old red stamp was discontinued. The value of stamps found loose in post-offices and left on post-office counters by the public amounts in one year to about £300. The quality of the gum used is satisfactory, and the Postmaster-General believes that postage stamps, which are now made of thinner paper, adhere more firmly than formerly to the covers to which they are affixed. It is not considered desirable to reduce the 2d. fee charged on unstamped letters. The expense of collecting charges for deficient postage is considerable.

(*Before* MR. JUSTICE RIDLEY *and a Common Jury.*)

PARKER V. STODDART AND ANOTHER.

In this case Mr. Daniel Warde and Mr. Broadbridge appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr. M. Shearman for the defendants. 13.6.00.

The plaintiff, Mr. Thomas Parker, sued the defendant Mrs. Ada Stoddart, trading as the *Sporting Luck* Company, for money owing, and also sued the same defendant and the Argus Printing Company for damages for libel. The plaintiff's case was that in the defendant's newspaper prizes were offered to those who should be successful in a coupon competition in naming the first four horses in the Manchester November Handicap in 1899, and that he became one of the successful competitors. On December 1 there appeared in the paper an announcement that £2,500 had been won and that 45 competitors had secured £44 8s. 10d. each, but the plaintiff's name was not among them, and the defendant had refused to award him a share. Immediately after the notice of the result of the competition appeared these words :—" Observant readers may have noted that whenever we extend the time limit for posting the 'smart' division are in evidence. As a matter of fact 'smart' is a misnomer. Some of them are too slow to be the last, and in the past we have been kind enough to this variety of competitor to write by letter, and endeavour to put them on the straight tack by pointing out the uselessness of their efforts. We hold sheaves of penitent screeds and apologies ; but perhaps the best mode of castigation is publication of name and address. Two very unambitious attempts at placing the first three—the fourth was not known apparently at the time of posting (Saturday evening)—were received from 'T. Baines, 29a, Scotgate, Stamford, and W. Cullen, Mountrath, Dublin.' A much heavier trick was attempted by 'Thos. Parker, 23a, Walpole-road, Putney,' who manœuvred in vain to obtain a share for placing the first four. This person suffered from too many postmarks, and is lucky to escape a police prosecution. When such a trick so badly played is successful with us the millennium will be here. We mention these matters to convince competitors, successful or otherwise, that we guard their interests and individual shares as jealously as we protect our own." On November 28, 1899, the defendant wrote :—" Sir,—You really deserve a criminal prosecution, and we are as yet undecided whether we shall not proceed. Your envelope (alleging to contain coupons) was posted to an address other than ours in order to obtain postmark. We know the trick better than you. The coupons were then reposted to us London, W.C., 7 30 p.m. Saturday evening (hours after the race had been decided), and did not arrive here until last post Saturday night. We then treated the matter as some boy's freak, but we take another view upon your claim, and shall publish the details with full name and address in our issue of next Friday. Yours, &c., The Proprietors." The defendant pleaded that it was one of the conditions of the competition that the coupons would only be accepted if posted not later than midnight on Friday and received not later than midday on Saturday, and that *Sporting Luck* would not be responsible for errors of the Post Office, nor accept as proof of delivery the mere posting of letters. As regards the alleged libels, the defendants pleaded that they were true in substance and in fact. As regards the claim for money, the postmark on the envelope proved that the letter was not received by midday on Saturday, and this part of the claim was given up by the plaintiff's counsel, the question of the libel alone remaining.

The plaintiff said he was a florist. He was residing last year at 23a, Walpole-road, Putney. He was at Barnes in partnership with a barrister named Henry Cecil Wright, who withdrew his capital last summer and left the country. He bought a copy of *Sporting Luck* of Nobvember 24, 1899, and saw the announcement of the competition. He filled up the coupon in the potting shed. He had an envelope there. (At this point, at the request of Mr. SHEARMAN, all witnesses were ordered out of Court.) He wrote the address about 3 30 o'clock in the potting shed, sealed up the letter, and before posting it dropped it by accident in the mud. He never saw it again till he visited the defendant's solicitor. He could not account for the marks on the envelope. No person with his knowledge opened the envelope and put in fresh names after the race was run. He posted the letter on Friday, but did not know that he had been right about all four horses till the following Sunday.

In cross-examination the plaintiff stated that last summer his partner drew all the money out of the bank, including his takings, and went to Australia. They parted good friends. Wright did not say he had swindled him. Wright had found the capital and he the experience. Wright's solicitor had in June recovered a judgment for £763 against him, but the money had not been paid. He was not sure whether he lived in Walpole-road ; it might have been Warple-road. It was a misspelling. He was sold up by his landlord, but his son bought up the stock. He was in very sore straits when he went in for this competition. He knew Bubear, and that he was convicted of forging the dates of telegrams. He had himself had 14 days' imprisonment for contempt over the payment of his rates. Four men were with him when he posted the letter, including his son.

The plaintiff's son stated that he saw the plaintiff filling up the coupon in the potting shed. He asked him what he was doing, as he knew he took no interest in racing. He saw the envelope addressed to *Sporting Luck*, and saw his father drop it in the mud before he posted it on the Friday. His father was not in the West Central District on the Saturday. (The envelope bore, over the penny stamp, a newspaper postmark " 24-99, 5 30 p.m." On the back was a " delivery " postmark with the " E.C." mark, the date of the 25th and L.P., meaning " last delivery " and on the front was a " receiving " mark " London, W.C., 7 30 p.m., No. 25-99.")

Further evidence was given as to the addressing and posting of the envelope, but two witnesses failed to answer on their subpœna.

The plaintiff's case being closed,

Mr. SHEARMAN, in addressing the jury, said that he wanted to explain how he suggested that an attempt had been made to defraud the defendant. Many years ago it had occurred to what was called the " smart brigade " that they might swindle bookmakers by juggling with postmarks or stamps on telegrams, and, since these competitions had been started the tricks had been attempted with regard to them. One way was to bribe a Post Office official, but that was a dangerous game. The other and simpler trick, which he suggested had been used in this case, was as follows. The envelope is addressed, stamped, and wrapped round with a newspaper wrapper, the stamp being left exposed, and the wrapper addressed to himself or a friend. The envelope thus returns to him with the stamp cancelled on the date he wishes, and the wrapper is then removed. The envelope is then filled up with the names of the winners, and reposted. If the trickster is lucky, the Post Office official, seeing the stamp cancelled and no delivery mark, passes the letter through the post again without putting another receiving mark upon it. In this case he had not that luck. The envelope had three postmarks. There was the cancelled stamp, dated Friday, the cancellation being that put on newspapers, the " receiving " mark, showing that the letter was posted in the West Central District on Saturday, and the delivery mark dated Saturday evening.

Evidence was then called from the Postal Service Department. The cancellation stamp was a newspaper stamp. A letter stamp would have had " Barnes " on it, if it had been posted there. Letters and newspapers were sorted into different bundles at the Post Office. If this was treated as a newspaper there would be no receiving stamp on it. The letter must have been reposted on the Saturday from 6 30 to 7 p.m. in the West Central District. On the back was L.P., indicating that the letter was received at the General Post Office from a large district office in time for the last delivery. There would be no second stamp required, because it would be assumed that the letter had been misdelivered and slipped into the post again.

Mr. Vickers, manager of the competition department of *Sporting Luck*, proved that the whole of the £2,000 offered was paid away to successful competitors.

Counsel then addressed the jury, and the learned JUDGE having summed up,

The jury, after a short absence from Court, returned a verdict for the defendants. 13.6.00

(Sitting in P

THE RECENT POSTAL DELAYS.

22.6.00.

On the motion for the adjournment of the House,

Mr. EGERTON (Cheshire, Knutsford) asked the Secretary of the Treasury whether he would take immediate steps to remedy the delays in the delivery of letters due to the absence of an adequate staff at the new offices at Mount Pleasant.

Mr. HANBURY said he was aware there was considerable difficulty in connexion with the transfer of certain duties to Mount Pleasant, but he thought those were confined principally to the book post and newspaper post. He was sorry to hear that those difficulties extended to the letter post also. His hon. friend was wrong, he thought, in saying that those difficulties were due to inadequate staff. He had heard nothing of inadequate staff, and no representations had been made to him on the subject. But, although the staff was adequate, no doubt they had been working at considerable inconvenience and with difficulty, owing to the mere fact that some 2,500 men had been transferred to the new office. Of course, it would take a short time before they could accommodate themselves to their new surroundings, but he could assure his hon. friend that within a very few days the difficulties would be overcome, and he hoped there would be no cause to complain. He would to-morrow make inquiries of the Postmaster-General and urge the Post Office to remove the difficulties as rapidly as they could.

Mr. EGERTON was understood to say that he was advised that letters had been sent to Mount Pleasant unsorted and returned again equally unsorted.

Mr. LOUGH (Islington, W.) asked the right hon. gentleman whether it was absolutely necessary to change the hour ; it had caused the very greatest inconvenience to all classes of persons engaged in business not only in London, but in every part of the country. He certainly thought that if it was not absolutely necessary it was a very strong step to take to change the hour of the departure of the mails, which he believed had hardly been changed for a generation. If the right hon. gentleman would extend his inquiries so far as to see whether it would be possible to keep the old hours, either by some arrangement at the office or by some arrangement with the railway companies, it would give the greatest satisfaction.

Mr. HANBURY said he would see that that matter was looked into also.

The House adjourned at a quarter-past 12 o'clock.

COUNTRY MAILS.

14.6.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As far as a plain man can judge from the cryptic notice published in *The Times* this morning, the net result of the new Post Office arrangements appears to be that, for all Londoners except those fortunate enough to live in the immediate vicinity of Mount Pleasant, the hour of closing the country mails in future will be 5 30 instead of 6 p.m., and the period for posting with a late fee will also be curtailed and the privilege confined to a few specified offices instead of being, as at present, available at every pillar. Further, if we or our messengers fail to appreciate what I may call the new "insect-tortoise" classification of the Post Office and to grasp the fact that whereas Manchester and Liverpool are country, New York and Paris in future rank as London, or else Hale-end, the Isle of Dogs, and Strand-on-the-Green have been transported to the Continent—I am not quite sure which—we shall run the risk of being penalized for our mistake by a delay of possibly 24 hours. How anybody who has ever seen basketfuls of letters pitched into the important post-offices as the clock was beginning to strike 6 can seriously contemplate the errand boys standing in front of the boxes while they sort the letters into the two groups which are henceforth to be obligatory passes my comprehension entirely.

But we must assume that the Post Office has a real reason for thus curtailing our accustomed facilities. And as that reason can evidently not be the provision of new and better sorting accommodation at Mount Pleasant—a point quite as easy of access to every part of London, except the City, as St. Martin's-le-Grand—we may probably safely assume that the Post Office finds that the ever-growing mass of letters can no longer be dealt with between 6 p.m. and the hour of departure of the country mails. We are, therefore, I think, entitled to ask whether the Post Office has not begun at the wrong end, and whether there is any real reason why the mails should leave London as early as they do. Practically speaking the night mail trains out of London have remained unaltered for a generation past. With the single, and no doubt most important, exception of the mails from Euston they leave now at the same time and potter off to the country in the same leisurely fashion as they did in the days of Rowland Hill. The Midland mail for instance—let us gratefully admit it has not been decelerated—takes two hours and 40 minutes to cover less than 100 miles to Leicester; the Great Western three hours and a quarter to Bristol (118 miles) with the mail for the west and two hours to Swindon (77 miles) with the South Wales mail; the South Western hurtles to Basingstoke (47 miles) in 71 minutes without a stop; while the Great Eastern requires two hours and 48 minutes to cover the 68 miles to Ipswich and five hours for 142 miles to Yarmouth. And so on all round the compass, though I ought to acknowledge that the mails from Cannon-street have within the last few years been much accelerated for so much of their journey as is on the French side of the water.

Is there, then, any reason why the extra time which no doubt is necessary for sorting should not be saved on the railway journey instead of being, as the Post Office proposes, filched from the public? I cannot think that we are treated fairly in having a drastic change of this kind sprung upon us at a week's notice. For my own part, and I believe my experience will be that of thousands of other busy men, the difference between being able to post up to 7 in the nearest pillar and up to 6 30 in a particular sub-office, situated I do not know where, will very frequently mean a whole day's delay. The result, I suppose, will be that we shall have to telegraph, and as, according to Post Office statistics, the more telegraph business they do the more money they lose, we shall at least have the satisfaction of avenging ourselves as customers on ourselves in our other capacities as tax-payers.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

June 11. AN OUTSIDE OBSERVER.

OLD POST OFFICE DAYS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I think you will find the letters for country places off the line of the main roads were stamped "cross post," not "crop," as in your article.

I have a letter now by me stamped "Cross post, Abergavenny." It is the only one of the kind that I can remember to have seen.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

June 12. 16.6.00. JOHN LLOYD.

POSTING FOR THE NIGHT MAILS.

22.6.00. 6.0 EARL STANHOPE asked the Postmaster-General if he would explain under what circumstances and in what cases the hours of posting for the provincial mails had been curtailed, in consequence of the transfer of a portion of the work of the General Post Office to Mount Pleasant.

The MARQUIS of LONDONDERRY, in his reply, said that if it had been possible the Post Office would gladly have avoided the transfer referred to. But they had no other course open to them owing to the pressure of business and the likelihood of that pressure being increased. The Post Office building at St. Martin's-le-Grand, which had hitherto been devoted to sorting purposes, was found to be absolutely inadequate for the work, and as regarded the *employés* there was danger that the sanitary arrangements would be insufficient. To give an idea of the increase in the work during the last few years, he might state that from a return taken in November, 1895, the number of articles posted in the E.C. district weekly was 8,300,000 and the number delivered in the E.C. district was 4,221,000, making a total of 12,500,000. From the latest return of November, 1899, the numbers had risen to 9,536,000 (an increase of nearly 15 per cent.) and 4,761,000 (an increase of nearly 13 per cent.) respectively, or a total of 14,290,000. The number of articles despatched from St. Martin's-le-Grand to places abroad was in May, 1896, 2,033,000. The number now was 2,842,000, an increase of nearly 14 per cent., but this was temporarily swollen by the large amount of correspondence which was now sent weekly to the troops in South Africa. Owing also to the reduction of rates of the inland letter postage in 1897 the bulk of the articles sent through the post had materially increased, and this was a serious factor as regarded the space available in the sorting office. His predecessor decided to transfer, roughly speaking, one-half of the duties of St. Martin's-le-Grand to what was now known as Mount Pleasant, a building one mile off on the site of what was formerly the Coldbath-fields Prison. For some years a large portion of the business of the parcel post had been carried on there, and on Monday last it was opened for its new work. He did not deny that there had been a certain amount of inconvenience to the public in connexion with the transfer, and he did not attempt to shirk any responsibility, but he could only ask their lordships, and through them the public, to exercise the leniency which was called for when there was a transfer of such a large number of *employés* and plant. The site of the new building was on the extreme edge of the E.C. district, but it was the only site available for a building of the dimensions necessary, and, as their lordships knew, it belonged to the Government. The duties transferred to Mount Pleasant were those relating to the postal arrangements connected with the provinces. The foreign mails and all the postal arrangements connected with London would remain at St. Martin's-le-Grand. He would impress upon their lordships that practically there was no alteration in the hours of posting in any district in London as a result of the change, except in the E.C. district. There might be certain delay in connexion with letters posted in London in the middle or early part of the day. Letters posted in the south or east of London and intended for the south and east provinces would have further to go to Mount Pleasant than they had to the old Post Office. But there would be a corresponding gain in point of time with regard to letters posted in the north and west for the north and west provinces, for the reason that those districts were nearer to Mount Pleasant. Except as regarded the E.C. district there would be no alteration in the hours of posting for the night mails to the provinces. At Mount Pleasant the hours of posting would be the same now as they had hitherto been at St. Martin's-le-Grand, and the hours of posting for the general night mails would be maintained all over the district. But letters intended for despatch to the provinces by mails other than the general night mails should as a rule, if posted elsewhere than at Mount Pleasant, be posted about half an hour earlier. He might mention that in the E.C. district letters would no longer be able to be posted in pillar and wall boxes with an extra halfpenny stamp up to 7 p.m. It had been found that of the 50,000 letters per night so posted an average of only 700 bore the extra stamp, and it was not practicable to examine 50,000 letters for the sake of 700. It had therefore been decided to abolish the wall and pillar boxes for late-fee letters. The facilities offered were, however, satisfactory, because at every post-office in the east central district the facilities for late-fee posting would exist as before, and no one would have to walk more than 200 yards in the east central district in order to reach a post-office. The main thing to which exception had been taken was that late-post letters must be posted at St. Martin's-le-Grand at 7 30 instead of at 7 45, as hitherto. The pressure at the General Post Office had been so great that they had found it absolutely necessary to remove a certain portion of the work to another building. It took a quarter of an hour to get from St. Martin's-le-Grand to the new building, and that quarter of an hour had to be made up in some way, otherwise the letters would not catch the train. After considering the matter very carefully, his predecessor arrived at the conclusion, in which he concurred, that that quarter of an hour should be taken off the time allowed at St. Martin's-le-Grand. He believed the inconvenience had been greatly exaggerated. He could only say on behalf of himself and the Department over which he presided that they did not think they were asking too much of the public, having regard to the convenience of every part of the country, and that they believed they would be able to carry on their enormous and daily increasing task in a manner which would give satisfaction to the country.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE NATIONAL TELEPHONE COMPANY.

27.6.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The answer of the Secretary to the Treasury to Mr. Henniker Heaton's question, reported in your issue of this date, will not be regarded as satisfactory either by those who are directly interested in the matter or by the public at large. The question was, "Whether it was an instruction to postmasters in the country and generally not to forward telegraphic messages over the wires of the National Telephone Company; and, if so, would he (the Secretary to the Treasury) explain why this new policy . . . had been adopted." The answer is that "the Postmaster-General does not now undertake to deliver telegrams by telephone to subscribers to the National Telephone Company who may apply for the privilege, but it has not been withdrawn from any subscribers to whom it has been accorded in the past." Then follows the explanation of the Post Office policy:—"There were obvious disadvantages in the Post Office entering into what was practically a partnership with a private company, especially a private company which was itself in direct competition with the Post Office, and persistently refused similar facilities to Post Office subscribers." To the further question as to "when this extraordinary policy was introduced" no answer was given.

Broadly, the statement of the Secretary to the Treasury amounts to this:—(1) That the Post Office does refuse to allow telegrams to be forwarded by means of the National Telephone Company's wires; (2) because to allow that means of communication would, in its view, be practically to enter into partnership with the Telephone Company. In other words, the Post Office declines, so far as this question is concerned, to work with the Telephone Company, which it regards as a trade rival. Such is the policy of the Post Office—or shall we say, at a guess, of our old friend the Treasury? For the saddle should be put on the right horse, if only we can discover him.

Of course the Post Office (or the Treasury) has a right to its own judgment, though the "obviousness" of the advantages accruing to the public from this particular instance of its policy may not be so plain to the man in the street as it seems to be to residents in Downing-street and St. Martin's-le-Grand. But there are, undoubtedly, some disadvantages which are obvious enough. Setting aside the question whether it is to the public advantage that a Government establishment should compete with a private trading company, and should actually in the course of competition deny it facilities for doing its business in the manner most advantageous to the public, there remain, at least, two results which cannot be considered beneficial in any way. The first is that, whereas a message could be delivered without expense over a telephone wire, it now has to be delivered up to the distance of three miles by means of a special messenger; the second is that, whereas it might be delivered in about three minutes, it now takes from ten to 25 minutes—for I am not speaking of very short distances, where it does not matter what method of delivery is used. But this is not all. It may easily happen that there is no messenger at hand to take the message, and so the message has to wait. Cases have, indeed, been known to occur where two messages, received at intervals of half an hour at the post-office, have been delivered at their destination at the same time by the same messenger. In short, messengers have to be employed and time is wasted—both needlessly. The Post Office loses by the messengers, and the public lose both by the messengers and by delays. It would not be so bad even if postmasters were authorized to hand over messages received to the nearest telephone exchange, to be forwarded thence to their destination.

There are two other points which deserve mention. Although the Telephone Company's wires may not be used for forwarding messages from the post-office, yet they may be used for sending messages in to the post-office to be telegraphed on. This anomaly appears to require explanation. Secondly, subscribers to the Telephone Company have to pay £1 a year for "Post Office facilities." They do not grudge the payment provided they get the facilities; but it appears that "*now* the Postmaster-General does not undertake to deliver telegrams by telephone to subscribers to the National Telephone Company"—though formerly he did so, and then assessed the value of his services at £1 a year. It is hardly fair that A and B should pay the same price for "facilities" which in the case of the one are twice what they are in the case of the other.

It seems a great pity that the Post Office and the National Telephone Company, which is practically a *quasi*-public company, cannot invent a more satisfactory *modus vivendi*, and work together for the improvement of both services. In neither of them is this country so greatly distinguished above its neighbours on the Continent that we can be unconcerned spectators of such unfortunate if not discreditable rivalries.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

June 26. B. W.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE NATIONAL TELEPHONE COMPANY.

28.6.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The answer which Mr. Hanbury gave to my question on Monday, regarding the refusal of the Post Office to forward telegraph messages over the wires of the National Telephone Company, has aroused the anger of the public. The decision is intolerable.

The National Telephone Company is in partnership with the Government, and gives the latter 10 per cent. (amounting to £110,000 per annum) of its gross receipts—exceeding a million sterling.

The partners are not working harmoniously, and the public suffers, not over a money matter, but over the question of business control.

Lord Londonderry is perfectly aware that no successful business man irritates his customers, and the question is whether he will submit to Treasury dictation. I am told he will not.

I am assured that the extraordinary new departure is illegal and a breach of the terms of the contract between the Government and the telephone company. You will judge whether this is so from the documents I send you. I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

House of Commons, June 27.

THE POST OFFICE.

7.7.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Is it to be understood that letters despatched from within the City for the London postal districts are to be posted 18 hours or more before delivery is assured?

On Saturday last two letters were posted at 5 p.m., but not delivered five miles from the office at which posted until 1 o'clock on Monday afternoon.

This has been followed by delivery at the same time to-day of a letter posted in Cannon-street before 6 o'clock yesterday.

This experience, it is needless to say, is not exceptional. I am, Sir, yours obediently,

July 3. R.V.

ARMY POST-OFFICE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The current number of the postal magazine, *St. Martin's-le-Grand*, contains interesting details and figures relating to the distribution of letters and parcels among the troops in South Africa. We are told that at the present time the staff consists of ten officers and about four hundred non-commissioned officers and men. This is not taking into account three hundred and twenty-six Post Office telegraphists and linesmen, who are serving with the Royal Engineers. The mail from the Army Post Office, which reached London on June 8th, contained 180,150 letters and registered articles. It is an interesting fact that those inward mails have sometimes included no less than 3,000 boxes of the Queen's chocolate. At the time of the Crimea, an experienced officer of the department was selected to proceed to Turkey as postmaster of her Majesty's forces, and three assistant-postmasters, together with seven letter sorters, were afterwards despatched from England to aid him in his duties. In the expeditionary force in Egypt in 1882, the Army Post Office Corps consisted of one hundred non-commissioned officers under two officers. 9.7.00.

THE POSTAL CHANGES. 26.6.00.

On the motion that the House do now adjourn,

SIR A. ROLLIT (Islington, S.) said he desired to draw the attention of the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, to the grave inconvenience and great loss sustained by the public generally, and especially the commercial classes, in relation to the irregular and late delivery of letters. (Hear, hear.) The complaint was universal, it amounted in the opinion of most to a scandal in the departmental administration of this country in regard to such matters. He knew many cases in which not only great inconvenience had been caused but commercial loss had ensued in consequence of the non-delivery of drafts and commercial documents. He was aware that some of these inconveniences might have resulted in a measure from the change of the sorting site from St. Martin's-le-Grand to Mount Pleasant, but he hoped they would have an assurance that that change was rapidly being consummated, and that this great cause of complaint would cease. The earlier posting of letters in the E.C. district was causing great inconvenience and, by loss of time, material loss as well. He hoped the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Post Office, would be able to give a satisfactory assurance on the subject.

Mr. HANBURY expressed, on behalf of the Postmaster-General, his great regret at the inconvenience that had accompanied the transfer of a great number of sorters from St. Martin's-le-Grand to Mount Pleasant. But he had seen the Postmaster-General, who assured him that the inconvenience had, in his opinion, come to an end. It had arisen from the necessary transfer, owing to want of space at St. Martin's-le-Grand, of 2,500 sorters - a difficult task to undertake without some temporary inconvenience. The Postmaster-General said that the inconvenience was not due to shortness of the staff, and that the accommodation at Mount Pleasant was better than at St. Martin's-le-Grand. Therefore, there was every reason to believe that as soon as the men had settled down to their work the cause of complaint would cease. The shortening of the hours for the late postage of letters must, he was afraid, be permanent. All the sorting of letters for the provinces was to be done at Mount Pleasant. Letters for London or abroad would still be sorted at St. Martin's-le-Grand. But, owing to the greater distance of Mount Pleasant from the E.C. district, letters could not be posted at St. Martin's-le-Grand at the former hours. They would have to be posted a quarter of an hour earlier—at 7 30 instead of 7 45. The regulation as to the posting of letters in letter-boxes with a late fee only applied to the E.C. district. The late fee letters formed so small a proportion of those posted in these letter-boxes that they did not compensate for the inconvenience and delay caused by sorting all the letters on their account. At all the post-offices except St. Martin's-le-Grand it would still be possible to post letters with a late stamp.

SIR A. ROLLIT thanked the Secretary to the Treasury for his satisfactory statement. (Hear, hear.)

THE POST OFFICE DELAYS.

9.7.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—I can entirely endorse the complaints of your correspondents in *The Standard* of Thursday regarding the serious delays still occurring in the delivery of letters from and to the Metropolis. To my knowledge, during the current week letters posted in London as early as four and five o'clock have not been delivered in the Midlands until the second day following, and letters which ought to have reached their destination in town by the first morning delivery have actually not been delivered until evening. Indeed, in spite of all the modern facilities for the conveyance of the mails, the irregularities at present existing compare very unfavourably with the punctuality for which the Post Office was justly noted in the old mail-coach days, when, if the actual time occupied was longer than at present, yet the public could at least reckon upon receiving their correspondence regularly, notwithstanding the great difficulties which had often to be contended with on the road.

It would appear that it is impossible at present to ensure a letter being delivered in the provinces at the proper time, but a suggestion with this object in view has been made to the writer, which may be of service to your readers. It is, that letters should be posted in the station-box at the London termini of the line which serves the town nearest their destination, as, in these cases, the letters are not taken to Mount Pleasant, but are transferred direct from the box to the train, where they are sorted.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

July 6. COMET.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN PARCEL POST.—"G. H. B." writes under date July 10:—"Yesterday I received a flat parcel from abroad (Munich). It came by German parcel post. It measured 3ft. by 2ft. 3in. I returned the parcel (same size) by English parcel post. To-day the parcel is returned me by the English postal authorities as 'too large.' The postman who returned it me admitted that there was many a parcel received from abroad and delivered by him, but which could not be sent abroad on account of size. The price of the parcel coming to England and fully insured was three marks and 70 pfennige (3s. 7d.). The cost of now sending it through one of the foreign carriers is 13s., which includes insurance (3s. 6d.). I should be much obliged if you would kindly give these facts publicity." 13.7.00.

WHY LETTERS ARE LATE.

11.7.00.

MANY COMPLAINTS OF POST OFFICE DELAY.

ANTIQUATED METHODS AND LEISURELY SORTERS.

Although it is three weeks since the provincial letter and newspaper departments of the General Post Office were transferred to the new offices at Mount Pleasant, the course of business at Mount Pleasant is still most unsatisfactory, and the delay in the delivery of letters causes great loss.

The "Daily Mail" continues to receive complaints about the delay of letters, and it is said that many thousands of apologies are being sent out daily from the General Post Office.

Moreover, there is no end to the grumbling among the sorters at what they call the imposition of increased duties, and the amount of overtime they are still called upon to do.

Sorters say that the men at Mount Pleasant are working almost to breaking-point, and that bags of provincial letters are still being sent out unsorted, to be dealt with, if possible, on the travelling railway cars. Further, the sorters allege that at St. Martin's matters are worse than before, and that since the removal there have been seventy men short in the sorting of late fee letters, some of which have been dealt with three days after being posted.

For weeks, also, the Cape, Indian, and Australian mails have been so inadequately handled that large quantities of letters have missed the mail boats.

STAMPING BY MACHINERY.

How far this is the result of understaffing or incapacity on the part of the officials and men to cope with the situation remains a problem which a "Daily Mail" representative has been trying to solve.

"Are there no cancellation machines in the post office?" he asked Sub-Controller Bruce, when that official showed him over the new premises at Mount Pleasant.

The reason for the inquiry was the spectacle of a number of men with hand stamps and ink pads cancelling stamps.

"We have two machines on trial," Mr. Bruce said, "but we find that it is almost as expeditious cancelling by hand."

Later on the official and "Daily Mail" representative came to the spot where the machines "on trial" were being tested. There was a fairly large heap of letters in the tray, which the machine, if properly worked, could easily have disposed of in five minutes.

A youth of eighteen picked up three or four letters, slowly shuffled them on a bare spot of the table to bring the stamped edges together, picked out the odd one where the stamp came the wrong way, twisted it around into place, and then deliberately and leisurely fed them into the stamp chopper, where they disappeared in a twinkling, the empty chopper meantime going at a rate which 20,000 letters an hour would not choke. And this was called a test. It was nothing more than a frightful waste of time.

Standing at the end of an alley-way lined on either side with sorters, it was possible to observe how the "overworked" employés filled out their time. Not one man in a dozen was even making a pretence of being busy.

From the trough in front of the sorting racks a man would pick out a handful of letters, leisurely read an address, as though such a thing as delay had never been heard of, hesitate between two or three pigeon-holes, not infrequently putting the letter into the wrong hole, only to take it out again, repeat the operation on the next letter, and then, still holding half a handful of letters, turn to the man beside him, and call a halt for a few minutes' talk.

MASTERLY INACTIVITY.

From whatever cause it may be, certain it is that activity is not the predominant feature among many Post Office sorters. Whether it be that union agitators have talked the men into semi-insubordination, or that the lax supervision leaves them the option of working or loafing as the fit takes them, the fact remains that the men in the Post Office do not work in the sense that work is understood in other places.

The officials know this and make no attempt at concealment of the fact. They state that the men know they have good life-long places, and do not propose to overwork themselves.

Perhaps the most satisfactory feature in the state of affairs is that the Comptroller of the Post Office yesterday received authority to increase the staff at Mount Pleasant temporarily by 100 men.

Continued delays in the delivery of letters were the subject of questions in the House of Commons yesterday.

Was it a fact, asked Sir Henry Fowler, that this week it took a letter a longer time to be transmitted from the E.C. district to Kensington than from the E.C. district to Birmingham?

Mr. Hanbury admitted it might have been so.

TELEGRAPH STAMPS.

Daily Chr. 13.7.00

SIR,—Can any of your readers inform me, or give the means of obtaining the information, how to detect telegraph cancellations? Is there any book published on them?

Spain, as most philatelists know, uses her postage-stamps for telegraph purposes, and cancels them with circular or other shaped holes. Other countries—notably Denmark, Argentina, and some South American States—use postage-stamps for telegraph purposes, and I think it would help other philatelists, besides myself, if they knew for certain the differences between the postal and telegraphic obliterations.

A country I am most puzzled in is Argentina. The "Correos y telegrafos" stamps serve the double purpose, but how is one to know, when one receives one of these used labels, whether the duty it has performed has benefited the postal or the telegraphic business?

THETA.

[We do not know of any work giving descriptions of the telegraph cancellations for countries which make their stamps serve the double duty of postage and telegraph labels. Of course, you know the round hole punched in the Spanish, and the star punched in the Portuguese; these are familiar to everybody. We can only say that if any reader will give us an illustrated article on the hand-stamps used for telegraph purposes on stamps that would otherwise be ordinary postals, we shall be pleased to publish it. As to special telegraph stamps, you will find all information in Morley's "Telegraph Stamps of the World."—ED.]

13.7.00.

POSTAL IRREGULARITIES.—"E. G. L." writes under date July 6:—"I am constantly suffering from postal irregularities. I am as constantly being informed that the Postmaster-General 'regrets, &c.' In the face of the reply which Mr. Hanbury was instructed to give to Mr. Broadhurst last night in the House of Commons, let me implore—and obtain—your aid. The success of the steps taken by the Postmaster-General to 'restore regularity to the postal service' is such that I had to-day five cases of irregularity to my own hand. If this is satisfactory to the Postmaster-General I trust it may be regarded by him as such a reward for his labour as to justify him in seeking repose in retirement."

TELEGRAMS AND ADDRESSES.—"W. U." writes to us:—"In the last issue of the official Post Office Guide (p. 521, section 37) there occurs the following sentence—'All names of towns and villages in the United Kingdom; the names of those railway stations (not in towns) at which telegraph business is transacted on behalf of the department; and the names of foreign telegraph offices mentioned in the international list of telegraph offices, are counted as one word each.' In this sentence it is clear that the qualifying phrase 'at which telegraph business is transacted on behalf of the department' applies to the names of railway stations and not to the names of towns and villages. I happen to live in a village with a double-barrelled name, where there is a post office but no telegraph office, and when I want to send a telegram home it invariably happens that the clerk charges the name of the village as two words. To my protest it is replied that there is no telegraph office there, and that the charge is, therefore, rightly for two words. Sometimes I gain my point, but even then the conversation usually terminates with a rather rude remark from the young lady behind the counter that if the telegram comes back she will have to pay the halfpenny herself. Perhaps the editor of the Post Office Guide may be induced to express the rule a little more clearly. Perhaps also in the competitive examination which candidates for the Post Office service have to pass some provision may be made for ensuring that successful candidates may have some knowledge of the value of a semi-colon." 13.7.00

THE NEW POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS.

Mr. HANBURY, replying to Mr. Cohen, said—The Postmaster General is not aware that a number of letters posted in closed envelopes in the E.C. district by the Bank of England and other dividend-paying agencies on the 30th June and subsequent days, containing dividend warrants and other cheques, were not delivered in districts within the Metropolitan area till periods varying from twelve hours to three days after posting. But it is possible that some of the large number of letters collected from the Bank of England on the date named were not delivered in the ordinary course, because it appears to have been found impossible at the Bank to comply with the Department's request that the letters should be divided into batches for London and the provinces respectively. The new arrangements do not as a rule affect letters posted and delivered within the Metropolitan area, but it is essential to punctual delivery that letters posted in the E.C. district in the usual way should be put into the proper boxes according to their destination, that is to say, London letters into the London box, and provincial letters into that for the provinces.

Sir H. FOWLER.—Is it not a fact that in the present week it has taken a longer time to transmit a letter from the E.C. district to Kensington than to Birmingham?

Mr. HANBURY.—I am afraid that that is so. I have had many letters delayed myself.

Sir H. FOWLER.—Will the hon. member take steps to prevent this in the future?

Mr. HANBURY.—I will call the attention of the Postmaster General to the matter.

Mr. DILLON.—Is this delay the result of the appointment of Lord Londonderry as Postmaster General? (Nationalist laughter.) 12.7.00.

POSTAL DELAYS IN LONDON.

12.7.00.

Mr. COHEN (Islington, E.) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he was aware that a number of letters posted in closed envelopes in the E.C. district by the Bank of England and other dividend-paying agencies on June 30 and subsequent days, and containing dividend warrants and other cheques, were not delivered in districts within the metropolitan area till periods varying from 12 hours to three days after posting; and whether the new postal arrangements affected letters posted and delivered within the metropolitan area; and, if not, what was the cause of these delays, and when might they be expected to cease.

Mr. HANBURY.—The Postmaster-General, I am informed, is not aware that any such delay as the hon. member describes occurred; but it is probable that some of the large number of letters collected from the Bank of England on the date named were not delivered in ordinary course, because it appears to have been found impossible at the Bank to comply with the department's request that the letters should be divided into batches for London and the provinces respectively. The new arrangements do not, as a rule, affect letters posted and delivered within the metropolitan area, but it is essential to punctual delivery that letters posted in the E.C. district in the usual way should be put into the proper boxes according to their destination, that is to say, London letters into the London box and letters for the provinces and abroad into the other box.

Mr. COHEN asked whether some clearer indication would be given on the letter-boxes as to the division in which letters should be posted; because the present instructions were invisible in the dark hours.

Mr. HANBURY said that now that letters were sorted, some at St. Martin's-le-Grand and some at Mount Pleasant, it was all the more important that the right letters should be put into the right boxes. He would suggest to the Postmaster-General that the public should be fully warned of this necessity.

Mr. COHEN asked whether the double boxes were confined to the E.C. district.

Mr. HANBURY.—Oh, no. They are all over London.

SIR H. FOWLER (Wolverhampton, E.).—Does the right hon. gentleman know that now it takes a longer time to send a letter from the E.C. district to Kensington than to Birmingham?

Mr. HANBURY.—I am afraid that the right hon. gentleman is correct in his statement. I myself have had experience of a number of letters so delayed.

SIR H. FOWLER.—Will the right hon. gentleman take steps to put an end to the delay?

Mr. HANBURY.—It is not in my power to do so. But I will press the Postmaster-General to do so.

Mr. GIBSON BOWLES (King's Lynn) asked whether there was to be an extension of this system of making the public sort its own letters under penalty of delay in the delivery.

Mr. HANBURY.—I do not know whether it will be extended. But it is universal all over London. (Cries of "No.")

Mr. DILLON.—Is this system the result of the appointment of Lord Londonderry? (Laughter.)

POST OFFICE DISORGANIZATION.

12.7.00

The following correspondence has passed between Mr. W. Bramwell Booth and the Postmaster-General :—

Salvation Army International Headquarters,
July 3, 1900.

Sir,—I beg to call your attention to the expense incurred in telegraphing owing to the late failure of the Post Office to deliver letters as usual, and to inquire whether you would authorize a refund to be made on account of such expense to persons who are able to satisfy you of the sum they have actually paid.

This application is based on two grounds. (1) No notice was given by the authorities of the G.P.O. as to delay in the delivery of letters which, after the first day, even if not before, was well known by them would take place during the period in question. Had such a notice been issued (as is usual in the case of anticipated delay in the delivery of telegrams) the inconvenience and loss occasioned by the delays which took place could have been very largely avoided. (2.) The G.P.O. went on receiving prepaid letters as usual under an implied contract to deliver them as usual, when it must have been well known that many of them would and could not be delivered as usual.

The cost of telegraphing was a very small part of the loss occasioned by the late experience. I venture to think that the least the Postmaster-General can do is to return the amount.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
W. BRAMWELL BOOTH.

General Post Office, London. July 5, 1900.

Sir,—I am directed by the Postmaster-General to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3rd inst., and in reply I am to express his lordship's regret that he is unable to entertain your request for the return of the cost of telegraphing consequent on the unfortunate delay which has recently occurred with correspondence from London.

I am to add that every possible effort is being made to ensure the smooth and regular working of the service, and that a great improvement has, it is thought, already been effected.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
W. Bramwell Booth, Esq. J. SWANSON.

"M." writes under date July 10 :—

The Times cannot do a greater service to business men at the present time than to expose the complete disorganization of the Post Office, despite reassurances to the contrary expressed in Parliament. I have written almost daily for the past three months to the department complaining of non-delivery of letters posted in the City before 5 30, which have not reached their London address the same evening. Yesterday I posted a letter at 4 40 in the heart of the City, and still the letter was not delivered at Bayswater till the next morning. We have often had evidence that when Parliament is powerless the Press is all-powerful. The present disorganization of the Post Office is becoming so scandalous that I hope *The Times* can find a corner even in this time of great pressure for exposing the continued disorganization at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

DELAY IN POSTAL DELIVERIES.

14.7.00

Mr. STEADMAN (Tower Hamlets, Stepney) asked the Secretary of the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, if he was aware that, in consequence of the removal of the Inland section to Mount Pleasant, necessitating as it had done protracted deliveries, some of the men had been working two or three hours in excess of their proper time daily, and would he state whether they would receive pay for the overtime thus worked.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—The Postmaster-General would be glad if the hon. member would state to what body of men his question refers. No deliveries are made from the Inland section at Mount Pleasant. The general practice is that whenever postmen are for some special reason detained at the office and thus prevented from starting on their deliveries at the usual hour they shall be paid for such detention, provided it is not less than half an hour and the full normal attendance for the week is given.

Mr. STEADMAN asked whether it was not a fact that some of the men had been working about 20 hours a week overtime—extra work entailed upon them by the removal to Mount Pleasant.

Mr. HANBURY said he understood there was no difference at all.

Mr. STEADMAN.—Then I shall give the right hon. gentleman the names of the men who had been doing the work.

POST OFFICE DISORGANIZATION.—Mr. J. F. Bateman writes from 119, Fordwych-road, West Hampstead :—"May not one of the delays which occur in distributing letters arise from the obligation laid upon postmasters to investigate the contents of halfpenny envelopes? A few weeks ago we sent out 250 circulars in halfpenny envelopes to the members of our Clergy Home Mission Union. In 50 of them I wrote in pencil, 'Please pay subscription at once.' Next day a district postmaster wrote to me saying that 50 of the circulars contained 'a communication of the nature of a letter,' and they would be surcharged to the recipient unless I forwarded 50 halfpenny stamps. Of course I sent them, under protest. If this conscientious public servant opened the remaining 200, how much time did he spend on that single business? Some three years ago you allowed me to suggest through your columns that weight, and weight only, should decide the postal charge, and I firmly believe that if that plan were adopted much time might be saved in the post-offices and much irritation avoided." 14.7.00

PICTURE POSTCARDS.—Mr. William Day, 44, Berners-street, W., writes under date July 13 :—"Under the above heading you notice in your to-day's issue some recently published picture postcards, and at the end of the notice you express a regret at finding them chromolithographed abroad, and conclude as follows —'Cannot our English colour-printers yet compete in style and price with those of Saxony and Bavaria?' As probably the oldest living authority on the subject, I answer, emphatically, yes; they can compete both in style and price, favourably on both points, but they have failed to secure the orders for the works that have gone abroad to be executed from want of enterprise. English printers do not originate work and speculate in producing it, but seek orders from publishers, while the foreign printers are the originators and producers at their own risk and cost of a very large proportion of the fine art things made in Germany, which swamp the English market. In other cases the English publishers are practically the owners of some of the foreign colour-printing establishments, which they keep going almost entirely on their work, and at prices dictated by them. It would be a very difficult thing now for an English firm to regain the market which has gone abroad; the competition would be too ruinous for the English printer to face, as the immense amount of machinery in existence throughout the Continent for the production of articles by chromolithography must be kept going, even at a loss." 16.7.00.

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS IN LONDON.

Mr. COHEN (Islington, E.) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he would state how many pillar letter-boxes there were in the metropolitan area: how many of these were divided into two compartments; how many of these latter were within the E.C. district; and what was the reason that persons posting in one part of London were obliged to sort their letters, under pain of having the delivery delayed, while no such obligation was imposed on persons posting in other parts of London. 17.7.00.

Mr. HANBURY (Preston).—The number of wall and pillar letter boxes, other than those in use at post-offices, in the metropolitan area is 2,988. In the Eastern Central District there are 156 boxes, 99 being pillar and 57 wall boxes. Of the 99, 26 have two compartments, and of the 57, 23 are double boxes—*i.e.*, two placed side by side and counting as one box. The duplicating arrangement will be extended as rapidly as possible in the Eastern Central District. The reason why it is desired that letters for (1) London and abroad and (2) the provinces should, so far as the Eastern Central District is concerned, be posted separately, is that the two classes of letters are now dealt with in different buildings a mile apart, and that at the busiest parts of the day each class is taken direct to the office appropriated to that class. When they are not posted separately, a certain proportion of them must necessarily be taken in the first instance to the wrong office, and then it is sometimes impossible to avoid a delay.

POST OFFICE DISORGANIZATION.—A correspondent, "O.," writes from Kensington, July 14 :—"I think I can 'cap' Mr. Bateman's letter in *The Times* of to-day. A few weeks ago my wife sent out in envelopes, bearing a halfpenny stamp, her visiting card, on which she had written the words 'At home every Sunday during June and July.' These were all refused delivery unless extra stamped. Whereon I showed the Post Office official a card (evidently one of dozens) which had just reached me unchallenged in a halfpenny envelope. 'Oh,' said he, 'that is all in order, because the words "at home" are printed, not written'—though the 'day' was written. Can folly further go?" 17.7.00.

THE DISORGANIZATION AT THE GENERAL POST OFFICE.

21.7.00.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

The situation at the General Post Office showed signs a few days ago of developing into a quarrel between the officials of the Controller's Department and a section of the men on the question of responsibility for the recent breakdown. Expression was given to the feelings of the men at a recent "indignation meeting" organized by the Fawcett Association, which is the sorters' trade union. The attendance was not large, perhaps because many of the staff were still on duty at the time, but the feeling was unmistakable. The object of the meeting was to repudiate the "official statement" that a strike was in contemplation and that the men had been guilty of "organized malingering." Both suggestions were indignantly denied. It is satisfactory to know that the members of the postal service take such a sensible view of their position as to have definitely banished the strike from their programme on the ground that their cause is better served, as it unquestionably is, by appealing to than by bullying the public. But it

was hardly necessary to call an indignation meeting to proclaim this fact. There had been no "official statement" or even suggestion that a strike was contemplated. The indignant sorters seem to have got the idea from a newspaper headline, which is a very different thing and not worth the notice of sensible men. Nor was there any official charge of "organized malingering"—a curious use of the word, by-the-by, involving a transference of meaning from "feigning illness" to "shirking work." The official view, to which I shall come presently, does not bear this interpretation. Altogether the action of the men in holding a meeting to repudiate charges which are wholly or partly imaginary indicates a state of hypersensitiveness or tension for which some explanation is required. Perhaps it is to be found in the second part of the resolution passed at the meeting, by which Mr. Steadman, the spokesman of postal trade unions in the House of Commons, was commissioned to ask for a Parliamentary inquiry into the disorganized state of the service "with a view to securing that the responsibility may be publicly proportioned to those that are to blame." In other words, it is implied that the officials of the department, not the men, are responsible for the trouble, and it is sought to utilize the occasion to obtain a Parliamentary inquiry to judge between them.

Now the friction so disclosed does not appear a very good augury in itself for the smooth working of a great machine, the efficiency of which depends on the mutual co-operation of its component parts, but there are reasons in the background for not attributing too much importance to it. To go into the whole question here would take me too far from the point immediately concerned, which is the recent breakdown, and I will therefore confine myself to that. The difference between the officials and the men has an important bearing upon it, because if the latter are right no improvement can be expected until extensive changes have been made. There is no doubt whatever that very serious dislocation of the service has occurred with much delay in the forwarding of correspondence and consequent inconvenience to the public. It is not necessary to prove the point or to labour it, because no one denies it. The important question from the public point of view is whether this state of things is going to continue and recur or whether it will disappear. Is it temporary or permanent? The answer depends on the cause or causes of the dislocation. The official view is that they are merely temporary, while the men—or rather that section of them that was represented at the recent meeting—maintain that they are inherent in the system of work laid down by the department, which is alone responsible for the muddle. It would be absurd for any one not possessing an intimate knowledge of the working of the Post Office to pretend to decide all the numerous points that arise and to deduce from them an authoritative verdict; but as non-expert inquiries are in fashion I need not apologize for lack of knowledge and will do my best to help the reader to such conclusions as common sense and an independent judgment may suggest. To make matters clear some account of the Post Office work and the changes just introduced will be necessary.

The trouble has arisen over the removal to Mount Pleasant of part of the work previously carried on at St. Martin's-le-Grand. Every one knows the great building on the east side of Aldersgate-street where letters are posted in the enormous boxes under the portico. It is the oldest portion of the General Post Office and the great circulation centre for the United Kingdom. Here the following items of correspondence have been dealt with up to the last few weeks:—(1) All letters and newspapers posted in the E.C. district, which embraces the whole of the City, and is consequently by far the heaviest and most important district in London; (2) all the foreign mails; (3) the greater part of the provincial mails, whether posted in London or passing through from one part of the country to another. It is the last mentioned—namely, the provincial mails—that have been moved to Mount Pleasant, leaving the foreign mails and the metropolitan correspondence of he E.C. district to be carried on as before at St. Martin's-le-Grand. The step was rendered necessary by the increasing pressure which had long outgrown the accommodation, and it had been contemplated for years. Mount Pleasant was chosen as the site of the new sorting office because the head parcel office was already established there, and also, as I understand, because of the excessive value of land at St. Martin's-le-Grand. The new building should have been ready last October, which would have been a much more favourable time of year for the transfer, but owing to the vagaries of the workmen the contractors could not finish it in time, and the change had to be postponed till last month. It took place at midnight, June 17, and in spite of months of preparation was followed by much confusion. During the first few days the correspondence could not be dealt with, great accumulations took place and complaints of delay poured in from all quarters. Gradually the arrears were worked off and matters were straightening out again, when what is known as the "midsummer pressure" came on. It is caused by the sending out of accounts, dividends, half-yearly reports, and a vast amount of similar business matter. On June 30 the mails to be dealt with were 50 per cent. above the average, and the state of congestion with consequent delay recurred. It was the recurrence of the trouble, which had not been confined to the new office, but had also affected the old, that annoyed the public, disheartened the responsible officials, and led to the recrimination already mentioned. 21.7.00.

In considering the causes of this breakdown it will be generally conceded at the outset that so large a change could not be expected to go off without some hitch. Between three and four million letters are dealt with daily, and the number of men removed from their familiar surroundings and set to work under new conditions is 2,500. No business could possibly go just as it did before until the men found their way about the premises and settled down in their places. And it must be remembered that the business was very far from going like clockwork in the old premises, which was indeed the reason for moving. Then the time of year is unfavourable, and the Post Office, like other establishments, is affected by the war, and has had to take on a number of temporary inexperienced hands, who cannot rise to an emergency and work fast. Sorting can only be learnt by practice, and the beginner is not only slow in himself but the cause of delay to others. This follows from the system of sorting, which is performed in three stages. There is first the "primary sorting," by which letters or newspapers are roughly distributed into the main "divisions" of the country—namely, Midland, North-Western, Great Western, South-Western, South-Eastern, Great Eastern, home and suburban, Scotch, Irish, and Welsh. In the second stage each "division" is subdivided into "roads." For instance, under the midland division come the Derby-road, Normanton-road, Leeds-road, and so on. Finally the "roads" are split up into single towns or small districts. The last is obviously the most difficult work and entrusted to the most experienced hands; the beginner could not undertake it, so he is set to do the simpler sorting, which has this disadvantage when he is very inexperienced—namely, that he sends many letters wrong. They have to be corrected at the later stage and sent back, which gives trouble and causes delay. 21.7.00

Another difficulty and a cause of lost time is unavoidably entailed in the change to Mount Pleasant. Letters posted in the E.C. district pillar-boxes have to go first to St. Martin's-le-Grand in order that those intended for London and abroad may be separated from those intended for the provinces. The latter are then sent on to Mount Pleasant, but the delay is very material when the time for catching trains is run so fine. I have my own little grievance on that score, and it is borne in upon me with particular force because, as it happens, I had three letters from Printing-house-square concerning this very inquiry, and every one of them arrived a full post too late, which practically meant a day to me. Perhaps if the department had known the contents it might have hurried up the belated missives, in order to produce a more favourable impression. But, though aggrieved, I admit the difficulty, which is about to be remedied by the provision of double pillar-boxes for London and country letters, thus freeing the latter from the double sorting. Mr. Cohen appears rather to resent the double boxes, but persons who are unwilling to co-operate so far as to take the very small trouble involved in posting letters in the right box hardly deserve much sympathy.

When all allowance has been made, however, for the foregoing and the like difficulties, I think something remains to be accounted for. The indignant sorters, represented by the Fawcett Association, say roundly that it is all the fault of official muddling, which has mismanaged the whole business and done some very stupid things. These include certain technical points in the arrangement of sorting tables and so forth, on which I am incompetent to form an opinion; but I confess to being but little impressed by such charges, because I know on the evidence of my own eyesight that some of them at least are quite contrary to the fact. A more important point appears to me to be this. When the change was contemplated a scheme of work and attendances was drawn up and submitted to the men. The Fawcett Association disapproved of it and drew up one of its own, which was carefully considered, but rejected largely on the ground that it introduced a complete innovation with regard to early morning attendance which would involve an additional expenditure of £15,000 a year. The association objects to the scheme actually in use that it is ill-conceived and unworkable and that it caused the muddle by changing the duties of the men. This is important, because if it is so bad as they allege the muddle will go on till it is altered. The answer is that the scheme was drawn up by the senior superintendent and the most experienced members of the working staff, who should be the best judges, and the changes in the duties were introduced at the wish of the men concerned and to suit their convenience. It is very likely that a good deal of confusion resulted at first, but the head officials can hardly be blamed for that.

They in their turn are of opinion that the confusion might have been avoided or minimized if all the men had done their hearty best to meet the emergency, and had worked as they used to work some years ago. This is the criticism that is so much resented. It is attributed to the controller, Mr. J. C. Padcock, C.B., but I must say I have found it prevalent among other officials and in other departments. Nor will it surprise any student of life. A good many years have gone by since the popular song of the day ran—"Work, boys, work, and be contented." The later gospel of idleness, which teaches that to grumble and shirk, to do as little and get as much as possible, are the mark of a manly and enlightened spirit, has not been preached in vain. It has infected most occupations, and it would be strange, indeed, if such a vast concern as the Post Office had escaped its influence altogether. The postal *employés* as a whole enjoy the esteem and confidence of the public, whose appreciation takes a very substantial form at Christmas time. No item in the great and growing budget of "boxing" exactions is given more cheerfully than the postmen's tip; but it would be ridiculous to pretend that there are no shirkers among them. The same holds good of the sorters, and no doubt some men have not been doing their best. A heavy strain has been put on them, they have had a great deal of compulsory extra duty, which is exceedingly irksome to some, and though the bulk of them have responded in a most creditable manner an equally good spirit has not prevailed throughout. Avoidable delay has undoubtedly been caused by individual men. One was caught the other day in the act of delaying 100 letters in order to get off duty a few minutes earlier. He was suspended, and a marked improvement promptly followed. Some of the men even expressed their satisfaction at the step, on the ground that such men "give the department a bad name." This is clear evidence that the thing is done and also that it is disapproved of by the men themselves.

The important question remains whether things are improving or not. I am happy to say there is no doubt that they are, and the fact bears out the view of the officials as to the causes of the breakdown. Last week I visited Mount Pleasant on Friday, the heaviest day in the week, at the busiest hour, and the inspectors of "divisions" all reported good progress and smooth working. The despatch of mails was more advanced than at the same hour under the old *régime*. At 7 20 the whole of the 6 o'clock provincial mails had been stamped and cleared off the table with the exception of those coming from St. Martin's-le-Grand. This improved state of things has been fully maintained since, and I have a little bit of evidence of my own in the last letter from Printing-house-square, which arrived at the proper time. There is every hope that when all the contemplated improvements have been carried out the public will reap the full benefit of the new office. The staff have already done so in the greatly improved accommodation, as they freely admit. One of the steps which will shortly be carried out is an augmentation of the staff. This appears to bear out the contention of the Fawcett Association and may perhaps go some way to meet their views. It has been arranged for some time ago, but postponed until it could be seen from the new working how the additional hands should be disposed to the best advantage, which seems reasonable enough. To put absolutely raw hands on during the pressure would probably have only resulted in still greater confusion. As for a return to the *status quo* hinted by Mr. Cohen, if that means going back to St. Martin's-le-Grand—and it cannot mean anything else—it is not to be thought of for a moment.

21.7.00.

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER SERVICE.

23.7.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I venture briefly to call your attention to the following facts

Ten years ago the District Messenger Company was formed to carry "urgent messages"—a class of work the Post Office had never attempted to deal with.

When the then Postmaster-General saw the business was likely to develop, he endeavoured to seize it. But a stout resistance from the House of Commons and the public forced him most unwillingly to grant us a licence to carry letters. In revenge, however, he saddled our business with most oppressive royalties, and, cruellest of all, started a competitive service, at cutting rates, with us his own licensees!

For ten years we have been struggling to maintain this messenger service which the public appears to require. It has been only possible to do so by developing an agency for selling theatre tickets and other matters, by means of which we have been able to maintain the messenger service, to pay the Post Office nearly £13,000 in royalties, and to just keep our heads above water.

Post Office royalties have exhausted our exchequer. Post Office opposition has impaired our efficiency and exhausted our energies. But in spite of all we still believe that we fulfil a useful purpose in London life, and that our disappearance would not only be generally regretted, but regarded as a misfortune.

The fact, however, remains that the Post Office has declared that our licence to carry letters shall not be renewed when it expires, as it does before long.

If by our disappearance the public interests were in any way served, I would not raise my voice against it; but the suggestion of the Post Office is that in future, when we get a letter to carry, our messenger may not carry it himself, but has to take it to the nearest post-office where express delivery is done, where he hands it over to a clerk (with possibly complicated verbal directions), who in turn hands it over to a telegraph boy (who ought to be delivering telegrams), and thus in the fulness of time the "urgent" message speeds on its way, but not in the form of an expedited messenger service surely!

This suggestion of the Post Office means the destruction of the system we have created and built up, and we have informed them that we cannot accept it.

Thus we are confronted with the question, Are we to continue our service or not?

This question must be decided by the public, and by them alone. It raises the old point of whether the Post Office exists for them, or they for it.

Believing as we do that the public wish us to continue, we intend to fight hard for our existence, and we therefore ask for the support of those who value our service.

I could argue at great length that our business in no way competes with the Post Office, and that if it did the royalty of over £1,200 per annum more than compensates for this: that a little healthy competition is the best thing in the world for the Post Office; that the Postmaster-General's monopoly was never intended to restrict such a business as ours; and, finally, that it would be far more judicious of the postal authorities to recognize that ours is a special class of business entirely foreign to their experience, and that they would consult their own interests and those of the Treasury and the public far more by encouraging us to act as their agents for this special class of urgent message, under proper safeguards as to the protection of their monopoly, and on a fair and reasonable royalty.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
GEORGE MANNERS, Chairman District Messenger Company.

STRAW HATS FOR POSTMEN.—Mr. A. E. Mc Adam, solicitor, of Blackheath, writes, July 20:—"Can any one explain why the privilege afforded to postmen in previous years of wearing straw hats during the summer has been refused this year? I understand the men petitioned in large numbers, but no relief was given to them from wearing the heavy regulation headgear of the department. With a shade temperature such as we have had this week it is abject cruelty to these hardworked body of men." 23.7.00.

THE DISORGANIZATION IN THE POST OFFICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I think the public will be, and I am sure the Post Office ought to be, very grateful to your Special Correspondent for his interesting and instructive article in your impression of Saturday.

Your Correspondent writes that I appear to resent the double boxes. I am sorry to have conveyed that impression. I think, and, *pace* your Correspondent, I still think, that if people do sort their letters it is hard their correspondence should be delivered less regularly and less rapidly than when that duty is neither required nor discharged. That this has been the case with the letters posted of late in the E.C. district must surely by this time be known to, and will probably be scarcely disputed by, the Post Office authorities.

However, the important question from the public point of view of course is, as your Correspondent says, whether this state of things is going to continue. It has certainly not yet ceased, and the new arrangements appear to a non-expert scarcely to have been devised with the forethought necessary to reduce the hitch and consequent inconvenience necessarily resulting, as your correspondent points out, from the removal of so large a staff as 2,500 men from their old places to new surroundings. Your Correspondent explains that letters posted in the E.C. district pillar-boxes have to go first to St. Martin's-le-Grand in order that those intended for London and abroad may be there separated from those for the provinces. This must refer to letters posted in the E.C. pillar-boxes which are not yet divided in the manner necessitated by the new Mount Pleasant arrangements. Your Correspondent tells us the new building at Mount Pleasant should have been ready by last October, so that the new arrangements must have been decided on a very long time ago. And yet Mr. Hanbury replied to me in the House of Commons that there are even now, nine months after the arrangements were expected to be completed, only 49 out of 156—less than one-third—of the pillar-boxes in the E.C. district divided into two compartments. If one may judge by past experience, it will take a very considerable time before the 107 remaining boxes are divided and before the clumsy arrangement ceases whereby letters which should go from the pillar-boxes direct to Mount Pleasant have to be taken first to St. Martin's-le-Grand to be there sorted, as explained by your Correspondent.

Your Correspondent says I hinted at a return to the *status quo*. I venture humbly to submit that he has been a little unfair to me. I did write that if the delays and irregularities do not soon cease I think the public will be anxious to know what steps are contemplated to bring matters back to the *status quo*. I did not by that mean to suggest that the Mount Pleasant arrangement should be given up, although Mount Pleasant has been so far very unpleasant for the public. I am aware, of course, that the Post Office has long since outgrown St. Martin's-le-Grand and that it is out of the question to give up Mount Pleasant. But I do think the public expect that the new arrangements, necessarily more costly, should be so devised that they shall result in greater despatch and less irregularity than those they are intended to supersede. This does not seem unreasonable, but I confess it does not seem very imminent.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

BENJAMIN L. COHEN.

House of Commons, S.W., July 23. 25.7.00.

8.8.00. POSTAL DELAYS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

Sir,—Permit me to draw your attention to the great inconvenience the inhabitants of this place have for some time past been suffering through the action of the Post Office. Country mails used to be delivered here soon after ten a.m. Now they are never delivered till after one p.m., which renders it almost impossible to answer them that day. The French and other foreign mails are also being delivered several hours later than formerly. If you could do anything to open the eyes of the Post Office to the discontent their retrograde action is causing, you would be conferring a benefit on the inhabitants of this place and the country generally.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

AUGUSTUS COLVILE.

18, Pevensey-road, St. Leonards-on-Sea, August 6.

DISTRICT MESSENGERS AND EXPRESS LETTERS.

15.8.00.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

About ten years ago one or two companies introduced into London an organization, already known in America, for the supply of boy messengers. The essential features of the system were offices at which the services of boys could be obtained and call-boxes fitted in private houses and public places and electrically connected with the offices. By turning a pointer on one of these boxes to the appropriate signal a messenger or a cab could be summoned. The idea was unquestionably a good one, though, owing to the different conditions of life here and in the United States and the habitual slowness of the British public to adopt any new practice, it was doubtful whether it would lead to profitable business. But there was a special difficulty in the way. It was said to be an essential feature of a successful scheme that the messengers should carry letters; but the Postmaster-General has a monopoly of the carriage of letters. Moreover, the use of the electrical call-boxes was inconsistent with the Postmaster-General's other monopoly of sending telegrams. The companies at first set the Post Office at naught. Proceedings in the Law Courts were commenced, and public attention was called to the situation. Finally the companies submitted to the Postmaster-General's view, and were prohibited from carrying letters or sending telegrams without his consent, while the Postmaster-General gave them permission to carry on their business, upon making certain payments in recognition of his authority, for a short term of years. The licensed companies subsequently coalesced, and are now represented by the District Messenger and Theatre Ticket Company (Limited), which recently held its annual meeting under the presidency of Mr. George Manners. From the statements of the chairman it appears that the company is becoming nervous as to its fate in 1903, when the Postmaster-General's licence runs out; and vigorous efforts are to be made to induce the Government to renew the company's licence, and not only to renew it, but to renew it on more favourable terms than those yet obtained. In point of fact the company has not been very prosperous. It has had exceptional chances. For the last ten years it has shared the Postmaster-General's monopoly. No other agency has been allowed to carry on a similar business, and the Post Office has been its only competitor. Yet it has never been able to pay a dividend to its ordinary shareholders; and in some years its expenses have exceeded its takings. In its last financial year it made a modest profit of £3,776, the whole of which went to pay arrears of dividends on preference shares. The company would apparently have it thought that this want of financial success is to be attributed to the crushing dues levied by the Postmaster-General. It is a remarkable fact, however, that while dues of 2s. 6d. for every call-box and 1d. for every letter carried were accepted as reasonable by the astute men who guided the company's affairs in 1891, the company now pays only 6d. per call-box and ½d. per letter. The whole sum paid to the Post Office last year was only £1,250; and if this payment had been waived the company would still have been unable to pay a penny to its ordinary shareholders. Nor can it be said that the company has sacrificed its shareholders' interest to anxiety to serve the public. The rates for messengers are not very low; they compare unfavourably with those of the Post Office. The charge for an express messenger for a distance not exceeding half a mile is 4d., and for a mile 6d.; while the Post Office charge is 3d. for each distance. The company, indeed, complain that the Post Office under-bids them—a rather odd complaint from an agency which claims to do part of the work of the Post Office, because it can serve the public so much better.

It is a little difficult to understand why it should be thought that a company so situated should be allowed to infringe the Postmaster-General's monopoly. There is one feature of the company's system, and one only, which is peculiar to it—namely, the call-boxes for summoning messengers. Even these are of much less importance than when

the company commenced business, because subscribers to any telephone system can now summon a Post-office messenger through the exchange. But the subscription for the call-box is small, and it is no doubt a convenience. Surely, however, it is not beyond the resources of the Postmaster-General to supply call-boxes to any who require them; and a good beginning might be made by taking over the company's plant on fair terms. Without doubt the public is entitled to have the very best letter service it can of every kind. It is no doubt also entitled, if it sees fit, to have half a dozen agencies to do the work. But it cannot be served in this way and also maintain a State Post Office in a condition of high efficiency. It is a fair question for discussion whether the delivery of letters and the transmission of telegrams should be undertaken by the State. The opinion of the whole civilized world declares for a State Post Office, and, with the one notable exception of the United States, there is general agreement in favour of State telegraphs. But if the State undertakes this kind of work it must be secured from competition. One main object of a State post is, by means of uniform rates, to supply remote places, even at a considerable loss, with ample facilities of communication, any such loss being redressed by the profit made in populous places. If competition is allowed, the basis of the transaction is destroyed. For competitors will select only remunerative business, and will leave the business upon which there is a loss to the State. History and contemporary practice alike prove this. From the London Penny Post of the days of Charles II. downwards all attempts to compete with the Post Office have had reference to the service of towns; and so convinced was Parliament of the impossibility of conducting the telegraphs on any self-supporting basis, if competition with the State were allowed, that it had no sooner sanctioned their purchase than it enacted a monopoly. As things are, the railway companies carry the bulk of the parcels between large towns, while the Post Office is left to supply rural districts; the postman tramps through miles of muddy country roads to deliver a single newspaper, while Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son make a fortune out of the sale and distribution of papers in towns. If, therefore, the public wishes to preserve the uniform postal system and to carry on the Post Office without loss to the State it must not allow the great source of Post Office revenue, the service of the large towns, to be tapped. It may, indeed, be suggested that the Postmaster-General may delegate some of his work and protect himself by means of royalties; and the suggestion sounds plausible. But such a system, if developed, would convert the State into a mere collector of taxes on means of communication—an agency to increase the cost of communications, not to facilitate them. The monopoly of posts and telegraphs was certainly not given for this purpose, but in order to secure the best possible service for the country. Already the District Messenger Company are saying that as the Postmaster-General does no part of the work, he should be satisfied with a very small acknowledgment. It would be more logical to claim relief from any payment at all.

The District Messenger Company has enjoyed, for a short time, an exceptional position, owing to its introduction of a new variety of postal service of some convenience to the public. It cannot maintain that position; for, if its licence be renewed, other licences must be given; it is impossible to maintain one private company in the position of a monopolist. But, if the carriage of express letters in towns is thrown open to the world, there is every probability that in no long time the Post Office will feel the results in its short-distance town letters, the most profitable letters it carries, while further inroads on postal work, very difficult to resist with any consistency, will soon follow. Why should such a risk be run for the sake of one small company, which would probably gain nothing from the change, and the reasonable interests of which it would be possible to respect in other ways? At a time when municipal action is every year taking the place of private enterprise in great undertakings, it may be worth while to hesitate before impairing the integrity of the one great undertaking which has been entrusted to the State, and which, on the whole, has been conducted to the advantage of the community.

AN IDEAL POST OFFICE.

Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., has forwarded to us for publication the following letter which he has addressed to Lord Londonderry:—

Dear Lord Londonderry,—On behalf of the public I venture to lay before you, the responsible head of the Post Office, a list of postal and telegraphic grievances and suggested reforms. As I do this at your invitation we cannot but observe that the era of conciliation opens with the accession to office of a public man whose attitude, both as a political leader and as an employer of labour, has been distinguished by an unmistakable spirit of fairness and even of generosity. We have had as Postmasters-General wealthy Peers, landowners of vast possessions, prominent statesmen, but what was chiefly needed, nay, indispensable, in the qualifications of that high official has always hitherto been missing. I mean the instinctive sympathy of the experienced man of business with the constantly growing and varying needs of the greatest of commercial peoples. Sometimes a Postmaster-General has been swayed too exclusively by the able staff about him, who are naturally opposed to alterations of a system under which they have grown up, and which they have perfected from every standpoint but that of practical business life. Almost invariably he has regarded his department as one created for the raising of revenue, forgetting that its prime constitutional function is to facilitate private communications with all the resources of the State. In short, between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the yet more formidable Secretary, he has usually been degraded into a kind of taxmaster-general, responsible for abuses which he was unable to redress, and reaping no thanks for a surplus which automatically increased.

The growth of that surplus (at the rate of £200,000 or £300,000 per annum), satisfactory as it is to the Treasury official, is perhaps the most indisputable grievance of all. For it has not been accompanied by corresponding concessions for the benefit and extension of the service from which it was derived, such as every prosperous railway or shipping company feels bound to bestow upon its customers. Of course, the possessors of a monopoly have not the same incentives to fairness and justice as affect undertakings subject to competition; but there is little fear that this consideration will prevail with you. The postal revenue is mainly derived from letter postage; and this, again, is to a great extent contributed by business men, in the course of operations which result in trade and manufactures by which the whole country indirectly profits. Postal taxation is in fact to a large extent a royalty levied on trading operations; and this is why the surplus grows with our trade. More and more other taxpayers are every year relieved at the expense of the commercial letter-writer; and it is conceivable that the Empire might be run on postage, just as the P. and O. and other steamship lines are at this moment. It is time to confront an insatiable Chancellor of the Exchequer, and set a bound to his voracity. I have, therefore, included below a demand that the surplus over and above £3,000,000 shall be devoted to cheapening, facilitating, and extending the postal and telegraphic services.

The service was originally intended to bring down individual expenditure on communications to the lowest possible point. It is now worked so as to show an enormous profit, and yet, until within the last few years, every grievance in connexion with it was ignored, and even now the subjoined list is, I fear, a long one. Some of the items in it may appear trifling. But it is the injustice displayed by a Government department, rather than the amount involved, which awakens public indignation in such cases. Your officials may feel inclined to marvel at the patience, logic, and eloquence, aye, and the "staying power" so often displayed by a hard-worked clergyman or busy manufacturer in fighting the question of an extra halfpenny or penny demanded by the Post Office. But nothing stiffens the British back like tyranny in fiscal matters. It is the ship-money case over again. Too frequently the hardship to the public is clearly the result of an originally thoughtless, but mistaken, policy, obstinately persisted in, even after it has been shown to defeat its own ends. And the irritation caused by the enforcement, year after year, in the face of protest and expostulation, of unjust or inexpedient fines and charges is at the bottom of the fact that St. Martin's-le-Grand is the one unpopular department in the State. By way of a flagrant (though far from solitary) exemplification of such charges, I begin my list of grievances with what to the official mind may appear a trumpery matter—namely, the notice printed on the face of every telegram:—

1. Receipts for Telegraph Charges.

"A receipt for the charges on this telegram can be obtained, price twopence."

That is to say, while an army of men will be employed in sending a letter, hundreds or thousands of miles, for a penny, twice as much is charged for the writing of a few words by a clerk, or 33 per cent. on the charge for telegraphing, while a banker's clerk will give an acknowledgment for a thousand pounds gratis. The result is that nobody takes a receipt, and the department, which unjustly would have twopence, loses an honest penny. If I send a telegram to Australia by the Eastern Telegraph Company the company's clerk gives me a receipt for the cost without charge.

2. Registration Fee.

For similar reasons, the charge for the registration of a letter should be reduced from twopence to a penny. There is certainly not more than a pennyworth of book-keeping and insurance involved.

3. Charge for Samples.

The *minimum* charge for the inland sample post should be reduced from one penny to one halfpenny. The Post Office will carry two ounces of printed paper (say, business circulars) for a halfpenny; but if the smallest scrap of the same paper, unprinted, be forwarded as a sample one penny is charged. It is unfair to tax the initial operations of an immense number of industries depending on the circulation of samples to the extent of 100 per cent.

4. "Cash on Delivery."

The "cash on delivery" system, under which goods ordered by post are delivered by the letter-carrier on payment to him of the price, which is then remitted by the department to the seller, should be introduced in this country and accorded a fair trial. No tradesman who learns that in this way mistake, fraud, and, above all, "bad debts," are impossible would hesitate to support this demand. A system which has proved such a gigantic success and boon on the Continent and in India could hardly be a failure in the United Kingdom.

5. Parcels.

(*a*) Colonial Parcels.—The parcel rates to the colonies should be still further reduced. There are different rates to the countries in the list based on no common principle. Why should it cost more to send a 3lb. parcel to Aden than to Australia? Why must we pay for a one pound parcel to Aden 1s. when it costs only 9d. to send it to the Cape? There is a British post-office at Aden.

Foreign Parcel Post.—The editor of a newspaper in Egypt sends me a printed extract showing the parcel post charges between that country and the United Kingdom are from 25 to 75 per cent. higher than between Egypt and other countries of the Postal Union. Again, a leading firm in Manchester, Messrs. Boyd, Barton, and Co., write to me, under date June 29, as follows:—

"May I bring under your notice the difference in charge for a parcel of paper designs weighing 26oz. It comes from Mulhouse for 80 pfennigs and we have to pay for its return 13d. It comes closed up; it has to be returned 'open ends,' a more difficult thing to do securely."

I could point out a score of such anomalies.

(*b*) The rural districts have long been languishing for an "Agricultural Parcel Post," at specially low rates, for dairy and market garden produce, for which we annually pay the foreigner £40,000,000.

(*c*) The rules for redirection of parcels lead to great annoyance. Two parcels came to two members of the House of Commons. On each 10½d. had been paid. My parcel was redirected to Eaton-square free of charge; my friend's parcel, redirected to the Grand Hotel, Charing-cross, was subjected to a fine of 10½d. for redirection. My friend used strong language. He was informed that before May 31, 1892, London was one postal district, now it is not. Therefore the fine. The old rule should be reverted to, or all parcels should be charged for when redirected.

6. "High Thinking" Fined.

The rules requiring a periodical, in order to pass as a "registered newspaper," to be published at intervals not exceeding seven days, and to contain a certain proportion of news and articles of a given character, should be abolished, so that such magazines as the *Contemporary*, the *Nineteenth Century*, and the *Fortnightly* should no longer be excluded from the advantages of the newspaper postage. The effect of the existing regulations is to tax literature of an educational, scientific, religious, and generally more valuable type more heavily than ephemeral publications of inferior, or less permanent, value—an inversion of true policy which obtains in no other country.

For the past 15 years the Department has been promising reform on this matter, and as this is about the time it usually takes to make up its mind I am beginning to be hopeful.

In a recent report of the Postmaster-General of New Zealand there is a statement to the effect that a magazine post has been established in that colony, the rates of which are 1d. for the first 8oz. and ½d. for each succeeding ½oz. *O si sic omnes!*

Permit me here to call your attention to the fact that, as regards publications and periodicals, the Post Office has lamentably failed to fulfil its mission. The fact that during ten years the circulation of newspapers through the British Post Office has only increased by four millions while the circulation of letters has increased by 370 millions is, I believe, a matter of congratulation amongst the officials. Surely the failure of the Post Office to aid in the grand educational work of the Press should be regarded as ignominious rather than creditable.

7. Postal and Money Orders.

(*a*) The repeated applications of the Australasian and other colonies for an exchange of postal orders between Great Britain and her dependencies should be immediately complied with. We allow the Australians to settle their Constitution, while our post officials defy and snub them on this petty question. They object that it would be possible to forge such orders (an objection which would equally apply to bank-notes), yet they pay postal orders issued in India, the Straits Settlements, Hong-kong, Newfoundland, and the Transvaal, and admit that they have never yet been victimized by a forged order.

(*b*) The commission on foreign and colonial money orders should be reduced, the *minimum* being fixed at 2d.

(*c*) The cost of ("poundage payable on") postal orders for 9s. 6d. is 2d., and on an order for 10s. only 1d., and in like manner the poundage on orders for 19s. 6d. is 2½d. and on an order for 20s. only 1½d.; it costs more to send sums from 8s. to 9s. 11d. than to send 10s., and it costs more to send sums from 18s. 6d. to 19s. 11d. than to send 20s. by postal orders. These anomalous charges were brought to the attention of the Department eight years ago. The Postmaster-General should establish a uniform scale of charges based on the amount to be transmitted.

(*d*) Why should not a 6d. postal order be issued so as to do away with the necessity for the transmission of stamps by post and the consequent temptation to clerks, messengers, and postal *employés*? Great inconvenience is caused to publishers, booksellers, vendors of fancy goods, and others, by the fact that postal remittances of less than 1s. must be made in stamps. Large quantities thus received are disposed of at a loss in discount, and much time is sacrificed in counting.

(*e*) How grateful many would be if a guinea postal order should be issued, for the payment of subscriptions &c. As for the objection that an Act of Parliament is required, the necessary Bill would, if made a Government measure, pass through all its stages in a few hours in both Houses.

(*f*) The public should be supplied with postal orders bearing counterfoils, on the plan adopted in certain foreign countries, each counterfoil being marked with the number of the attached order, as well as the amount and office stamp, so as to facilitate detection in case of theft, to relieve the transmitters of small sums from the task of noting these particulars, and to encourage the use of postal orders.

On this important subject, I may remark that a well-known firm has offered to supply the Department with forms of orders rising by 6d. at a time from 1s. to £1 1s. and provided with a detachable counterfoil (marked with the date, number, and amount, and office of issue), for less than half the sum now paid for the present orders.

(*g*) The *Mandat-Carte*.—By this admirable system (under which the sender purchases a kind of post-card marked with the sum to be remitted, such sum being delivered, together with the post-card, to the payee by the postman) all chance of fraud, theft, and mistake is obviated, and this plan has proved a great success in Germany, Switzerland, and other countries. Unfortunately, our officials are resolutely opposed to it, though they have never yet supplied any tangible objection to it. By means of it small remittances might be made here as swiftly and safely as in France, Germany, or Switzerland, and the painful spectacle, so familiar at the Old Bailey, of a veteran postman being sent to penal servitude for embezzlement would be a thing of the past. The *Mandat-Carte* should be introduced without delay.

(*h*) The following harsh regulation is frequently complained of—postal orders are invalid if not paid within three months of the date of issue, unless the owner consents to pay a commission equal to the amount of the original poundage for each and every three months that have elapsed since the issue. On what grounds of (Western) justice or morality can this arrangement be

defended? A man recently found a ten shilling postal order which he had overlooked. On presenting it for payment he was informed that the commission would be 10s., the exact amount of the order. I respectfully ask whether this arrangement to charge the owner of the postal order 5 per cent. for keeping and using his money is fair or businesslike.

You make £10,000 a year through lost postal orders. It would become your Department to be generous and not mean.

(*i*) Telegraph money orders should be brought to and paid at the residence of the addressee, thereby saving time and fraud. In India this system works admirably.

(*j*) England has not a telegraphic money order arrangement with Egypt, although France enjoys one and has enjoyed it for more than ten years. Yet Englishmen own the cable to Egypt, and English interests predominate in that country. The system of telegraphic money orders should also be extended to Australia, India, Canada, and, in fact, to all parts of the British Empire.

(*k*) Sunday Arrangements.—Why should not postal orders be allowed to be sold at those post offices which are opened for the sale of stamps and for registering letters on Sundays? Not long ago a gentleman desired to make a remittance somewhat urgently required to a relative at Liverpool. But the day was Sunday; and on inquiring at the Charing-cross office, which was open, he was told that postal orders were not sold on Sundays. If it be a question of desecrating the Sabbath, or of Sunday labour, there is as much to be said against selling stamps and sending telegrams as there would be in selling postal orders on Sunday. In either case rigid precisians would censure the Postmaster-General; but he might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb.

8. Post-cards.

(*a*) Stamping post-cards.

A particularly scandalous abuse of official authority occurs in connexion with the stamping by the Post Office of privately printed post-cards. The Department makes a considerable profit, over and above the face or stamp value, by charging for the material of which its "official" post-cards and envelopes are made.

In order to retain this profit (which no other Post Office in the world stoops to secure) it charges the makers of "private" post-cards from 20 to 30 per cent. above cost price for printing or impressing stamps on such cards. This overcharge is obviously imposed in the interests of the contractors who supply the Department with "official" cards; and it contrasts with the system of stamping other articles, where there is no competition, gratis. It will probably be sufficient to call your attention to this extraordinary interference with the stationery trade, whereby the public is forced to pay extra for post-cards.

Why should not the private post-cards be stamped for the bare face value of the stamps? It must be remembered that the ½d. stamps cost only about £16 a million, while the post-cards cost about £300 a million.

(*b*) Price of Post-cards.

"Official" post-cards and envelopes should be sold as in all Continental countries at their face values, and ⅔d. should no longer be charged for a single card. The richest Post-Office in the world should be above wringing farthings from the poor.

9. An International Postage Stamp.

An Imperial and, if possible, also an international postage stamp should at once be brought into use; and until this is done a room should be set apart in each of the more important post-offices in the kingdom for the sale of foreign and colonial stamps (as is done in some of the colonies), in order to enable commercial men to send stamps to the colonies and foreign countries for replies, &c. Everybody outside St. Martin's-le-Grand has experienced the annoyance of being unable to enclose one, two, or three stamps of the country to which he is sending a letter.

10. Foreign Postage.

In view of the fact that 2½d. is the irreducible minimum of postage for a foreign letter, it is to be hoped that our Post Office will advocate at the next Postal Union Congress a reduction on letters weighing more than half an ounce. At present a letter weighing a grain over half an ounce is charged 5d. Surely until we get universal penny postage a charge not exceeding a halfpenny for every additional half-ounce on a "foreign" letter would be sufficient.

11. Imperial Penny Postage.

(*a*) It need not be pointed out that a prompt notice extending the Imperial penny postage area so as to embrace both the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal would be grateful to the nation at large as a practical and unmistakable assertion of her Majesty's authority in South Africa.

(*b*) It is to be hoped that the postal rate of 2½d. to Egypt may shortly be reduced to 1d. Practically Egypt may be considered as an English colony, and there are large numbers of English people, including many of the poorer classes, now settled there. It is 1d. to Malta and 1d. to Aden, and I understand it is to be 1d. to Khartum. If the fiction of Turkish suzerainty can subsist with a British army of occupation, it can doubtless survive a reduction of postage to the British standard. Again, Wei-hai-wei is virtually a British possession. Why have we not penny postage to that place?

(*c*) It would be a welcome and very inexpensive concession if the weight of a letter to the colonies could be increased to 1oz. for the minimum stamps, thus finally assimilating the Imperial and inland rates and obviating the need for flimsy, transparent notepaper.

12. Express Letters.

Much of the usefulness of the express ("all the way") delivery service is destroyed by the voluminous and embarrassing rules. The public's convenience would be furthered if the Department would sell crimson express envelopes, or large red express stamps, and allow a letter thus distinguished to be dropped into any pillar-box, to be treated as an "express" when received by the sorter. The delivery would be slightly delayed, but surely that is the sender's affair; and if he wished to save every minute he could still hail a cab and take the crimson envelope to the nearest express office.

13. Expediting Delivery of Letters and Classification.

The time has long since arrived for expediting delivery of the mails in large cities and towns by establishing three classes of mail matter—(1) letters and post-cards; (2) newspapers; and (3) parcels. The letters should be delivered by first-class postmen, the newspapers and halfpenny matter by second-class postmen, and parcels by third-class postmen, priority in delivery being given to mail matter of the first class. The "rough and tumble" sorting methods of the last century will not suffice now. Division of labour and concentration upon a single function are as necessary in the Post Office as in a great commercial undertaking. With the simple system here suggested the late scandalous block at Mount Pleasant could never have occurred. Every householder in London would have his letters before 8 a.m.

14. The Pneumatic Tube.

To add to the inconvenience in the overcrowded streets and congested traffic of London and other large cities the mail carts are increasing in number and the drivers are becoming wilder and less considerate. The postal authorities should at once introduce the Batcheller pneumatic tube system for the conveyance of the bulk of the mails from the principal centres of the metropolis to the head offices and to the railway stations. This system works admirably in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, in America; also in Berlin, Germany.

15. Unconscionable Fines.

(*a*) The fine for insufficient postage should not exceed the deficiency. At the outside a halfpenny fine (in addition to the deficient postage) should be the *maximum* for an inland and a penny for a foreign letter. The reason for the clemency desired is that the receiver is perfectly innocent in the matter, whereas he is treated by the Department as "worse than the thief" who posted the letter unpaid. Why should the former be made a "whipping boy" for the latter, whom perhaps he never saw? Surely a right-minded letter-carrier blushes when exacting by order 3s., 4s., or 5s. from the unhappy person whose foreign correspondent has forgotten to stamp his letter.

(*b*) "Of the Nature of a Letter."—This phrase is so difficult to interpret that I receive some hundreds of letters of complaint in the course of the year from business men, secretaries of clubs and societies, and clergymen, telling me that they have had their correspondence impounded or the recipients of their communications heavily fined for breaches of the postal law. A man may send out a thousand receipts or bills or orders for goods at the halfpenny rate, but woe betide him if he is polite to his customers and adds the words "with thanks," or "immediate," or "to-morrow," telling when or how to send the goods. Surely some attempt should be made to make this clearer and to say what is a "mechanical" process, when typewritten circulars are subjected to being treated as letters unless posted in batches of 20.

16. Postmarks.

The present illegible, indistinct, blurred, and smudged postmarks cause general dissatisfaction, since as a rule they record the minutes, but not the hours of posting. The clear, legible, and fairly and equally impressed American postmarking machine should be at once introduced in the British postal service.

17. Railway Facilities.

Provision should be made for the sale of stamps.

post-cards, and postal orders at Euston, Victoria, Paddington, and other principal British railway stations. Such facilities have long existed at many of the chief Continental stations, and they would be greatly appreciated here.

If no satisfactory arrangement can be made for the utilization of the bookstalls, a youthful postal *employé* might, without loss of dignity to the Department, cry stamps and post-cards for sale as newspapers and refreshments are cried.

Letter boxes should be attached to all through trains, and even to tramcars on the principal lines. The Post Office should attend and serve the travelling no less than the stay-at-home public.

18. Pillar Boxes.

In view of the increasing number of thefts from letter-boxes, the system adopted by the German Post Office, or the most effective of the hundred designs offered by patentees in this country for preventing such thefts, should be brought into use.

The sole objection of the postal officials is that no perfect design has ever been devised. But the public will be modest enough to be satisfied with the degree of security enjoyed in Germany.

19. Embossed Stamps.

The perverse practice of fining people for using embossed postage stamps cut from envelopes on letters should be discontinued. Yet cut-out embossed stamps are accepted for telegrams. It should be borne in mind that more money is paid for these stamps than for ordinary postage stamps. In any case the officials are not justified in not only defacing and destroying the embossed stamp, but also in fining the recipient of the letter double postage rates.

20. Redirection.

As regards the redirection of a letter, after 12 months have elapsed an extra charge of 1d. should be imposed, instead of requiring every person changing his residence to pay a guinea, under penalty of his letters being returned to the senders. An option, at least, should be given of either paying 1d. a letter or a guinea.

The new regulation on the subject is causing great irritation and annoyance, as formerly a renewal notice of removal was deemed sufficient. In some cases the Department must under this harsh rule net as much for redirecting half a dozen letters as for dealing with 252 ordinary letters. This certainly was, no doubt, present to the mind of the astute gentleman who framed the order.

"Lodgers'" letters should be redirected, and this the Post Office now refuse to do.

21. The Post Office Guide.

The general impression about the regulations in the Postal Guide is that they are drawn up in the interests of the Department, and are as full of pitfalls as a fraudulent insurance policy; the principles of interpretation being apparently reducible to two—(1) Read the regulations as unfavourably to the public as possible; and (2) never alter a decision once pronounced. It is suggested that the Postal Guide should now be revised in the interests of the public, and that the regulations should be at least grammatical, always clear, and occasionally generous.

22. Mail Subsidies.

The whole cost of the so-called mail subsidies (*e.g.* paying 3s. per lb. for letters sent to the United States in English ships, as against 1s. 8d. per lb. for letters sent to America in American and German vessels of equal and often superior speed, and paying £40,000 a year for the splendidly-equipped but little-used mail service between Canada, Japan, and Hong-kong, and also the immense cost of the Indian mail service) is charged to the Post Office, whereas it has been declared by a Select Committee that these subsidies are paid for four distinct purposes—viz, to encourage British shipbuilding, to keep up the commercial supremacy of England on the seas, to maintain an auxiliary naval reserve, and lastly, to carry the mails. The Postmaster-General should take steps to carry out the recommendation of the Canning Commission and solicit the Treasury to charge the Post Office only a fair proportion of the subsidies paid, viz., the ordinary freight charges for the carriage of the mails. It would be as reasonable to throw on the Post Office the fares of the passengers and the freight of the goods carried in mail trains. One evil of this misplaced charge is that it enables uncandid obstructionists to represent the carriage of colonial and foreign mails as involving heavy "loss"; the imaginary loss being of course these subsidies, so wisely expended for the encouragement of our commerce and mercantile marine.

23. Bookkeeping at the Post Office.

All Post Office expenditure for sites and buildings should be carried to a capital account, and spread over several years, instead of being defrayed out of current revenue. It will surprise men of business to learn that this elementary rule of sound account-keeping is not observed. A postal palace costing £100,000, and certain to stand for a century, and serve four generations, has to be wholly paid for by the first generation and in one year. How furious shareholders would be if they were treated like postal taxpayers!

24. Foreign Lotteries.

All who deprecate the encouragement of indiscriminate and excessive gambling trust that the British Post Office will speedily free itself from the present degrading obligation to circulate among all classes, in every part of the United Kingdom, the lottery advertisements of foreign syndicates, whereby British capital is wasted and our laws brought into contempt.

25. Insurance.

In the City the opinion is expressed that a specially qualified and experienced man versed in insurance business should be appointed at the head of the Post Office insurance and annuity branch, so as to secure for this most valuable postal institution, which at present must undoubtedly be described as a failure, a larger amount of popular favour. The peculiar advantages of making provision for old age through a State institution, which confers absolute safety, only need to be brought home to the masses.

26. Telegrams.

(*a*) The name and address, not exceeding eight words, in an inland telegram should be sent free.

(*b*) The tariff of charges for the transmission of telegrams should be freed of such anomalies as have been exposed—*e.g.*, "ironworks" as one word, "steelworks" as two words, or "St. Leonard's-on-Sea" as one word and "Charing-cross" as two words. Persons should not be punished and fined for living in places like Camden-town. It would be well to provide that a combination of words forming the compound name for a person, place, locality, or thing be charged for as one word. "5a" in a telegraphic address is charged as two words, but "55,555" as one word. Such absurdities should be done away with once for all.

(*c*) The charges on inland telegraph money orders should be reduced, and the money sent (as in foreign countries) with the order to the residence of the receiver. This delivery of the money with the order doubles the value of these hasty remittances. *Bis dat qui cito dat.*

(*d*) Since the charge for telegrams in France and England does not exceed a halfpenny per word, the rate from England to France should be one penny per word, instead of twopence per word as at present. Telegrams should be sent also to Belgium, Holland, and Germany for a penny per word.

(*e*) Compensation should be awarded for errors in telegrams through carelessness on the part of the *employés*, whereby great losses have frequently resulted. In a recent case of a telegram from Newtonards "sevenpence" was written "as plain as print," and the telegraph operator telegraphed "eightpence"; a loss of many pounds was caused, but no compensation was given. Last year the newspapers contained a painful account of the ruin and bankruptcy of two men through an error in a telegram. Why should the Postmaster-General, with a revenue of 13 millions sterling, repudiate a liability which every petty employer of labour accepts?

(*f*) Porterage anomaly. By the Post Office telegraph regulations, it is laid down that any person residing within three miles of a post-office door shall receive his telegram free of porterage; but by regulation 7, in the case of persons living one yard beyond the three-miles area, one shilling porterage is charged—that is at the rate of 3d. per mile or part of a mile, the charge being calculated from the post-office door. Thus men are punished for not flocking into towns to live. It is to be hoped that the Department will consent to charge for porterage 3d. per mile beyond the three miles, and thus deal less severely with the rural population, the admitted policy of the Government being to encourage the people to remain on the land by giving them cheap postal and telegraph services.

(*g*) The regulation requiring payment of one guinea a year for registering a telegraphic address embodies the latest form of extortion. It brings in a revenue of £60,000 a year. In order to enforce registration telegrams bearing curtailed addresses are returned to the sender. By the strict letter of the rules a telegram addressed "Prime Minister, Hatfield" or "Lord Salisbury, London" is declined. The officials should be directed to deliver such telegrams, where there can be no reasonable doubt as to the addressee. Firms established for 100 years in country towns and of world-wide reputation have had their telegrams sent back on the ground of "insufficient address," although their buildings tower over and are opposite the post and telegraph office and are known to every boy messenger.

(*h*) Yesterday a gentleman presented a reply-paid telegram form for 2s. at one of your post-offices. Your officer declared it invalid because it was 60 days' old. Surely no banker or merchant would frame such an unjust rule, to use no stronger term.

27. Imperial Telegraph Cables.

The British Post Office has hitherto shown a parochial spirit with no idea of Empire, and such an officer as a foreign and colonial mail superintendent may exist since I complained of this some years ago, but if so he is still unknown. One of your predecessors stated in the House of Commons that it was a most unjustifiable interference with private business for the Government to even ask statistics showing the cable telegraph business between England and the rest of the world. Recently an Imperial Telegraph Committee was formed among members of Parliament, and one of the most able of England's bankers and merchants, Sir Edward Sassoon, was elected chairman. His investigations and revelations have excited the greatest interest. I am anxious to know if you will extend to Sir Edward Sassoon hearty support in his resolution passed somewhat on these lines :—

"That, it being advisable to put an immediate end to all cable monopolies, the British Government (or the home and colonial Governments jointly) should, in the interests of the Empire, acquire at a fair price the rights, plant (and other property if any) of the existing cable companies ; that the price paid should not exceed the market value of the cable companies' shares on the date of the appearance of this proposed resolution in the paper ; and that the State (or the Imperial cable administration), when possessed of the cables, should aim at no profit on the transmission of cablegrams, but should charge rates low enough to allow of the despatch of the largest possible number of messages by all classes, after providing for the cost of maintaining the cables and the service generally in an efficient condition, the cost of any extension of the cable being met by a further investment of State funds."

28. Telephones—Chaos.

(*a*) The attitude of the Post Office on the telephone question is a crying scandal. We have the worst and dearest service in the world. While a fierce triangular duel above and below ground is in progress between the Department, the local authority, and the National Telephone Company, our business operations are impeded, and the foreigner profits. The Post Office should at once obtain authority to take over the company's exchanges at a fair valuation, together with its staff ; and so give wings instead of chains to our commerce.

(*b*) Has not the time arrived for reducing the cost of a telephonic message between London and Paris from 8s. for three minutes' conversation to, say, 2s. 6d. ? Why should the Telephone Department require an impossibility, and say to all comers *Pauca verba* ?

29. Cast-iron Rules.

Red tape should be discarded as much as possible by a Department whose mission it is to hasten and facilitate communication. Here are two incidents illustrating this grievance. A gentleman at Folkestone posted a book packet to a settler in Australia, but the postage was deficient by one penny. Thereupon the Dead Letter Office wrote to the settler (who would cheerfully have paid the deficiency on delivery) informing him that it held the offending packet, and that he must write to the sender and urge him to pay the penny. This the wrathful settler did, the equally wrathful sender paid up, the packet was sent (two months late), and the Department majestically wrote to Folkestone announcing its despatch. And all for a penny, which might as well have been paid in Australia as here !

The second case might (with testy diplomatists like Bismarck) have led to international complications. Not long since a brazen postal *employé* actually had a foreign Ambassador roused from bed to rewrite a telegram, which it seems his Excellency had indited on a "home" instead of a "foreign" form ! What tradesman would dare to treat customers in this way ? Surely there are occasions when a rule should be relaxed.

30. Ways and Means.

Some of these suggestions, it will be said, would cost money. And it is certain that no Chancellor of the Exchequer would willingly relax his clutch of the postal surplus. On the other hand, it is impolitic to tax too heavily the communications of the people, and the initial operations of trade ; while in some directions a little administrative liberality would immensely increase the usefulness of the Post Office. It should therefore be enacted that any surplus over and above three millions shall in future be devoted to cheapening, extending, and facilitating the postal and telegraph services.

I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

House of Commons, July 14.

An amusing and very instructive contrast is presented by two documents relating to the Post Office which we print elsewhere to-day. One is an elaborate but not too fanciful picture of "An "Ideal Post Office" drawn in a long letter addressed to the POSTMASTER-GENERAL at his own invitation by that persistent and indefatigable Post Office reformer MR. HENNIKER HEATON ; the other is a communication from a correspondent on "District Messengers and "Express Services," in which the writer offers an ingenious apology for the Post Office in its dealings, actual and prospective, with the outside organization which for some years past has furnished London with facilities never previously afforded by the Post Office, and not even now adequately afforded by it, for the rapid conveyance and punctual delivery of messages, letters, and parcels. Nothing could well be more effective, nothing more significant, than the contrast presented by these two documents. The apologist of the Post Office evidently starts with the assumption that that Department, if not already an ideal institution, is in a fair way to become one. "Without doubt," he tells us, "the public "is entitled to have the very best letter service "it can of every kind." In furtherance of this indubitable title Parliament in its wisdom has invested the Post Office with a strict monopoly, and this monopoly it is the duty of the Post Office to guard with the utmost jealousy. The obvious inference would seem to be that in virtue of this indefeasible title and this unassailable monopoly the public is already provided with the very best letter service it can get of every kind—and this may perhaps be the opinion of the Department itself and of its thorough-going apologists like our correspondent. That opinion is by no means shared by the public at large. The Post Office is in no very good odour just at present. LORD ROSEBERY offered in the House of Lords the other day to enter into correspondence with the SECRETARY of STATE for WAR—"such corre-"spondence as the penny post will allow" ; and every one who has had much to do with the Post Office of late must have felt the force and justice of the gibe. But that, it will be urged, is exceptional and temporary ; give the Post Office time and it will "muddle through in the end." If MR. HENNIKER HEATON is to be trusted it has got plenty of muddling through to be done before it gets to the end. He enumerates no fewer than thirty important points—many of them including several sub-heads—in which reform is needed before we can have "An Ideal Post Office." Without committing ourselves to his views on all those points we may say that on many of them, if not on most, he makes out a very good case against the Department—a case which is fortified by the fact that many of the reforms he advocates have already been adopted by foreign post offices with excellent results. His conception of "An Ideal Post Office" is evidently very different from that of our apologetic correspondent ; we may add that, without impairing the monopoly of the Post Office in any vital respect, it would come very much nearer to providing the public with the very best letter service it could get of every kind.

The fact is that the Post Office is incurably imbued with a sense of its own perfection. Yet its own historians have shown that it has hardly ever adopted an important reform that has not been forced on it from the outside. It delivers letters well and punctually, on the whole, though it has done its best of late to compromise even that solitary merit ; but its subsidiary services are as often as not very badly performed in comparison with similar services performed by independent organizations having neither its

prestige nor its monopoly. Its telegraph service is by no means the best in the world, and its telephone service is probably not far from being the very worst. On its routine, its red-tape, its superfluous regulations, and its vexatious restrictions we need not dwell. MR. HENNIKER HEATON'S letter abounds in illustrations of them, and they are officially set forth in that marvel of complication, confusion, bad grammar, and bad sense, the "Post Office "Guide." For a single example pertinent to the present occasion we may take the section in that amazing publication which relates to "Ex-"press Delivery Services." Now we know how an express letter is sent by the independent organization which is threatened by the Post Office with extinction. It is taken to the nearest office of the company, the required fee is paid, and away the letter goes; or, better still, if a man has a call-box in his house he has only to turn a handle and the company does the rest. According to our apologetic correspondent the Post Office is quite prepared to do the same thing. If we only allow it to suppress the company, "surely it is not beyond the resources of "the POSTMASTER-GENERAL to supply call-boxes "to any who require them." It ought not to be beyond his resources certainly, though he never has supplied them, and never thought of supplying them until private enterprise showed him the way; and even MR. HENNIKER HEATON has never suggested that the POSTMASTER-GENERAL should undertake to send a cab to any renter of a call-box who chooses to ask for one. But what is apparently beyond the resources of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL is to frame regulations for an express service so simple as to induce the public to avail itself of them. There are seven and a half pages devoted to "Express Delivery "Services" in the "Post Office Guide." The sender is first given his choice between "three "systems by which letters and parcels can be "specially delivered." If he chooses the first and, on the whole, the simplest, "by special "messenger all the way," he is first told that, "to secure it, letters, &c., must be handed in at "an Express Delivery post-office." Then, by reference to a distant page of the volume, he finds the names of the 268 post-offices in all London which are authorized to transact this particular business. Under the heading of "Charges" there is more than half a page of regulations, the last of which is that "all charges must be prepaid in "postage stamps to be affixed to a form provided "for the purpose." Next, "every packet must be "handed in over the counter, in no case may it "be placed in a letter-box"; and, finally, "the "words 'Express Delivery' must be boldly and "legibly written by the sender above the "address in the left-hand corner of the cover." Now if all this and much more to the same effect is held to be necessary by the Post Office, how comes it that the independent company, which stinks in the nostrils of the Department, manages to dispense with it? If it is not necessary, with what countenance can the Post Office come forward and undertake to do the work of the company not less efficiently? The whole thing is really preposterous. The Post Office charges lower fees than the company, and had it offered as good a service the company must have succumbed long ago. "In point of fact," says our correspondent, with really superfluous cruelty, "the company has not been very prosperous." Seeing that it has paid nearly £13,000 in royalties to the Post Office for doing many services which the Post Office does not undertake at all, and other which it undertakes so clumsily that the pub will have none of them, that is the unkindest of all. Our correspondent seems to argue that, because the company does not pay a dividend, therefore the services it renders are not required not appreciated by the public. Even so, it hardly becomes the Post Office to look the gift horse of £1,250 a year—the royalty paid by the company—in the mouth; and in any case the argument is certain to be pressed for all it is worth, as soon as the company is suppressed, to excuse the Post Office for not even pretending to afford the services which the suppressed company did its best to afford, and as a matter of fact did afford not inadequately so far as its resources permitted.

The whole drift of our correspondent's argument is that the monopoly of the Post Office must at all costs be preserved. There is great force in this contention, subject to one paramount condition, and that condition is so clearly stated by our correspondent that we cannot better his expression of it. "The monopoly of posts and "telegraphs was . . . given . . . in order "to secure the best possible service for the "country." Then by all means let the country be provided by the Post Office with the best possible service and no one will complain of its monopoly, while both MR. HENNIKER HEATON and the "not very prosperous company" now threatened with extinction will alike be out of court. But the Post Office makes a very great mistake if it thinks that the public estimate of its merits and its services is anything like so high as its own. MR. HENNIKER HEATON sighs for "an ideal Post Office." So we all do, and the Post Office answers, through its apologists, with an assurance of its ideal perfection, and offers convincing proof of it in the chaos of Mount Pleasant, in the public scandal of the telephone service, in its threat to suppress a struggling company which does its own neglected work better than it has ever attempted to do it itself, in its persistent opposition to some of MR. HENNIKER HEATON'S most sensible proposals, in the bewildering confusion and slovenly editing of its own official "Guide." We hold no brief for the company whose reason for existing our correspondent treats so cavalierly. But the fact remains that it has met a public want which the Post Office had neglected, and we cannot altogether repress a suspicion that the determination of the Department to revoke its licence is due much less to its own readiness to provide a better service than to a not ill-grounded fear that if such outside agencies are tolerated more of its own shortcomings will from time to time be found out. 15-8.1900

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN FIELD FORCE.

17.8.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—My experience respecting the delivery of letters in South Africa is the same as that of Lord Ormathwaite.

My son left London in April as a trooper, No. 7007, in the Yeomanry.

He was kept for two months at Maitland Camp, and lately was sent up to Rhodesia.

We or friends have written numerous letters by every mail, but he has only received one.

He states in a letter lately received that he could bear all the hardships and trials (and they are very great) if he could only hear from friends at home. At the Cape he inquired if there were any letters—at the post-office—the official said "None"; my son produced a shilling and asked him to search again, with the result that the one letter he has received was after a short delay handed to him!

I should have written before, but I dislike anonymous writing, and I somewhat feared that giving the name might cause him to be a "marked man." I will now risk that.

I may also mention that I have another son in the Army Transport Corps, to whom I wrote, but two of these letters have been returned through the post.

I quite agree that it is a very hard thing that this bad postal arrangement should exist.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. HUGHES, LL.D., Rector of Perivale, W.

August 16.

A NEW POSTAGE STAMP.

19.8.00.

...ny postage came into operation in 1870. Since that time, ...ing the change which came into force this week, there have been ...lfpenny stamps. The latest edition was issued this week. It is not ...cial change on its predecessor—in fact, it is the same stamp, only ...d in green instead of the vermilion which used to make it such a ...l addition to the tokens of the Post Office. The change has been ...t about in consequence of a decision of the Postal Union Congress ...ington last year. This Congress, in which all the countries of the ...n are represented, came to the conclusion that it would tend to ...ral convenience, if not to universal amity, if the postage stamps of ...ent denominations in the various nationalities were of the same ...r. Most of the nations have adopted green for the colour of the ...ent of our halfpenny stamp, and for this, and no other reason, ...it is henceforth to be. Of course, the remaining stock of red stamps ...to be disposed of, and both red and green will remain current till the ...re exhausted. Meanwhile, anyone wanting a halfpenny stamp can ...himself as to the colour.

...ATAL POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S REPORT

...8.00.

AN INTERESTING DOCUMENT.

The annual report for 1899 of Natal's Postmaster-General is a most ...resting document, containing many war details, with romantic touches ...e and there in a mass of statistics. It is additionally interesting ...n the fact that the compiler of the report has just returned to this ...ntry after a year's service in the colony. The war, of course, has ...y interfered with an accurate compilation of statistics; but, the whole, the earnings of the department exceed the expen...re by some £3,000. One of the most important and peaceful ...rovements has been the introduction of money-order conventions ...ween Natal and the majority of our Australian colonies. The house-to-...se delivery of letters is now operative in Durban, superseding the old ...awkward system of calling at the office for letters; and collections of ...ers are now made by European postmen instead of by native carriers. ...his connection it is interesting to recall the fact that a native servant at ...ntzburg, unversed in the mysteries of pillar-boxes, on being told to post ...ain letters, promptly proceeded to drop them down the nearest drain!

The Natal postmen and telegraph messengers have now been provided ...h the universal khaki instead of blue serge. There are now 262 post ...ces in the colony, and 135 telegraph offices. Owing to the "unusua ...ditions," it has been impossible to estimate the effect of the participa ...n of Natal in the colonial penny postage reduction to England. A serie ...pictorial postcards representing scenes in the war has been issued, and ...ood sale of these is anticipated. The war has shown its effect on th ...nber of telegrams sent and received, there being an increase of 438,258 ...ing the erection of a telegraph line in Zululand, one of the constructio ...ty was attacked and severely injured by a lion—such are the difficultie ...Empire making.

Previous to the Boer revolt the English mails were sent overland b ...l, through East London and De Aar Junction, to Cape Town; but afte ...cutting of the lines they were despatched by Natal direct liners to th ...pe capital, and thence by mail steamer. On the whole, the correspon...ce with the old country has suffered very slightly through th ...erruption of regular communication. A branch of the Army Post Offic ...s opened in Natal last November, and at first only Natal stamps wer ...d by this branch for all correspondence, but it was subsequentl ...anged that British stamps should be used for oversea correspondence ...tters from Volunteers for delivery in the colony were carried free o ...arge. Owing to hostilities fifty offices were closed, among them bein ...well-known names of Ladysmith, Colenso, Elands Laagte, Dundee ...ogo, and Van Reenan.

During 1899 the number of letters received in the colony was 12,859,771 compared with 12,137,193 in the previous year. The number of letter ...t from Natal in 1899 was 9,682,115, as against 9,122,402 in 1898. It i ...eresting to see that all the home mails for the Transvaal and Orange ...er Colony were opened by the Natal authorities and distributed t ...h of the refugees as were in the colony. This involved a large amoun ...extra labour, but was much appreciated by the recipients.

NEW ZEALAND AND THE PENNY POST.

20.8.1900.

Mr. J. Henniker Heaton, M.P., has received the following telegram from the Postmaster-General of New Zealand:—

Much pleasure informing you New Zealand introduces universal penny post 1st January. Befitting commemoration new century and adding another link to the chain of Empire.—J. G. WARD, Postmaster-General.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Mr Henniker Heaton's magnificent indictment of the G.P.O. is most timely; and I can mention a recent case of the utter absurdity of at least one of the points he alludes to—viz., "of the nature of a letter." I had occasion the other day to post a couple of formal business notices—typewritten and absolutely not of the nature of a letter—identical in wording. As I do not waste my money in buying the "guide" (which is no guide at all), I sent the notices as circulars, and with the flap of the envelope tucked in in each case, and put them in the letter-box in the ordinary way. They were each surcharged as a letter, and being refused, therefore, by the addressees they came back to me, and the surcharge was demanded of me. On inquiry at the post-office here, I was informed that it was because they were typewritten and not handed in in batches of 20 over the counter that they were surcharged as a letter; yet the notice affixed in the post-office says distinctly that circulars printed in imitation of typewritten characters will be surcharged as letters if sent in fewer numbers than 20; no mention is made in that notice of typewritten circulars, and the notice is, consequently, misleading.

With regard to efficiency in delivery of correspondence, I some months ago sent out over 100 copies of a book to the Press, but in many cases the copies, large enough, in all conscience, and bearing large labels (7 by 4½) properly and fully addressed and properly stamped, failed to reach their destinations—even in London!—and duplicates have had to be sent. The Department "regrets no trace can be found," &c., and denies liability for compensation. Are we authors to be put to loss and, what should be, unnecessary "out-of-pockets" by the carelessness of the G.P.O., and not get a penny compensation?

"Pas s'il y a des juges à Berlin!"

Another lovely bit of red tapeism! Should you be living in Dover and want to send a money order to Ostend, the money you pay in at the Dover post-office is sent to London, whence it is sent, *via* Dover and Ostend, to Brussels, where the post-office sends the money to Ostend! Incredible, but true; and though Ostend is only three hours from Dover, yet it takes three days to get the money at Ostend that is sent from Dover, and a careless official might delay payment by over a week, as was what I myself recently experienced.

18.8.00.

Yours faithfully,

August 16. AUTHOR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Referring to postal matters, we are apt sometimes, I fear, to exaggerate the importance of small irregularities and to always forget what a great boon the service is. As an instance of the latter, I should like to be allowed to say that at this out-of-the-way place my copy of *The Times* arrives on the day of issue by post about 6 o'clock p.m.

I am, your obedient servant,

18.8.00 WILLIAM TATTERSALL.

Invereloy, Brodick, Isle of Arran, Aug. 17.

THE DISTRICT MESSENGERS AND THE POST OFFICE.

18.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The article in your issue of yesterday on the working of the district messenger and the Post Office express messenger services is not quite explanatory, as the following facts will make clear:—

Telephonic connexion to the National Telephone Company's service has not been established with all the post-offices where express messengers are employed.

In cases where telephonic communication can be made the Post Office make a fixed charge of 3d. for sending a boy to the telephone subscriber calling for him, even though the subscriber may live within a hundred yards of the Post Office; the mileage for carrying the letter or parcel is then charged for independently.

Most of the post-offices where express messengers are maintained close at 8 p.m., and between that hour and 8 the next morning the service is ineffective.

The district messenger service is available both day and night.

No independent charge is made for sending a messenger from their depôts to the subscriber's house.

In practice it is cheaper to employ the district messengers for short distances, though their tariff is nominally higher than the Post Office service.

Yours faithfully,

FLORENCE O'DRISCOLL.

2v, Bickenhall-mansions, London, W., Aug. 16.

AN IDEAL POST OFFICE.

18. 8.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Mr. Henniker Heaton has taken advantage of the appointment of a new Postmaster-General to reproduce his picture of an ideal Post Office; and, under some 30 headings, he has arranged a much greater number of reforms, which he thinks Lord Londonderry should immediately introduce. He has prefaced his proposals by declaring that "the growth of the (Postal) surplus is perhaps the most indisputable grievance of all, for it has not been accompanied by corresponding concessions for the benefit and extension of the service from which it was derived." In the first place, this statement is not true. The growth of the net surplus revenue has been checked by the large concessions which from time to time have been made to the public. And, in the next place, Mr. Henniker Heaton overlooks the fact that his proposals—some of which would dissipate the Post Office surplus effectually enough—are not conceived for the benefit and extension of the service from which (the surplus) is derived." For the surplus, speaking roughly, is derived from the writer of the penny inland letter. And the writer of the inland penny letter is the one person for whom Mr. Henniker Heaton has nothing to propose. We may be taxing, perhaps we are taxing, the writer of the inland penny letter unduly by making a profit of some £3,000,000 or £4,000,000 a year out of him. But I cannot see on what principle the Chancellor of the Exchequer is accused of "voracity" because he applies this sum to the ordinary purposes of the State (*inter alia* the education of the people) instead of applying it to reducing the cost of an already unremunerative service (*e.g.* the transmission of telegrams).

Mr. Henniker Heaton thinks that in the case of inland telegrams the name and address, not exceeding eight words, should be sent free; that compound words should be treated in all cases as single words; and that charges for porterage should be reduced. These may, or may not, be desirable changes; but they would inevitably increase the loss on the telegraphic service, since they must have the effect of reducing the average paying length of each message. I once calculated that, if the senders of telegrams would increase the average length of their messages from 15 to 18 words—15 words is about the present average—they would wipe out the existing deficit. On the same principle, if Mr. Henniker Heaton's proposal should be adopted and result in reducing the paying words in the telegram to 13 or 14, it will add something like 50 per cent. to the deficit.

It is no doubt open to Mr. Henniker Heaton to contend that the convenience arising from the change would be well worth the cost. I am only concerned in pointing out now that there is no reason for making it at the cost of the writer of the penny letter. The writer of the penny letter does really represent the great mass of the nation; the sender of the inland telegram represents a comparatively small class of the nation. It may or may not be desirable to give the latter more facilities. But he certainly cannot be entitled to claim them because Lord Londonderry is making an immoderate profit out of another set of people.

In the same way Mr. Henniker Heaton may or may not be right in thinking that the Post Office should establish a cheap agricultural Parcel post, by which I presume he means that the Post Office should convey agricultural produce at a rate of 1d. a lb. I think I could show that such a post would not have the effect that Mr. Henniker Heaton supposes, and that the great warehouses would be much more likely—if it were in operation—to send by it foreign butter into the country, than the British farmer to send English butter to London. That, however, is not my point. I assert that by no possibility could such a post be made to pay, and I contend that neither the farmer, who Mr. Henniker Heaton thinks would benefit by it, nor the rich wholesale dealer, who, I believe, would gain most advantage from it, have any claim to its institution because Lord Londonderry is deriving a large or immoderate profit from the penny letter writer.

I will not weary your readers, or occupy your space, with discussing Mr. Henniker Heaton's other proposals. With some of them I agree. From most of them I fear that I dissent. But I wish to lodge my protest against the fallacy which seems to underlie the majority of them—that, because the Post Office is making a large or excessive profit from business in which the whole nation is interested, it is therefore bound to spend it in pushing or establishing unremunerative business in which only a minority of the nation is interested.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

17.8.00. S. WALPOLE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—We have carefully read Mr. Henniker Heaton's letter to the Postmaster-General, but we do not see that he has suggested any real remedy for the present troubles of the Department. 18. 8. 00.

What is wanted is some means of saving time, labour, space, and consequently money. We have before now pointed out a very simple means by which a great deal of time, labour, and space could be saved, but the reply has so far been "Your scheme looks very well, but we have no system for carrying it out." This is, of course, exactly what one would expect from a Government department. Were matters postal carried on by a private firm or body independent of the Government official, the answer would note "We have no system, but we will do our best to make one to carry out any scheme to save money."

What we suggested was that, when dealing with book packets for abroad in large quantities coming from one firm, they should be accepted without stamps affixed and should be charged at so much per hundredweight, with an extra percentage for the loss that would otherwise be caused to the Post Office owing to the senders' giving all the odd ounces, half-ounces, &c., which would, of course, be greater when small packets were sent than when each packet came as near as possible to the limit allowed—viz., 4lb. or 5lb. according to the country to which the packets are addressed. Take ourselves; we post each week on an average about one and a half tons of book packets, and there are, of course, many firms who post more. At present we have to affix the correct postage to each packet, which takes a long time and entails risk of loss in the matter of stamps from many causes.

If the Post Office would relieve us of the work of stamping we should be very pleased to do for them the work of sorting, and that work would be better done by those interested than now is the case, because our bread and butter, so to speak, depends on correctness, we being responsible for the error.

Were the work done as we suggest, we should hand to the Post Office so many bags labelled for the country for which the contents were intended; all they would have to do would be to weigh them, deduct the weight of the bags, add the percentage of loss, and the work is done. We see no use in putting a postmark if all is in order; we would suggest a postmark only for packets posted late.

That an arrangement of the kind suggested can be with little difficulty carried out we are certain, and we feel sure that, just as it would help us, so others similarly situated would gladly avail themselves of it.

Assuming it to be in force, think of the tons of stuff coming in on a Friday and Saturday for the Eastern and South African mails that would not require handling. If the work was lessened, our letters would have a better chance, and the Post Office would no longer be spoken of as a mismanaged concern.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

RICHARDSON AND CO., export newsagents.

25, Suffolk-street, S.W., Aug. 16.

POSTAL DELAYS.

16.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

Sir,—Can these delays be the reason for the curious illegibility of the Post Office "date and place marks" stamped—or rather smudged and blotched—on envelopes and cards? In many cases it is impossible to charge the General Post Office with delay, for these marks are undecipherable. In this matter we are far behind other countries, where such marks are carefully stamped.

What proportion of anybody's correspondence could be certified, from the smeared half moons on the envelope, as having been posted on such a date and at such a place? The delays are becoming notorious. I had an instance of postal slow travelling recently, having sent a postcard to a friend at Folkestone, who did not receive it for nearly a fortnight. Like Paul's ship, it had to fetch a compass before arriving at Rhegium.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. F. B. C.

August 16.

16.8.00

INDIAN PARCEL POST.—"One of the Long Suffering" writes:—"I write on behalf of a very large British community interested in the transmission of parcels to India through the Post Office, and will not trouble you with the personal grievance that induces me to write this letter, substantial though that is. We all know what a wonderful institution the Post Office is, how rarely, in spite of the millions of letters and parcels passing through it, a letter or parcel fails to find its destination. When one knows personally of the extraordinary addresses or want of addresses with which letters are burdened, and how parcels which are to go hundreds of miles are done up with flimsy paper and scanty string, besides being illegibly addressed, yet the contents arrive intact, one is still more astonished. All this I acknowledge, but I should like to know who is responsible for the Parcel Post Customs in Bombay, if the Post Office, then this otherwise sound and admirable institution bears signs of great mismanagement; if it is not the Post Office, surely they might insist that the parcels they carry so splendidly, so far, should not come to an untimely end passing the barrier of India in Bombay. People most religiously fill up the foreign parcel forms provided by the Post Office, writing contents and values; but this seems no protection, apparently every parcel is ruthlessly torn open, its contents turned upside down, hats crushed out of all recognition, dresses of delicate material tumbled and tossed, breakables, which have probably arrived so far safely, get broken, and people wish they had never written 'home' for anything. All this is the work of the Customs establishment at the port of Bombay, which is from all accounts practically native, as far as I can discover. Having been in India I know the failings of the native in office—innate curiosity and love of exhibiting his authority at all costs other than his own. Surely there could be better supervision, and parcels opened more systematically. If the public are not to be trusted, why give forms to be filled up; and if they are, why let native clerks ruin their things? Could not the parcels be opened at the terminal post-office in front of the recipient or a substitute, and if the contents do not tally as declared on the form, or if custom is due, could it not be paid at the terminal office? But it is hard that, however carefully parcels may be packed, they should arrive at their destination in a state of dilapidation, owing only to the want of proper supervision over the examining native agency at the port of entry. Five years ago it was different. Parcels came 'up country' from England quite intact, and it is only within that time that few persons receive a parcel the contents of which are more or less spoiled; one can only say that at least there is honesty, and they are not lost, which is wonderful, as I can quote cases in which contents have fallen out as the owner has taken the parcel, because the boxes or strong paper have been torn open by Customs officials, and no attempts have been made to reclose or ensure the safety of contents. The grievance of which I write has formed the subject of much, but fruitless, correspondence in the columns of the Indian Press, and the difficulty seems to be in locating the responsibility for this utterly needless destruction of private property, which must sooner or later destroy all confidence in the Indian parcel post. Does the remedy lie in the hands of the Post Office or the Indian Customs? The outside public cannot answer this question; but surely these two Government Departments might combine and put a stop to what has really become a scandal as regards a department which generally commands the respect and admiration of all men. I have made one suggestion, but if these departments can suggest something better it will be much appreciated by a long-suffering Anglo-Indian community."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—I yesterday received a letter from Town, bearing the following postmarks:—Braintree, August 2 (corresponding with the date of the letter); London, August 12. I think this beats the record.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
FREDERIC H. BALFOUR.

Margate Club, August 14.

21.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The ninth of Mr. Henniker Heaton's thirty ideals for the Post Office (*The Times*, August 15, 1900) is "an Imperial and, if possible, also an international postage stamp."

An international postage stamp was suggested for, I believe, the first time in a letter you did me the honour to publish in *The Times* of October 23, 1883. Must we wait other 17 years?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Killarney, Aug. 16. ROSS O'CONNELL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have recently read so many violent attacks on the Post Office that, perhaps, I may be permitted to give you a proof of extreme celerity on the part of that much-maligned organisation. I enclose the postal wrapper of a copy of *Truth*, despatched from that office to a house in the N.W. postal district, 1 a.m., 18-7-00, with postmark. It was reposted to Buxton, postmark N.W., 18-7-00, 12 15 p.m. It reached Buxton the same afternoon, for, although the postmark is barely decipherable, I know it was posted from there on the evening of the 18th, arriving here about 11 a.m. on the 23rd.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,
Sliema, Malta. 21.8.00 MILITIA CAPTAIN.

THE POST OFFICE.

21.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I am not an apologist of the Post Office, and am certainly not one of those (if any such there be) who think the Post Office has attained perfection. But I think many will agree with me that your attack upon it is unnecessarily severe. For instance, you charge against the Post Office "the public scandal of the telephone service." But the telephone service is mainly in the hands of a private company; and for the position of that company I always imagined that some prior Governments of the day rather than the Post Office were responsible, while the House of Commons has had something to say to the matter, and not always to the same effect. Moreover, do not all the difficulties in the way of a satisfactory telephone service arise from the fact that a private company has been authorized to do work which is the work of the Post Office? Yet you advocate a repetition of that mistake in the case of the District Messenger Company!

Again, you compare the regulations of the express delivery service, as set out in the "Postal Guide," with the sweet simplicity of the rules of the District Messenger Company. I have little to say for the "Postal Guide." It contains much useful information, but its arrangement and make-up are repellant. But a glance at the Post Office express regulations will show that there is an obvious reason why they should cover more ground than those of the company; they provide for a greater variety of service. A letter can be carried by the Post Office, as by the company, by special messenger all the way; but the Post Office also delivers a letter by express messenger after it has reached the post-office of destination in the ordinary mails, and that at the request either of the sender or of the addressee. You actually complain that there are "three systems by which letters and parcels can be specially delivered." There would be legitimate complaint if any one were abolished; but while they exist they must be subject to rules. My personal experience is that there is no more trouble or complication in handing an express letter across the counter at a post-office than across the counter at an office of a District Messenger Company.

As to Mr. Henniker Heaton's proposals, some seem well worth consideration, while others, as Sir Spencer Walpole points out to-day, are open to serious objections of principle. But it is a little odd to assume that, because Mr. Henniker Heaton strings together in a light-hearted way all the proposals which are put in his letter-box with little regard to their exact effect so long as they involve change of some kind, his idea of a Post Office is any higher than that of such capable and public-spirited administrators as—to mention only a few names—the late Mr. Fawcett, the Duke of Rutland, Mr. Shaw Lefevre, Mr. Arnold Morley, or Sir Spencer Walpole.

I am yours faithfully,
August 18. A CITIZEN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Greatly as I appreciate and, as I believe, the public generally appreciates Mr. Henniker Heaton's persistent efforts to promote efficiency in the service of the Post Office, and the almost marvellous and unlooked-for success that has attended his efforts for the reduction of postal rates, I think the Department is right in refusing to entertain his suggestion that in the case of inland telegrams the name and address should be sent free. Sir Spencer Walpole hits the true nail on the head when he says "there is no reason for making it at the cost of the writer of the penny letter." Surely the profits arising from the penny postage ought to be applied in reduction of postal rates and in securing greater efficiency in the transmission of letters—not in unduly favouring a small class at the expense of the nation. Allow me to remind your readers that the immoderate initial cost of our telegraphic system was owing to the extravagant terms for the purchase of the telegraphs entered into by a moribund Government, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the succeeding Administration, Mr. Lowe, severely condemned but did not feel it in the power of the Government which he represented to repudiate.

This, and this alone, has proved to be a millstone for more than 30 years round the neck of the Post Office.

21.8.00. Yours faithfully,
Redwell-park, Hatfield, Aug. 18. C. J. MONK.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The apologist of the General Post Office in your issue of August 15 should have added a few lines of history to his plaintive but veracious statement that "the postman tramps through miles of muddy country roads to deliver a single newspaper while Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son make a fortune out of the sale and distribution of papers in towns." The history is that in the days of the mail coaches the Post Office had a monopoly—fortunately for the public only in fact and not by statute—in the delivery of all but purely local newspapers. This monopoly the Post Office lost because it charged ridiculous rates and maintained—alone, I believe, of European post offices—ridiculous regulations as to folding, addressing, &c. And the Smith family made a well-deserved fortune out of the business which Post Office red tape threw away. The law has decided that a telephone is a telegraph. Had it only decided that newspapers are letters—a much less startling assertion to the ordinary mind—and so given the Post Office a statutory monopoly in newspaper carriage, it is interesting to reflect what the effect would have been on the development of the English Press. The greatest living English economist has been heard to say that the Post Office ought in the public interest to be deprived of its statutory monopoly even in the case of letters. The remedy sounds drastic, but, as your apologist says, the interest of the public is after all supreme; and if the Post Office, with its prestige, its acquired position, and its ubiquitous organisation, cannot hold its own against any possible rivalry of new competitors, surely the public interest must be that a department so singularly inept should be deprived—even at a sacrifice of four millions of public revenue—of any further opportunities of obstructing the development of new methods of public service.

I am, Sir, yours &c.,

AN OUTSIDE OBSERVER.

DISTRICT MESSENGERS AND THE POST OFFICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The apparently official apology for the Post Office attitude towards the District Messenger Company in your issue of August 15 contains so many misleading and inaccurate statements that I must ask to be allowed to answer them.

Your correspondent states that "the company is becoming nervous as to its fate in 1903." Probably, if he had provided the £140,000 spent in establishing our business, he would desire to know the company's position in regard to the renewal of its licence before committing himself to further capital expenditure. We naturally desire to know at once how far additional expenditure will be wasted.

He states that we have had "exceptional chances," and "for the last ten years have shared the Postmaster-General's monopoly"; also that "no other agency has been allowed to carry on a similar business." Such statements as these are quite opposed to facts. The company, as the licensee of the Post Office, has all along been saddled with oppressive royalties, and as soon as it had demonstrated that the system was a necessity, the Post Office started a competitive system at losing rates. The Post Office, in addition to taxing us heavily and competing with us, allows large numbers of letters to be daily delivered by commissionaires, street messengers, licensed by the Commissioner of Police, House Boy Brigades, club and hotel porters, bank and other messengers, cabs, &c. The Post Office make no attempt to obtain a royalty, or to preserve their monopoly in these cases. We are the only institution which attempts to render an efficient day and night service, and ours is the only system which is saddled with heavy royalties and has to meet unfair competition. We would not complain of competition on fair terms.

Your correspondent states that the whole of our last year's profit went to pay arrears of dividend on preference shares. This is erroneous. Less than one-half was used for dividend purposes.

He further states that "the company would have it thought that this want of financial success is to be attributed to the crushing dues levied by the Postmaster-General." There can be no room for doubt that the Post Office is responsible for our want of financial success. It has prevented the company from using patents purchased for use in all large cities in the British Isles, and has limited its working to a radius of five miles from the General Post Office. I estimate that from first to last the Post Office attitude has cost us £70,000, in consequence of curtailments of sphere of operations, law expenses, royalties, interest on loans, &c. I may further mention that if a member of the public wishes to send seven letters by our system, we not only have to pay the Post Office a net royalty of 3½d., but are compelled to send a second messenger with the seventh letter. Again, if two letters are handed in to us by different senders for delivery to the same address, or to addresses near to each other, we are forced by the Post Office to send two messengers, thereby materially increasing our expenses. Truly the company has "exceptional chances"!

Your correspondent further states that "dues of 2s. 6d. for every call box and 1d. for every letter were accepted as reasonable in 1891." This, again, is quite inaccurate. The company accepted these terms because it was unable to get better, and had to accept what the Post Office were willing to give. The necessity for reductions in these royalties was repeatedly urged upon the Post Office, and it was clearly shown that such terms were altogether impossible and unreasonable. Unsuccessful applications to the Post Office for reductions were followed by discussions in the House of Commons, with the result that reductions were made.

Your correspondent refers to the rates charged by the Post Office and my company. I can only assume that he has had little practical experience of the tariffs of the two systems. Ours is a rate which includes sending a messenger to the subscriber's house, bringing back a reply when necessary, carrying packages, parcels, bags, &c., without any extra charge. The Post Office charge 50 per cent. extra for a reply, and also charge by weight for packages, bags, &c. The Post Office rates are undoubtedly cheaper for certain services, but then the service they render is distinctly inferior. Many cases have been brought to my notice where the Post Office actually pay more in travelling expenses and wages to messengers than they receive, and it would be interesting to know how they provide for such expenses as salaries of officials, uniforms, stationery, &c. The question is whether we give additional facilities for the increased charges. The fact that we render more services at our 25 offices than the Post Office do at nearly 300 post offices in London and others in the provinces, would appear to show that the public consider we are giving better value for money. This is not difficult to understand. We have always endeavoured to provide a prompt and efficient service available day and night, and free from tiresome regulations, and we have conscientiously considered the best interests of the public in spite of numerous difficulties. We have always recognized that our shareholders' interests depend upon a good service being rendered to the public.

Your correspondent cannot understand why we should be allowed to "infringe the Postmaster-General's monopoly," and is afraid that numerous other agencies will spring up if we are allowed to continue. Our position on this point is that, after ten years' experience of our service, the public consider it an essential feature of London life and demand its continuance; that, as the originators of the electric call system and organized messenger service, we are entitled to fair and equitable treatment; that it is impossible for a business like ours to be conducted by a State department which must always be bound by red tape, instead of making the system simple and elastic and studying the interests of individual clients; and that the renewal of our licence is in no way detrimental to the Post Office interests, but on the contrary the Post Office revenue would be increased by the royalty we pay; and further that a messenger service like ours, if encouraged and properly treated, would pick up a large amount of business which the Post Office could never touch. Having created a considerable business, we urge that we are entitled to more consideration than persons who, in the future, may make applications for licences, and that there should be no difficulty in saying "no" to future applicants if it is desirable in the public interest to do so. They appear to find no difficulty in saying "no" to us!

Many arguments could be advanced showing that the interests of the public, the Post Office, and my company would be best served by a renewal of our licence, but it is clear, from the views expressed by your correspondent, that he regards the preservation of monopolies as of much greater importance than the requirements and convenience of the public.

In conclusion, criticizing Mr. Henniker Heaton's letter, Sir S. Walpole, late Secretary to the Post Office, says:—

"I wish to lodge my protest against the fallacy which seems to underlie most of Mr. Henniker Heaton's proposals—that because the Post Office is making an excessive profit from business in which the whole nation is interested, it is therefore bound to spend it in pushing or establishing unremunerative business in which only a minority of the nation is interested."

But surely that is just what the Post Office is doing when, in order to crush its licensee, it fixes a competitive cutting and losing rate for its express service. What possible justification can there be for the Post Office making a loss on a very urgent message which a rich man wants to send on private affairs? A special, urgent message cannot be classed in the same category as telegrams or postal matter, which, on account of the vast numbers handled, can be carried so cheaply that the humblest may benefit. A special urgent message quickly and accurately performed is well worth paying for, and should not be carried at a loss at the taxpayers' expense.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
GEORGE MANNERS, Chairman, District Messenger Company.

District Messenger Camp, Felixstowe, Aug. 20.

THE JUSTICE AND LIBERALITY OF THE POST OFFICE.

27.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your correspondents Messrs. Richardson and Co. make a suggestion with a view "of saving time, labour, space, and consequently money" in the Post Office arrangements with apparently little hope of their being adopted. To show the slight inducement and encouragement given by the Post Office authorities for making valuable suggestions, I will beg your leave to give a case in point.

In 1861 my friend Mr. E. F. Devenish Walshe, was employed in the Savings Bank Department, which soon got quite out of hand. I quote from Mr. Walshe's application to the Treasury for remuneration and compensation, which he has never had.

"At that time each receipt and acknowledgment of money in the Savings Bank department involved, in the case of each deposit, the following separate operations at the head office. . . . ."—fifteen are enumerated. "Owing to the multiplicity and variety of operations here involved it was soon found that as the number of deposits largely increased the staff of this department became soon quite unequal to the demand made upon it . . . causing a state of inextricable confusion."

"Observing the confusion and delay . . ." Mr. Walshe devised the "combined envelope and receipt now in use, which is well known. The principle of the invention is that one piece of paper combines both envelope and receipt, and when it is opened all the history and details of the particular deposit appear on the face of the document, the name and address of the depositor having to be written only once. This document shows without any manipulation all that was necessary for checking, stamping, and signing the receipt dispensing in the case of every form used with 13 out of 15 operations necessary under the old system."

Mr. Devenish Walshe duly registered his design on December 10, 1861, No. 4,422 on the Register.

His invention was put into operation. Its merits and advantages are described and admitted in the report by Messrs. Scudamore and Chetwynd on the progress of the Savings Bank system made in 1862 and reprinted in 1871 (see sec. 11 appx., pp. 133-144).

The saving to the Post Office is stated to be £1 17s. per 1,000 deposits, &c., and upon calculation "the total direct saving was £411,715 from 1861 to 1896," irrespective of labour saved.

After the combined envelope was begun to be used a verbal intimation was made to Mr. Walshe, by Mr. Scudamore, through Mr. Harrington, that it was considered extremely undesirable for the future that Mr. Walshe's name should appear on each receipt form as registered owner of the invention, and that it was considered advisable by the Post Office authorities that Mr. Walshe should abandon his legal rights. Mr. Walshe under this strong pressure of his official superior "signed this letter." Although aware that he thus abandoned the strictly legal claim he then possessed to be compensated for the use of his invention, he never abandoned, and never signified his intention of abandoning, his moral claim to be so remunerated.

I can only add that Mr. Walshe has only received the usual official expression of regret in reply to his applications for remuneration and compensation.

I am, Sir, yours,
August 18. ARUNDELL OF WARDOUR.

THE POST OFFICE.

23.8.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—We are much obliged by your insertion of our letter of yesterday, but we must point out one slight error. The telegram as despatched read 13s. 6d., and as received 13s. 9d.

Had the former been 13s. 9d. as printed we should of course, have had no cause of complaint.

Your obedient servants,
p.p. J. and R. Grant, G. R. ELLIS.

23, Billiter-street, London, Aug. 22.

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN FIELD FORCE.

23.8.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Writing from Deelfontein Imperial Yeomanry Hospital on July 30 my son says he has not received any letter from me since that by the mail of April 21.

Since that date there have been sent him about 180 letters, papers, and parcels, none of which are apparently to hand, as my son asks, in his letters received with the greatest regularity every week, if any evil has befallen us.

A remittance through the kindness of the Standard Bank found him at Johannesburg, and enabled him to exchange his ragged uniform for garments that covered his nakedness.

It is strange that, whilst the bankers can find him and homeward letters come so regularly, nothing reaches him. Even parcels sent through the embarcation officer at Southampton share the fate of those by parcel and letter post.

I am, Sir, yours truly,
August 21. A. B.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—My experience is the same as that of Lord Ormathwaite and the Rev. C. Hughes.

I have a son in the A.S.C. who received no letters during the months of April and May, though during the latter month he was at Bloemfontein. Before and since he has received a letter occasionally. I have another son with the 4th Cavalry Brigade. He wrote from Pretoria on July 23 that he had only received two letters—one of April 13 and one of May 11—since leaving Bloemfontein on May 12. We have written to both of them every week since they embarked for South Africa. Parcels, strange to say, seem to reach their destination oftener than letters.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
August 21. R. V. T.

TRAVELLING PILLAR-BOXES.

23.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Mr. Henniker Heaton has lately placed before the public a series of important suggestions for reforms in our Post Office work, and with these, taken broadly, I think most business men will agree.

Will you permit me to make yet another suggestion, one I venture to think as important as any yet put forth, and one so obvious and so simple that it is a wonder to me it has never occurred to our energetic reformer? Without at this stage encroaching upon your space with arguments in support of my proposal, I will simply formulate its main points. To me it seems that to state these will ensure their acceptance in principle by all who come into contact with the Post Office as a distributing machine. To secure their acceptance by our Post Office authorities themselves may not be so easy. But all things must have a beginning. And if in the idea which I now formulate the germ shall be found of reform in the direction indicated, others will surely step forward, with more leisure than I can command, to cultivate this germ to fruition.

1. Let every passenger train throughout the kingdom, except such as are for purely local and suburban traffic, be fitted with as many separate locked Post Office boxes as correspond to the important towns at which each train stops.

2. Each box to be marked with the name of the town for which its delivery use is intended. The town names to be indicated by movable interchangeable plates, so that they may be varied to meet the variation in the train stoppings.

3. Such boxes to be placed invariably at the back end of the train, either in the guard's van or next to it.

4. Such boxes to be open for the public posting of letters up to the last moment of the departure of the train and the public to have access to them and to use them in all respects as they use the stationary boxes in the public streets.

5. Each box to be accessible only to the postal authorities by a door opening outwards on to the railway platform—exactly in the same manner as the doors of fixed boxes now open on to the public streets.

6. The railway authorities to have no concern whatever with the boxes.

7. At each stopping station a Post Office collector to await the arrival of the train, to clear the box bearing the name of his town, and to deal with the contents in precisely the same manner as he would deal with the contents of any fixed box in his own town.

The scheme as propounded is a far-reaching one, and would be of immense public advantage when in full work. But I suggest it should be tried experimentally on one of our great main lines.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
BADLESMERE.

22.8.00.

THE POST OFFICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Just at the present moment there is some outcry against the businesslike habits of the Post Office. Let us bring forward two instances of the last week.

We will not go further back, or the instances will be innumerable. On the 15th inst. we wrote :—

"To the Secretary, General Post Office, E.C.

"Sir,—On the 13th inst., at 1.8, our Swansea correspondent, Mr. George Lennard, handed in to the local post-office, for transmission to us, the following telegram :—

"'Thanks telegram. Fixed Laszlo Trieste 13s. 9d., fuel tenth September cancelling. Could not do better.'

"This telegram reached us 13s. 9d. You will easily see that a difference of 3d. per ton on 1,850 tons is a serious matter, and this means £23. We shall be pleased to know what will be done in the matter.

"Your obedient servants,

"J. AND R. GRANT.

"P.S.—We shall be glad to have a prompt explanation. It is important that we should have this not later than Saturday morning at latest."

You will see that we allege a serious telegraphic error, and that we particularly asked for a reply by Saturday. Up to time of writing we have only received the usual circular in reply.

On the 17th inst., early in the morning, we sent to the G.P.O. by hand the following :—

"To the Secretary, General Post Office.

"Dear Sir,—One packet of Italian newspapers posted at Fiume to Giovanni Zelazimk, s.s. Matyas Kiraly, to our care, has not been delivered. As the boat goes away to-morrow, we shall be much obliged if you will make inquiries to-day and try to find the packet.

"Yours truly,

"p.p. J. and R. Grant, G. S. ELLIS."

One would think that even a Government official would understand that a foreign sailor in England yearns for some news of his home.

Up to now we have not received even the printed circular in reply to this letter.

Your obedient servants, J. AND R. GRANT.

23, Billiter-street, E.C., Aug. 21.

TRAVELLING PILLAR-BOXES.

29. 8. 00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—When "Date Stamp" asks me in *The Times* of to-day "if I consider the postal service of any State of Europe or in America, taken as a whole, even equal to the British postal system," consideration for the space of even such a mammoth journal as *The Times* compels me, without giving any reasons, to reply in the negative.

But though a mansion taken as a whole is superior to a cottage, details may exist in the cottage which could with great advantage be applied to the mansion, and my suggestions were chiefly that in this country, as in America, every railway station should be a telegraph one, and that facilities should be also given at every railway station to send letters off by train.

If these things that appear so easily done abroad require special legislation in this country, then I say let us have the legislation, and soon.

Yours, &c.,

August 28. S. NUGENT TOWNSHEND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Since your correspondent "Date Stamp" wishes to know, I may say (what he might have deduced from my first letter) that I do not consider the ownership of the English and German railways comparable. But that is not the point. It is that the travelling pillar box is of great practical value and convenience, as those who have used it abroad can testify. Although I know that our railway companies are far from patriotic, I do not think them so unreasonable as to make such an arrangement impossible. Really this question of travelling pillar boxes is merely a detail in the defect of principle of using sorting *en route* altogether too little.

I doubt whether at the present day our postal system can be said to be better than the German or the American, except perhaps in London itself. The provinces are greatly neglected. Compare the service between New York and Washington with its 12 deliveries a day with that between London and Liverpool with only five deliveries a day. Not content with standing in our own way, we are also selfish to other countries—*e.g.*, the British P.O. will not allow the sorting of the American mails on boats under the British flag.

If special legislation is required for improvements, then it must be introduced. It is the summation of our deficiencies in little points such as these, in every department of commerce and science, which is rapidly and surely diminishing the start which we once had of other nations.

Yours, &c.,

August 28. 29.8.00. UP TO DATE STAMP.

TRAVELLING PILLAR BOXES.

27. 8. 00 TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—If our postal and, indeed, many other Governmental authorities would only prefer to lead instead of being driven, it would save many growling encroachments on your space.

Governments ought always to be in a better position to adopt improvements in their departments than any member of the public to suggest them, and, as to travelling post-offices, they are not unknown in this country, and were universal in the United States more than 20 years ago on every line of railway there. "Badlemere's" questions as formulated by "Date Stamp" are all easily answered by the U.S. postal procedure. In small wayside stations the public are admitted to the platform, and, as each postal car has large slots for mail reception at both sides, there is no inconvenience caused by the trains coming in any direction to any platform.

But where the stations are large, and only ticket holders are admitted, then there are railway boxes in the ticket-office approach, and these are cleared by the travelling postmen just before the train leaves.

Apropos of this, not only is every American railway station a place where letters, &c., can be posted, but it is also a telegraph station. Why should not our Postmaster-General lead in these elementary benefits to the public, more especially the travelling public, instead of being driven into them, for the expense of transforming a goods truck into a travelling postal car is not at all an expensive matter?

Why do not our departmental chiefs go or send abroad to learn how these things are done to perfection and universally availed of?

It is beyond the purpose of this letter to go into other departments of Government and corporate management, but I cannot deny myself the temptation to ask you to draw attention to the splendid and successful way in which the public lands acquired by cession and conquest in the Western States were administered, with the result of a very immediate and sometimes dense colonization. That settlement of loyal, hard-working foreigners as well as of Americans would be one of the greatest importance to study at present in the South African arrangements now in progress. I was entrusted in 1880 with a small part of such settlement in Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico, and nothing that I ever attempted was so successful, both to the settlers and the settled, or gave me more pleasure, or ever led to warmer or more enduring friendships. Five million acres were thus occupied in 160 acre lots in eight years in Kansas alone.

Yours, &c.,

S. NUGENT TOWNSHEND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I wonder whether your correspondent "Date Stamp" has ever been in Germany. Travelling post boxes are the rule there, and were so even before the railways all became State property. It is true you have to pay 1d. to get on to the platform, but if you choose to post your letter only five minutes before the train is due you can do so in the station letter-box without extra charge.

The innovation would consist only in copying what other countries have done before us. If possible to them, it should be to us. I am, Sir, &c.,

August 24. 27.8.00. UP-TO-DATE STAMP.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As, like Rosa Dartle, I only want to know, may I ask Mr. S. N. Townshend if he considers the postal service in any State of Europe or in America is, taken as a whole, even equal to the British postal system?

Of "Up-to-Date Stamp" I would inquire whether he thinks the ownership and control of German railways stand precisely, or even nearly, on the same footing as those of British railways.

Have your correspondents really mastered the elementary facts? As it is, they remind me of an amiable Bishop who, in *The Times*, once propounded a law of his own for settling trade disputes. When asked how he would give effect to what seemed to be an impracticable idea, he adroitly replied, in substance, that was none of his business; he supplied principles, let others work out the detail!

Briefly put, the suggestions offered are, without legislation, quite impracticable; and even an enabling Act could render them possible only at a cost ludicrously disproportionate to the gain, or by methods which must necessarily fall short of the speed and precision of the existing post.

This is not saying that improvements are not possible. Far from it. Let us advance by all means, but with wisdom as well as vigour.

August 27. 28. 8. 00 DATE STAMP.

TRAVELLING PILLAR BOXES.

1.9.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have read with interest and satisfaction the correspondence which has appeared in your columns on this subject, in reply to my communication of the 23rd. It is gratifying to me to learn that my proposal appears to be justified by the actual existence and practical working in other countries of arrangements similar to those which I suggest. Of your various correspondents "Date Stamp" is the only one whose observations call for any reply on my part. To his six "elementary questions" the answers seem to me obvious, but as he puts them to me as difficulties in opposition to my proposal, I think he is entitled to categorical replies. These, with your permission, I now give :—

1. The authority to fix boxes on trains would be the same as that which governs the existing relations of the Post Office with the railway companies in respect to the carriage of her Majesty's mails. The railway companies would, of course, be paid for the transport of the boxes and their contents, and would I imagine be only too ready to accept such an additional source of revenue. If not, any necessary compulsory powers could be obtained.

2. The public would have access to the railway platforms by arrangement with the railway companies or by compulsory powers if necessary. This would involve no inconvenience to the railway companies. As a matter of fact at present the non-travelling public have in most cases free access to platforms up to the departure times of trains.

3. Any trains halting at the off side platforms at any stations *en route* would not at their starting platforms present open boxes for the reception of letters for such stations. In other words, off side platform stations would be treated as non-stopping stations.

4. No matter how many portions long distance trains may be made up in, they have always a tail end and this alone need be considered for the purpose of the scheme if extreme simplicity be essential. In actual working, however, I imagine each "portion" could be considered as a separate train, without confusion.

5. I should certainly consider 1s. apiece too much for the collection of letters from the "travelling boxes." The amount I should consider fair would be just so much as it costs for the local collection of letters from the fixed boxes at present existing either on the platforms or in the streets outside the stations; the labour would be identical. As to the cost of delivering the letters collected, "Date Stamp" is evidently under some strange delusion. Letters collected from the "travelling boxes" would take their place in the collector's bag along with those collected from the fixed boxes on his round and would follow the usual routine of distribution.

6. This, the last "elementary question," seems to let a flood of light upon the opposition of "Date Stamp." It is not proposed to establish "a new postal service parallel with the old one." The whole postal machinery of collection and distribution as at present existing would remain absolutely undisturbed in its organization. All that is proposed is to increase the existing fixed pillar boxes by certain others which shall travel. And these being established all that would be necessary would be that the Post Office officials of each town should add to the rounds of their "fixed box" collectors the "travelling boxes" of the trains stopping at their stations.

From the remarks of your other correspondents I feel satisfied that my proposal is one that could be introduced with considerable advantage and convenience to the public. Its principle seems to me to be incontestable and its practical working only a question of detail. That our postal authorities will voluntarily deal with the matter is, I am afraid, out of the question. Pressure is needed on the part of one who will not rest till the end has been attained. Where is our redoubtable champion Mr. Henniker Heaton?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

1.9.00 BADLESMERE.

TRAVELLING PILLAR BOXES.

28.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The "elementary questions" put by your correspondent "Date Stamp" to "Badlesmere" appear to be difficult to answer. I think, however, that it would be serviceable and quite feasible if the Post Office authorities were to give in the "Post Office Guide" a list, divided into "roads," of trains which have travelling post-offices and boxes attached, with the extreme points duly notified thus :—5 30 a.m., Paddington to X. ; 5 40 a.m., Paddington to Y. The information would be more useful in the case of the day mails than of the night mails.

Putford, August 25. J. J. GRATREX.

TRAVELLING PILLAR BOXES.

24.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your correspondent "Badlesmere" repeats in effect the plausible suggestion many times offered that the Post Office should arrange for letter-boxes to be attached to every passenger train throughout the kingdom—the public to have the same access to them and to use them as they use the stationary boxes in the public streets. The railway authorities are, *mirabile dictu*, to have no concern whatever with the boxes.

Has "Badlesmere" asked himself these elementary questions :—

1. By what authority can the Post Office fix such boxes on part of the private property of a railway company?

2. Under whose authority are the non-travelling public to be guaranteed access at will to a railway platform?

3. Do trains starting from a near-side platform never halt on the way at an off-side platform? If so, what about the near-side boxes?

4. Are long distance trains never made up in two or more portions, and so with two or more guard's vans?

5. Has the cost been calculated of collecting and delivering letters so posted? Would "Badlesmere" consider 1s. apiece too much?

6. Does he think that such a system (which means a new postal service parallel with the old one) could ever be worked without an amount of friction annoying to all concerned?

Not to go further, does any one who has studied the matter believe that without a travelling post-office and its sorting staff—apart from the machinery for collection at stopping points and subsequent delivery—the "far reaching" (it is certainly that) plan of "Badlesmere" could be made a true convenience to the public? The hard logic of facts seems to be against it.

August 23. DATE STAMP.

TRAVELLING PILLAR BOXES.

3.9.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—"Badlesmere" clearly belongs to Napoleon's band of Englishmen who never know when they are beaten! That he has the courage of his opinions is beyond a doubt, and as a bold cross-country rider he makes no more of my fences, grips, and five-barred gates than a kangaroo of an Australian log.

So, as he is a past-master in the art of reply, I will by way of finish venture, with your leave, on only one more question. Where does "Badlesmere" expect to find a Government weak enough to propose and strong enough to carry the compulsory legislation essential to his scheme? Compulsory vaccination would be as child's play to it.

As to cost, "Badlesmere's" cheerful notion of a local postman happening in at the nick of time and doing everything for nothing is a sound piece of strategy. I fear, however, that amongst the unregenerate who share my "delusion" it will but create a smile.

So let us attempt a practical test. The plan cannot live without a sorter in the train to do postal work—however trifling—on the move. His day's pay and night's lodging money might be as little as 10s. A train from London to Carlisle may stop at six stations, even counting "Badlesmere's" wondrous "non-stopping stations" as stops. How many letters does he suppose would be posted at each station. As many as ten? Incredible! However, 10×6=60 would yield in postage about 5s. The sorter's fare would be somewhere between 25s., the single fare, and £12 10s., the fares of a full compartment, according to the sorting space boxed off for his use. Put it as low as 50s., or two fares; say, for expense of meeting the train at six points 5s. Other expenses let us neglect. Therefore, against a gross receipt of 5s. sums of 10s.+50s.+5s.=65s. would be spent—equal to 13 times the postage. My snapshot of 1s. per letter would seem to be in the bull's-eye. Let "Badlesmere" ponder the fact!

September 1. DATE STAMP.

THE POST OFFICE.

24.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The country has reason to be grateful to Mr. Henniker Heaton, who by his unflagging energy, superadded to his influence in the House of Commons, has forced on an unwilling Post Office a number of advantageous changes. It is rather to be regretted that he has responded to the official spider and walked into his parlour, so to speak, by supplying the Department with so many sensible recommendations.

The Session is over, and the officials now have ample time before the next meeting of Parliament to exercise their ingenuity in inventing reasons to demonstrate how entirely impossible it would be to fall in with any of Mr. Heaton's ideas. The letter of the late Secretary to the Post Office which appeared in your issue of the 18th inst. seems to confirm this opinion.

The fact, however, is that principles should be grappled with before details. No reasonable man will trouble himself with schemes for the painting and decoration of his house while its fabric is faulty and foundations insecure, and such, indeed, is the condition of the British Post Office. Established on a bad foundation, it has been worked on erroneous principles. Till these are amended minor questions had better be put to one side. The Post Office should be managed by those who not only understand the correct methods of scientific business working, but who are also possessed with the needful authority to carry them into effect; such persons will not require advice from outsiders. The Postmaster-General's invitation to Mr. Henniker Heaton to make suggestions is very much the same thing as if a captain of a ship were to ask one of the passengers to say what course should be steered.

The great majority seem to be under the impression that the Post Office is a kind of a co-operative department of the State, established and worked for the general benefit of the public. This is a complete mistake. The Post Office is in reality a revenue department, and its primary object is to collect taxes indirectly, the convenience of the public being a secondary matter.

The Post Office was originally formed for the Sovereign, and not for his subjects, a tradition which has been carried on from the earliest times until the present. The office originated in the reign of Henry VIII.; that Monarch was *de facto* as well as *de jure* ruler of England. In his reign there was a Court official called the Master of the Posts, who made arrangements for couriers and horses to convey communications to the King from different places. A regular line of posts was first placed between Dover and Hampton Court, rendering special messengers unnecessary between these points. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth two similar lines were arranged, one between the Court and Berwick-on-Tweed, the other to Holyhead. Later on private individuals were permitted, on payment of a fixed charge, to send articles by the post or to travel post, all money so collected being the perquisite of the Crown. An inland Post Office was commenced in the reign of Charles I. and became a statutory department in 1660. From this small beginning the existing Post Office has grown; the Treasury now receives the revenue instead of the Crown, but the public convenience and interest are as much subordinated to the Treasury's as they were to the King's in bygone days. The Postmaster-General has taken the place of the Master of the Posts and has really no more power to decide how the Post Office revenue should be expended than the ancient Court officer had. The latter did what the King required, the former must be guided by the Treasury.

Of late it has been rather the practice to attack this Department and find much fault with the officials. Very likely a great deal of the abuse which has been poured on them may be deserved. No one, however, seems to have thought it necessary to blame the Treasury officials because of the way in which the taxes of the country are collected; no one asks that the Inland Revenue and Customs Department should be managed with an eye to anything but the revenue. Now, it is mainly with a view to the collection of revenue that the Post Office is carried on as it is. The public does not like the results that necessarily follow, but so long as the Department continues to be conducted on this principle it seems hardly fair to blame the Treasury. The Admiralty and War Office Departments are intended for the defence of the country, and not for the collection of revenue; although indirectly influenced by the Treasury in time of peace they are not controlled by that Department, while in time of war its indirect influence practically vanishes.

If the Post Office is to be made a department for the convenience of the public it must be worked on a different basis, and be freed absolutely from the Treasury's direct control. Some will say a liberal policy would improve the net revenue of the Post Office, but this is not necessarily so. It may be the case when persons or companies are in competition that the one who acts most liberally will earn the most money; but when there is a monopoly such as the Post Office holds more money is made by keeping expenses down and reducing facilities and generally acting in what is called an illiberal manner. Without doubt this is the view of the Treasury and Post Office officials, who are blamed by persons who do not perceive that the former are only acting in order to increase the revenue, and not from any ingrained vice or desire to annoy the public.

Holding these views, they have opposed every change that has ever been proposed. For example, near the end of the last century, although the Post Office had been in existence over 200 years, very few improvements had been made. Perhaps one of the greatest reforms ever suggested was the utilization of the stage coaches for the conveyance of the mails, out of which the present system of railway conveyance has grown. It was a scheme of a Mr. Palmer, who was not connected with the Post Office. His plan was vehemently opposed by the officials of the time, but Mr. Pitt, who was then Prime Minister, saw its merits and caused an Act of Parliament to be passed authorising the adoption of the plan. To give a more modern instance, the introduction of the penny post about 60 years later was the idea of an outsider, Mr. Rowland Hill. It was also strongly opposed, and great loss prophesied by the officials, but the House of Commons took a contrary view, and the plan was carried out.

The two reformers met with different treatment. Mr. Palmer was appointed Controller of the Post Office, and after some years the Treasury officials succeeded in getting rid of him; a progressive officer did not suit them. Mr. Hill was made Secretary, and, being of a less combative disposition than Mr. Palmer, adapted himself to his surroundings, and in a short time became thoroughly imbued with official ways. Any one now who imagines that there can be any real reform of the Post Office under the present system, and tries to bring it about, will either share the fate of Mr. Palmer or become fossilized like Mr. Hill.

Were Mr. Henniker Heaton behind the scenes of the Post Office he would speedily find that the Treasury officials are the real masters, and that the Postmaster-General has about as much to do with the management of the office as the figurehead of a vessel has with her navigation.

It should be noted that the complaints against the Post Office have increased concurrently with the Postmaster-General's having ceased to be a member of the House of Commons. It seems to be the case that at no time have the Treasury officials been able to exercise more control than they are now doing. Lord Londonderry, the present Postmaster-General, a man universally respected, is not even a member of the Cabinet, and it would be as unfair to blame him for not reforming the Post Office as it would be for his not stopping the tide at London Bridge.

The Postmaster-General's function is to have the nominal responsibility. His august name is used by the officials whom he does not control, and, sheltering behind him, they exercise all the power and escape all the blame. The Secretary, or permanent head of the Department, is an ex-Treasury and Inland Revenue official, with no experience whatever of postal business. This may seem anomalous, but really it is not so from a Treasury aspect, as the permanent head of the Post Office is placed there to look after the revenue more than to deal with postal questions. Doubtless to the ordinary mind it does seem extraordinary, when to the functions of a letter-carrier are added the business of a goods carrier, and also telegraph, telephone, banking, insurance, stockbroking business, &c., that this Briareus-like department should essay to exercise its functions with not only its Parliamentary but also its permanent head devoid of any knowledge of these matters. This, however, is the case, the wonder only being that the business is conducted as well as it is.

Some people believe it would be an advantage if Mr. Henniker Heaton were made Postmaster-General; as matters now stand it would be rather a calamity, for so long as he is an independent member of the House of Commons he may be able to effect something, but, once inside the walls of the Post Office, he would be as helpless as his predecessors.

The whole question is one for the House of Commons. They have decided that many things should be done by the Post Office contrary to the advice and wishes of the

officials. The House have only to determine that the Department should be worked on sound commercial principles for the general benefit of the whole community, this being the primary object, the collection of revenue the secondary one.

There seems a difficulty at present to find a policy to set before the electors. If Mr. Heaton and those who think with him will make the reformation of the Post Office a plank in the political platform I feel sanguine that a majority of the electors will adopt their views. There is hardly a man, woman, or child in the British Islands who does not make use of the Post Office, directly or indirectly. Every one has not a vote, but nearly every one can influence an elector. Let every one do this and let the electors decline to vote for any candidate who will not promise to pledge himself to postal reform on the lines here indicated, and the reform will be accomplished. Reform of the War Office seems now considered essential, but a reform of the Post Office is as much, if not even more, necessary.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

August 23. OUTIS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As a large user of postal conveniences, will you permit me to say that I think that Sir Spencer Walpole's strictures on Mr. Henniker Heaton far within the bounds of moderation? The logical result of Mr. Henniker Heaton's policy would be gratuitous transportation of all letters and newspapers. I question the desirability or sound policy of cheapening the postal service, giving ocean penny postage, &c., as simply increasing the burden of letter answering to busy people and making the general public, which sends *per capita*, few letters, pay for the multitudinous service of the writers of numerous letters—i.e., business men and firms, who can well afford to pay their postage. We want good, not cheap, service. I use, according to our local postmaster, more stamps than any other private person in the postal circuit, but I deprecate any more provocations to write letters. Make every branch of the service pay, but give us an adequate service—what we have now is half starved from mistaken economies. We kill off the postmen to give the letter writers cheap postage. In this district we have this summer had three carriers break down from the excessive weights they have had to carry in the hot weather, one of them died and one, I fear, permanently crippled; the doctor says from the loads he had to carry.

It is a shame to permit men to stagger through their rounds under burdens of postal packages added to the legitimate letter and paper post loads which are more fitted to a donkey than a man. A beast so overloaded would provoke the interference of the R.S.P.C.A.

Then such an organisation of the distribution! I live a little over two miles from the chief distributing office of a large district—our local office is hardly a mile away, but the postman makes his round from the chief office, not from our own, with the exception of a small portion of one round, which is vagariously served from the local post office. The chief office is just 45 minutes from London by a quick train, and we have a partial first delivery at 8 a.m., but *The Times* and other morning papers reach us at 2 30 p.m., so that most of the copies come through Smith and Co. who employ a little boy, doing the deliveries on foot, between 8 and 9 a.m. I get the evening papers sometimes at 8, sometimes at 2 30, and sometimes the next morning.

This morning, the letter-carrier brings me, as part of his burden, two boxes of fruit. And, owing to the parcimony of the G.P.O., he has to make a round of quite five miles. I would willingly wait a few hours for my parcels to come by a proper parcels delivery service, but to keep my letters and papers back while the poor carrier distributes all the fruit, flowers, and parcels of the district at the same delivery is a nuisance.

I am Sir, 24.8.00 A NOBODY.

THE POST OFFICE.

24.8.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—We are pleased to be able to tell you that publicity begins to have some effect upon the Post Office.

Up to yesterday morning, when you published our complaint, we could get no reply from the Post Office. By a curious coincidence an official arrived here yesterday afternoon to explain that search had been made for the missing packet which had not been found. Of course, as the steamer for which it was intended had left, the information was useless.

By a still more curious coincidence, we have this morning received a letter from the Post Office to say that the telegraphic error of 13s. 9d. for 13s. 6d.—a mistake which made a difference of £23 to us—is "regretted." Your obedient servants,

J. and R. GRANT.

23, Billiter-street, London, Aug. 23.

REGISTERED LETTERS.

24.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—It is to be hoped that the efforts of Mr. Henniker Heaton to reform the General Post Office will some day prove effectual.

May I give an instance to show how urgently reform is needed in the matter of effective registration of letters?

Some time last year a lady in the North of England remitted the sum of £14 to the secretary of a religious society in London. The letter, which contained two bank-notes for £5 each and a money-order for £4, was duly registered, but never reached its destination.

The postman who was charged with its delivery came into the office of the religious society and said he had, through some oversight, lost possession of the letter and the form of receipt attached to it, and could not tell what had become of it, his impression being that he had inadvertently delivered the letter and the form of receipt with the ordinary letters.

It should be added that the society has its offices in a building in which many other offices are located, and that the letters are entrusted to the housekeeper appointed by the landlord for distribution to the various offices.

The matter was immediately brought to the notice of the Post Office authorities and a formal claim was entered for compensation. After the usual formalities, the Post Office repudiated its liability, and, although the claim was repeated by the society's solicitors, the authorities would only consent to cancel the money order, which had not been presented for payment, and to issue a new order on repayment of the commission, 6d. The society was never able to trace the letter, and held that, as the Post Office could produce no signed receipt to prove that the letter had been received by any one, its loss was the direct result of the postman's carelessness and should be made good by the Postmaster-General.

In the official reply to the society's solicitors, the following extraordinary statement appears:—

"It is of course hardly necessary to add that it is well established law that no legal liability whatever attaches to the Postmaster-General in such cases, and that any payment of compensation made by him is made voluntarily and as an act of grace. And, as stated in paragraph 20, page 16, of the Post Office Guide, the decision of the Postmaster-General on all questions of compensation is final."

In view of such an instance as this, and doubtless many similar instances might be given, it becomes necessary to ask what is the good of undertaking the trouble and cost of registering money remittances? I for one have given up the practice, and would advise others to do so and to remit only by crossed cheque on banker's draft.

In the instance I have given, the lady unfortunately omitted to keep a memorandum of the numbers of the bank notes, and this was, of course, used by the Post Office as an additional reason for repudiating its liability.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

London, Aug. 22. K. P. D.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Shivering here at 7 30 p.m. yesterday, I wired to the Isle of Wight for a bulky woollen garment—a rowing "sweater." The parcel post delivered it here at 9 30 a.m. to-day. This long cross-country journey (including the passage of the Solent) done in such a few hours and for so few pence seems to deserve publicity. Can any other country match it for economy of time and money?

Yours obediently,

L. C. RIDDETT.

The Bell Hotel, Streatley, Berks.

24.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As a contrast to the statement of one of your correspondents, who wrote from a remote part of Scotland praising the arrangement of the Post Office, by which he could get a copy of *The Times* at 6 p.m. on the day of publication, will you kindly allow me to state our experience here? This place, West Hanningfield, is only 36 miles from London and yet we cannot get a daily paper delivered here through the Post Office until the day after its publication. Two years ago we sent a petition signed by the residents here to the Postmaster-General requesting that a better arrangement might be made; but the reply was that the existing arrangements could not be disorganised by any alteration.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. WACE, Rector of West Hanningfield.

West Hanningfield, Chelmsford, Essex, Aug. 21.

27.8.00 TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—We have read with great interest the letters which have appeared under the heading "An Ideal Post Office."

That which appealed most strongly to ourselves was Messrs. Richardson's suggestion re payment by gross weight *plus* a percentage to cover loss by the odd ounces.

How this would work out we cannot say; but as the Post Office would no doubt make the calculation on such a basis as would insure them against loss, the possibility is that we, and all others posting large quantities, would stand to lose something by the arrangement, and as we get not a cent of profit out of postage stamps we have no margin against this.

Their suggestion that in return for this concession we should undertake the sorting is impracticable, as, excepting in the case of say India, China, Australia, the Cape, and other of the principal countries (which we already do), it would be impossible to make up separate bags for every corner of the earth to which we post newspapers, magazines, &c.

There is, in our opinion, one thing needful to make an ideal Post Office, and that a very important one—the issuing of unnegotiable stamps.

Any one with any experience on the subject knows that wherever *employés* have to be trusted with stamps this is a fruitful source of dishonesty, and often the beginning of the downward path.

We have for years past urged this upon the Postmaster-General, both by letters from ourselves and by a petition signed by all the leading firms of newsagents, but the answer has always been the same, "regret that they cannot accept our suggestion." Yet it would cost nothing to carry out—*i.e.*, a line made by a graver across the plates from which the stamps are printed. This would produce a white line across each stamp, such stamps to be considered as "crossed" and therefore unnegotiable.

Perforation, in which the Post Office seems unexplainably interested, is pointed out as being permitted as a means to this end, but inasmuch as the stamps are so "weakened" that they tear in the wrong place, and there is a charge for it which, although small, means something a year where large quantities of stamps are used, does not meet the case.

Some time since, when we had an interview on this subject with an official representing the secretary, the arguments put forward against it were, "That if all stamps were rendered unnegotiable it might prevent persons sending small sums by post, such as a son sending a few stamps to his old mother"; and when it was pointed out that even if a postal order would not meet the case the option of purchasing negotiable or unnegotiable stamps would do so, he still objected on the ground of "the difficulty of keeping both sorts." We met this by suggesting that unnegotiable stamps should only be obtainable at the chief offices, yet he still maintained his objection; he, however, concluded, with a sudden gleam of intelligence, "but very soon the public would only want the unnegotiable stamps," to which the obvious reply was, "That is our case."

Yet, strange as it may seem, and although their own detectives discovered that we were being robbed of stamps, they still refused to grant us this protection, referring us to the eternal and useless perforation.

Although we do not agree with the idea that a surplus from one branch of postal work should be "given" to those using another, we certainly think that everything should be done to make that service as perfect as possible, and in the above and in many other ways it has recently been shown that there exists grave cause for dissatisfaction, and that the Post Office is anything but the "ideal" that it might be made.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

W. H. EVERETT and SON (World's Publications Supply).

Salisbury-square, E.C., Aug. 24.

27.8.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Under above heading I note in copy of *The Times* of to-day a letter from L. C. Riddett, Bull Hotel, Streatley, how prompt we Post Office officials can grapple with matters. I shall be glad if you will kindly state, in your next issue, message referred to was despatched from this office to Isle of Wight, not Streatley office. I expect Mr. Riddett was confused between Goring and Streatley.

Yours faithfully,

HENRY LACEY SMITH, Postmaster.

August 24.

THE POST OFFICE.

3.9.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have before me the regulations of the "General Post Office, London" as advertised in "The Comic Almanack" for 1836. They run thus:—

"Letters to go the same day must be put in before 7 o'clock, but those put in before half-past 7 will go the same evening by paying 6d. each."

Letters so posted were delivered in this village next morning.

Sixty-four years have passed, years of progress such as this world has never seen. To-day, letters posted in London long before 7 o'clock are not delivered here till 1 p.m. next day.

Yours faithfully, W. M. L.

Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, Aug. 31.

THE POST OFFICE.

27.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In all the correspondence upon this subject which has appeared in your columns it seems to be taken as an axiom that the statutory monopoly which the Postmaster-General possesses must be and ought for reasons of public policy to be maintained.

My object in addressing you is to raise the question whether such a monopoly is necessary and desirable, either for the Post Office or the taxpayer.

The figures which you published show that the official estimate of profits for the year from the Post Office was about 3¾ millions sterling; the loss on telegraphs was rather over a quarter of a million sterling.

Thus, in order to make the taxpayer no worse off than he has been, posts and telegraphs must net at least 3½ millions sterling a year.

What reason is there to suppose that, even if the statutory monopoly of the Post Office were abolished, such a profit would not be reached?

The official answer is, "If you allow competition, all our profitable business will be taken away, and all our unprofitable business will still have to be done.

But surely this is inconceivable. The Post Office has, or ought to have, such an organization at work in these islands that no competitor could seriously invade it.

Where it neglected its business it would be at once, or almost at once, brought to book by small enterprises equipped with better brains. It would itself be compelled to secure—and from its wealth and position could secure—as good brains as every other trader does when threatened by competition, and thus probably large fresh sources of income would be, as in the case of other traders, found out, which are now lying untapped. For certain parts of its business it might have to fight.

But this it does now—*e.g.*, in the parcel post, where it gives, in consequence of competition, compensation for loss which it refuses to give for its telegraph errors where it has a monopoly.

Again, though it is illegal, owing to this monopoly, to send a letter by a country carrier's cart or a college messenger, the Post Office allow you to send a letter enclosed in their own parcel post, so as to help their own parcel service, which competes with other agencies.

But even suppose the worst came to the worst and the whole profit disappeared.

This would be but 3½ millions a year—a mere bagatelle to Chancellors of the Exchequer who can raise what they like in New York at a moment's notice, and that disappearance of profit, be it remembered, would all go into the taxpayer's pocket in another way—viz., by the cheapening or improving his facilities for postal and cognate services.

If it be objected that this is making one set of taxpayers pay for another, I would point to Sir S. H. Walpole's authority in his letter to you to prove that this inequality exists at present, since the sender of penny letters is by him declared to pay for all other postal services. For these reasons I should like to see the Postmaster-General's monopoly suspended for (say) four years, and I believe myself that it would prove as beneficial financially as it would commercially.

Yours obediently,

The Orchard, Cambridge, Aug. 20. FARRER.

POST OFFICE INCAPACITY.—"C." writes from Ipswich:—"About last Midsummer Day the plate that gives the times of collection and the little tickets that tell whether the collection has been made were removed by the authorities from a pillar or rather wall box near my house. They are still absent, and on inquiry I find that the times of collection have been altered and that the plates were sent to Birmingham to be corrected, that they came back a few days ago, and that, as they did not fit, they have been sent to the midland capital again to be put right. As it took two months to alter them before, I assume it must take as long this time, and we shall thus have been for one-third of a year in the unhappy state of knowing that the times of collection are not what they were, but without any information as to what they are, or any guidance as to whether we have or have not caught the post. The blame for the muddle does not seem to rest with our local folk, but with those in authority over us. As the same thing is probably going on all over the country, I trust that you will enable me to give public voice to my complaint. The inconvenience which I personally have suffered is great, for many times I have had to go to the General Post Office to be certain that my letters would catch a particular post. All this could be remedied if temporary slips printed on paper were supplied to the postmen to affix on the boxes whilst the iron plates are away. As it is we have nothing to guide us." 30.8.00

THE POST OFFICE AND TAXATION.

20.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In your leading article to-day on postal affairs I find the following sentence:—"In the former alternative the monopoly becomes a form of taxation, which, like any other form of taxation, is open to consideration on the grounds of policy and expediency." The relation of postal revenue to taxation thus casually touched is, it seems to me, a matter of some importance which is seldom raised and unknown to many.

As Lord Farrer observes, there is a profit on the working of the post and telegraphs combined of about 3½ million pounds. And this is not an accidental thing, as a few figures will show. In the year ended March, 1895, the surplus revenue was £2,928,475; in 1896, £3,533,126; in 1897, £3,756,023; in 1898, £3,429,941; in 1899, £3,637,442; and in 1900 it is a little less than in 1899, but the figures are not yet complete. These figures are a reply to your suggested alternative, which was whether the profit on letters pays for the loss on parcels and newspapers. That, of course, is a very interesting inquiry; but the figures above quoted show that the difficulty in the way of reform is not a difficulty from revenue, or earnings at the Post Office. There is no use in beating about the bush, for the postal revenue is undoubtedly of great consequence to the Treasury. It has been a surprise to some how it is that Mr. Hanbury, whose duties as Secretary of the Treasury are heavy, should in this Government have undertaken postal inquiries at "question time" in the Commons; but it is not surprising when it is reflected how closely the Treasury watches the revenue of the Post Office.

In effect, then, the Post Office is used every year as a tax-gatherer, and is an example of making "one set of taxpayers pay for another" of a more serious kind than Lord Farrer seemed to think as he wrote, and much more serious than the question as between parcels and newspapers on one hand and letters on the other, but intimately and vitally connected with the one and the other. I venture to commend this aspect of the question to Mr. Henniker Heaton's attention. His little present of suggestions to Lord Londonderry will not issue in much reform while it is necessary to supply the Treasury with 3½ million pounds every year from the postal revenue. I do not propose to discuss the merits of this method of raising Imperial revenue, but would call attention to the fact only.

Yours, &c., W. M. J. WILLIAMS.

National Liberal Club, Aug. 27.

THE POST OFFICE.

31.8.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—A large part of the letter of your correspondent "Outis," although highly interesting from the historical point of view, hardly supplies the material for a reorganization of the Post Office, which he, very reasonably, seems to think desirable.

"Outis" is right in his allegation that the Treasury officials are the real masters of the Post Office; but his suggestion that the Post Office should be freed absolutely from Treasury control is, it is to be feared, looking at our national system of finance, outside the sphere of practical politics.

It is in this respect that able and intelligent reformers often do so much to defeat their own ideas—by advancing as feasible that which a study of facts would show to be impracticable; and so they give a handle to their opponents in decrying or refusing other suggestions of real value.

No doubt what is needed at the Post Office is (1) that the Postmaster-General should always be a Minister of Cabinet rank; (2) that a director-general, whose business would be wholly with questions of progress and reform and not all with detail and official routine, should be interposed between the Secretary and the Minister; and (3) that there should be an understanding that on all questions except those of the first order—such as mail packet services and large augmentations of the establishment—the *dictum* of the Postmaster-General should prevail at the Treasury. On such large questions the Minister, in case of Treasury opposition, could at any time claim the support of his Cabinet colleagues.

On the judgment shown in the selection of the director-general for service during a fixed term of, say, five years all would depend. The eyes of the public would naturally be upon him. He would, by that stimulus, be kept up to the mark, and by his deeds would the selection be justified. I do not touch on the numerous improvements ready to his hand, nor on the essential point of a recognition of the inadequate organization both in scope and in pay of the "eyes" of the Department—the surveyors. I need go no further than mention the discouraging position of the working boes, the postmasters (on whom so much depends), and who are strangers to that institution—more blessed in its operation than the word Mesopotamia—annual increments of salary.

With reorganization such as I have roughly sketched out, and which might take effect almost to-morrow, greater progress could be made in public convenience and in net revenue at the Post Office than even its apostle, Mr. Henniker Heaton, has dreamt of and only one Chancellor of the Exchequer—the Right Hon. G. J. Goschen—has had the penetration to foresee.

August 29. A TELEGRAM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—On July 28 I posted at 10 30 a.m. in the Western Central District Office a letter addressed to a gentleman in her Majesty's Customs, asking him to call on me before 7 p.m. on July 28.

He did not receive the letter till 10 20 a.m. on July 30.

From the Western Central District to the Eastern Central District, two days save ten minutes!

I wrote to the W.C.D.O. on July 30, to know how much earlier the City post went, and I have as yet only received a stereotyped form of acknowledgment.

I have now to send important letters by hand.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

31.8.00 BASIL H. SOULSBY.

Union Club, Aug. 28.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your correspondent "Outis" goes to the root of the matter when he attacks the principle of making Post Office receipts contribute to the national revenue.

Many persons have written as if this contribution were the result of some occult and nefarious conspiracy between the Post Office and the Treasury instead of being a recognized and even fundamental feature of our fiscal policy. Even Lord Farrer treats it as a side issue.

It would be well if such persons before following the advice of "Outis" to agitate for reform on his lines were to consider seriously in what form they would prefer to contribute four millions a year to the Exchequer. It would, in my opinion, be difficult to discover an impost more equitable in its incidence than that which falls upon the writers of letters, if we may assume, with Professor Bastable that, but for the surplus, letters could be transmitted for a halfpenny instead of the present penny.

At all events, in the actual condition of our finances any notion of abandoning any portion of the Post Office revenue must be chimerical, and the discussion to be profitable must seemingly be confined to the suggestion of reforms—and they must be many—which would be consistent with its maintenance. If the discussion is limited by this condition a man need not be that most harmful of created beings, an official optimist, if he holds much of the published criticism of the Department to be irrelevant and unjust. Lord Farrer is, I believe, an expert on railway administration, and he probably has an opinion on the manner in which the public is served by certain of those great private monopolies, the railway companies. He would hardly contend that the Government monopoly of the Post Office, a far greater business than any of them, is not their superior, both in the efficiency of its service and in its accessibility to the complaints and suggestions of the public. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

31.8.00. Q.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—A letter posted in Westminster before 3 o'clock on the 27th inst. was delivered here about 1 30 p.m. on the 29th inst. Two whole days to cover two miles seems an ample allowance even for the Post Office.

Yours obediently,

"MERCURY."

19, Surrey-street, Victoria Embankment, W.C., Aug. 30.

TRAVELLING PILLAR-BOXES.

8.9.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—"Date Stamp" is too hasty. He is overmuch burdened with "facts" without foundations. He does not read, or, reading, does not understand. If he will refer to points 1 and 2 in my communication of the 23rd ult., he will see that the scheme I suggested renders letter-sorters quite unnecessary. "Date Stamp's" elaborate array of figures respecting the cost of sorters has, therefore, no *raison d'être*. Is this the "fact" he desires me to ponder?

Your obedient servant,

September 4. BADLESMERE.

JUBILEE OF SUBMARINE TELEGRAPHY.

28. Aug 1900.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

Fifty years ago to-day the possibility of sending telegraphic messages for any long distance under the sea was first firmly established. On August 28, 1850, telegrams passed between Dover and the coast of France through a makeshift cable, coated with gutta-percha; and what had been held by nearly every one to be a wild dream became an accomplished fact. Of course there had been for many years previously scientific men ahead of their time who felt certain that it could be done. As far back as 1795 a Spanish engineer had suggested it. All through the first half of the century experiments had been going on. In 1813 signals were transmitted through seven miles of wire laid down at the bottom of a pond. In 1838 an R.E. officer had some success with a cable insulated by means of tarred rope and yarn solidified with pitch. Split rattan canes were also used as insulators. Professor Wheatstone, who, with Mr. Cooke, had in 1837 first introduced the land telegraph into this country, had also been making trial of a submarine system. He had laid a cable in Swansea Bay and had succeeded in connecting the lightship with the shore. But all these attempts fell short of any wide practical result. Submarine telegraphy was not put into actual operation until the brothers Brett came upon the scene.

Jacob Brett was an electrician full of ideas. John Watkins Brett was a clear-headed, long-sighted man of business. In 1845 they were discussing the recently-established land telegraph between London and Slough. Why, they asked, should not similar communication be carried on under the sea? They were not the sort of men to ask questions and, like jesting Pilate, not wait for an answer. They set to work to prove that what they suggested could be done. In June, 1845, losing no time, they registered a project for an Atlantic cable, and they also offered to connect Dublin Castle with Downing-street if the Government would advance £20,000. The British Government would have little to say to them. They did get leave to lay a submarine telegraph from Dover, if they could, but they could obtain no pecuniary assistance. So they turned their attention to foreign States. In 1847 they received permission from King Louis Philippe to land a cable laid under the English Channel on the coast of France. Before they could mature their plans the Revolution of 1848 had driven Louis Philippe from the throne, and it was necessary to obtain a concession from the Republic. Prince Louis Napoleon, President of the Republic, granted their concession; and in June, 1850, it was transferred to a small company, consisting of Mr. J. W. Brett, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Charles Fox, Mr. Francis Edwards, and Mr. Charles J. Wollaston, on the understanding that the cable should be laid down by September 1 of that year. Of these four pioneers, who each subscribed £500 for the purpose of the experiment, Mr. Wollaston is still alive, hale and hearty in a green old age. He has not made a fortune out of his share in the plucky enterprise, but he enjoys a Civil List pension granted in recognition of his services to electricity, and he can look back with a feeling of pride upon his close connexion with so momentous an undertaking. For it was Mr. Wollaston who acted as the engineer to the company and actually directed the laying of the first cable. Part of his electrical talent he had inherited. He is the nephew of Wollaston, the famous philosopher, who introduced the Wollaston electro-chemical cell. He had also been a pupil of Brunel, who, by the way, refused altogether to believe in the feasibility of the submarine scheme. Meeting his pupil at the time when every one was ridiculing the idea, he said gravely, "I hear, Wollaston, you have something to do with this. I'm sorry for it." And when his pupil inquired the reason for this discouraging address, the great man said, with emphasis:—"It can't succeed, can't succeed." It is only fair, though, to add that, as soon as Wollaston had proved that it could succeed, Brunel congratulated him warmly, and, realizing at once what its success meant, declared that "nothing could stop it from going all over the world."

But to go back to June of 1850, as soon as the final concession had been made by President Louis Napoleon, Mr. Wollaston, who had gone to Paris to receive it, hurried back to England. Less than three months remained for all the preparations to be made. As soon as he touched British soil, he telegraphed to the wire cable makers and to the Gutta-percha Company and arranged for the supply of the materials. Both undertook to deliver them in good time. The next thing was to devise some means of paying out the cable from a ship's deck. Mr. Wollaston for this purpose had made to his order a large drum or reel. Upon this the 24 miles of wire covered with gutta-percha were wound, and then it was placed in position upon the deck of the tug Goliath. At last everything was ready. On the morning of August 28 the tug was at Dover. A coil of wire was twisted round a pile belonging to the harbour works (just where the Admiralty Pier now stands), and then carried up above to a horse-box, which the South-Eastern Railway Company had lent the Submarine Cable Company to serve as their Dover office! The end securely fixed, the tug started off in a straight line for Cape Gris Nez. The cable, weighted with small pieces of lead to keep it down, was sunk without accident, and the other end was made fast in an old Custom-house that stood on the French cliffs.

Now came the moment of painful suspense which was to decide whether the promoters' pains and anxieties were to be rewarded. Considering, in the light of our fuller knowledge, the imperfect insulation and the simple method of keeping the cable down and the strain that was put upon the unsupported gutta-percha wire, it seems a wonder that the experiment succeeded at all. But succeed it did and proved that the promoters had, so far as they could, gone the right way to work. The instrument in the horse-box at Dover Railway Station clicked out a message to Louis Napoleon congratulating him upon the happy result of the experiment. It was sent with misgiving, for the senders could not tell whether it would ever reach the other side. Nervously and impatiently they waited, and then to their intense joy the needle moved again and they knew that 24 miles away across the sea their message had been safely received. Their labours had borne fruit. They had done what very few believed they could do. The possibility of telegraphing under the sea was established; and, as *The Times* said in a leading article a few mornings afterwards, "the jest or scheme of yesterday" had become "the fact of to-day"; "the wildest exaggeration of an Arabian tale" had been "outdone by the simple achievement of modern times."

All the same, the "fact of to-day" very nearly became in its turn the "jest of to-morrow." The cable very soon refused to work, and on August 31 its brief career was ended. A Boulogne fisherman picked up a piece of it in his trawl-net, and, making sure that it was some new kind of seaweed or coral or a section of some marvellous sea-snake, he cut it open to see whether it had "gold at its centre." In truth, it had gold at its centre, but not in the sense he dreamed. He was disappointed, but he carried off the strange object to Boulogne, and the life of the earliest submarine cable came to an inglorious end. However, the great thing was that the success of the experiment had been duly attested. Ten independent persons on the French side had signed a report to the effect that messages had passed to and fro, and this was sent to Louis Napoleon. An unfair attempt was made to wrest the concession from the pioneer company on the ground that their cable was not permanent. Louis Napoleon, however, expressed both surprise and indignation at this endeavour to rob them of the fruits of their enterprise, and granted a fresh concession for permanent communication to be established by the end of October, 1851. To work this con-

cession there was formed the Submarine Telegraph Company. They duly laid down a four-wire cable, with strong wire insulation, made on the same principle as that which still holds the field to-day, and on November 13, 1851, it was opened for public use. That the public took advantage of it without hesitation is shown by the fact that the company earned a dividend of from 16 to 18 per cent. up to the date when the Government purchased their undertaking.

The possibility of submarine communication having been proved, its extension was merely a matter of time. It was, however, a matter of a good deal of time. In 1853, after three failures, the connexion that Mr. Brett had proposed eight years before was made between England and Ireland; and in the same year the Dover-Ostend cable was laid and opened. In 1854 began the sinking of a series of cables in the Mediterranean. These operations were much hindered by several untoward and alarming "flights of cable," that is to say, by the cable getting out of hand and running off the drums at a terrific speed. On one occasion two miles of cable weighing 16 tons flew into the sea in the course of four or five minutes. It was not until 1856 that the Atlantic Telegraph Company was formed, and not before 1858 was communication established.

When one thinks of the effect that the telegraph, and especially the submarine telegraph, has had upon modern conditions of life, one can see that the event of which the jubilee occurs to-day marked a great step in the progress of humanity. Like all such steps, it was taken in defiance of the opinion of the world, in the face of obstinate lethargy and even active opposition. It succeeded because it was made by Englishmen of energy and will-power, believing with all their heart in the possibility of what they meant to do and determined to prove their belief well-founded. We may be justly proud that so great an advance was made by our countrymen first of all the world. If we want future generations to have like reasons for being proud of us, we must make up our minds to be as energetic and determined as were these bold, far-sighted pioneers of the submarine telegraph.

7.9.00 TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The interesting article in your issue of 28th ult. coming at holiday time escaped my notice on publication.

Accurate though it be, I cannot help thinking that this article—along with others published in your contemporaries the same morning—will come somewhat as a surprise in regard to the jubilee idea.

Possibly the writer, or writers, of these various articles (and they are couched very similarly) may not be aware that it is the intention to commemorate the jubilee of submarine telegraphy in a suitable manner next year, the late Thomas Russell Crampton having supervised the laying of a cable from Dover to Calais on September 25, 1851.

Your columns are too well occupied with more immediate matters for me to dilate at length on the early history of submarine telegraphy, but, whilst wishing to fully testify to the important work of Mr. Charlton Wollaston, I would suggest that this only forms one of various steps in the pioneering of submarine telegraphy. I notice, by the way, that the writer of your article in specifying some of the other preceding links has failed to mention the work of the late Charles Vincent Walker, F.R.S., who, in the year 1849, laid a gutta-percha line (somewhat similar to that of 1850) for a length of two miles from Folkestone Harbour, when he succeeded in exchanging telegrams with London from aboard a vessel at anchor.

For my own part I venture to think that it is a difficult, if not an invidious, task to fix the real date for jubilation unless it be clearly recognized that—like most other great scientific and engineering achievements—submarine telegraphy has been gradually rendered effective as the result of investigations and accomplishments due to many hands.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES BRIGHT.

Denham Priory, Bucks, Sept. 5.

RURAL LIFE AND THE POST OFFICE.

15.9.00 TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As a dweller for some years in Arcadia-on-Clay nobody would more gladly welcome than myself the postal reforms which your correspondent advocates in his fascinating letter to *The Times* of Wednesday.

I fear, however, they are somewhat impracticable; and before the Post Office caters for luxuries it should certainly carry out a promise in its entirety, which was made in 1897, that wherever a letter is addressed to in England it would be delivered. Nevertheless, there are still places where the postman's knock is never heard and where letters have to be fetched from some distant centre. Anything which tends to brighten country life and relieve its monotonous tedium is calculated to stem the tide, somewhat, of rural depopulation; but the disease is of long standing and deep-rooted, and requires drastic remedies to be applied. In towns the master and man are not in such close touch; capital and labour is more automatic, with the result that the working man in the towns appears to have more liberty and freedom. The cry of rural depopulation is, I believe, somewhat exaggerated; nevertheless, the scarcity of labour at present experienced in rural districts is sufficiently serious to call for remedial efforts.

If only some means could be devised to give the labourers fixity of tenure of their cottages and a home out of which they could not be turned in a week by the caprice of the employer, we should very soon see a great alteration. I understand that the Small Dwellings Act passed in 1898 is practically a dead-letter, at any rate so far as rural districts are concerned. Building societies as at present constituted are virtually prohibitive by reason of their preliminary fees for any but the really well-to-do working classes. We require some way whereby the thrifty labourer is able to acquire his own cottage, and I believe the Post Office Savings Bank might greatly help in this matter.

It is the experience of all thoughtful students of the working classes that the possession of the cottage in which they live, gives to them a new charm and zest in life, works in them a social transformation, attaches them permanently to a parish, and is a delightful hobby which engages all their spare moments.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. P. BACON PHILLIPS.

Crowhurst Rectory, Sussex.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE TELEPHONE SERVICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have always been under the impression that the telephone monopoly enjoyed by the National Telephone Company is very disastrous to the interests of the public, and, as a London subscriber to the National Telephone Company's system, have looked forward to the time when the State would provide an alternative system.

I fear, however, that if a recent experience of mine is any criterion, the Post Office are quite incapable of dealing satisfactorily with the matter.

On the 30th ult. I had occasion to telephone from the town of Chesham on a somewhat important legal matter to my office in the City. There is a telephone call office at the post-office at Chesham, and the trunk line is under the control of the Post Office. I attended there at about 11 15 a.m., and was kept waiting one hour and a quarter before they could put me through to London. I was informed that to wait an hour was the usual experience of any one wishing to telephone to London.

I communicated with the Postmaster-General, asking for an explanation of such extraordinary delay, but up to the present time have received merely a printed acknowledgment of the receipt of my communication, and, therefore, conclude that such delay is quite normal and, in the eyes of the Post Office officials, perfectly reasonable.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to point out that if this is the case the telephone outside the metropolitan area is quite useless to professional and business men.

Yours, &c., JAMES P. R. LYELL.

5, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C., Sept. 11.

The official explanation given by the Post Office for just delivering a letter posted to a tradesman of Holbeith from Luton eight years ago, was that repairs had recently taken place at Luton post office, and the card was then found to have slipped down between the letter box and the wall.

15.9.00

11.9.00. TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Having followed with much interest the correspondence which is going on in *The Times* with reference to the Post Office, I hope you will give me space to chronicle two instances which have come under my notice within the last few years of the way in which that Department carries on its business. The train with the London letters of the previous evening passed through a certain park (there being a station at each end of the park) within 300 yards of the house on its way to Wexford, distant nine miles, regularly every day at about 11 30 a.m. The letters for the house in question were delivered the next day at 9 a.m. ! Fortunately I had a near relative at the time, a high official in the Department, and, after about two years' worrying, an arrangement was permitted by which the mail train dropped a bag with the letters at one of the stations at the end of the park.

The other instance I should like to draw attention to is here in the Island of Skye. The night mail from London reaches Broadford the next afternoon between 3 and 4 p.m. The letters for this place, however, 12 miles off, are only forwarded three out of six days in the week ! But, even then, the ingenuity of the Post Office authorities is signally exercised to try and inconvenience the public as much as possible, for the mail-cart despatched on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from Broadford only travels the enormous distance of six miles to Torran, where it sleeps, and the following morning it starts again and manages to do another six miles to Kilmarie, where it arrives at about 8 30 a.m., and on to Elgol, a further four miles, returning the same afternoon and calling for letters at Kilmarie at 3 p.m., but again sleeps at Torran, and reaches Broadford the next morning, taking three days to travel the extraordinary distance of 32 miles, which includes both the going and return journeys ! Sunday, of course, is a *dies non*, and the effect is that, if a letter is written here after 3 p.m. on a Saturday, it will not leave Broadford, 12 miles off, till Wednesday morning, reaching London on Thursday, and, if an answer were sent the next day, it would be delivered here on the following Tuesday—*i.e.*, in 11 days ! Complaints have been made upon the subject, but it is declared that it would take the colossal sum of £25 to be subtracted from the annual profit made by the Post Office of upwards of four millions sterling in order to provide the use of another horse for the work ! It is possible that in the winter time the arrangement of an improved service would be superfluous ; but the huge bundles of letters, newspapers, telegrams, and parcels which come here every week during the summer and autumn months make the present state of affairs an absolute scandal. I trust that you, Sir, will give Lord Londonderry the opportunity of reading this, for, as you so well remark, the permanent officials of the Department seem to think that the public is made for them and not they for the public—a state of matters which, from personal experience, I know extends to all the other Departments of the State.

Your obedient servant, R.S.

Kilmarie, Broadford, Isle of Skye, N.B.

THE POST OFFICE.

11.9.00. TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Having had experience in the past in the Post Office and of its relations to the Treasury I will ask permission to supplement the interesting discussion in your columns on the subject of postal reforms.

Your correspondent "Outis" is tempted into exaggeration when he describes the Postmaster-General as a mere clerk of the Treasury. In the general management of the vast establishment he is supreme, and the Treasury have no control over him ; but in any matters involving an increase of expenditure, whether it be an addition to the staff, rendered necessary by the adoption of an improvement, or the reduction of any charge to the public which may involve a diminution of the net revenue, or any increase of sala ies or pensions to the staff, the Treasury have a veto. They cannot and do not initiate anything of the kind. They can and do very frequently refuse their consent to such schemes on purely financial grounds.

Every respect is, indeed, due to the Treasury as a necessary spoke in the great wheel of our administration and as a co-ordinating authority for the general finance of the country. It is necessary that any large scheme dealing with salaries and pensions of clerks, in any department, should be submitted to the Treasury with the object of giving them the opportunity of forming an opinion as to the effect on other departments ; for any great advance in one office is very likely to give rise to demands in others. Any great scheme also involving a large increase of expenditure may interfere with the financial arrangements for the year of the whole Government. In this respect the Post Office ought not to be treated otherwise than any other department. But in fact its relations to the Treasury are very different. The Treasury regard it from their point of view as a revenue department, as one from which they are justified in expecting and demanding a continually-increasing net revenue. They consequently look with a most jealous eye upon any proposal by the Postmaster-General involving an increase of expenditure, lest it should interfere with the development of this net revenue. And hence it comes about that in Post Office improvements and reforms the Treasury, and not the Postmaster-General, determines whether they shall be carried out or not. The initiative lies with the Post Office, but the chief of that department has to do battle with the Secretary of the Treasury on every occasion when an improvement involving an increase of expenditure, or a reduction of income, is proposed.

The Secretary of the Treasury, as a rule, is overworked. He is unable to go fully into details. It results that one of the principal Treasury clerks has to advise him ; and the determination rests with this officer, who has no knowledge of the interior working of the Post Office and no means of gauging the wants of the public, and whose main duty it is to maintain, and increase, if possible, the revenue. The Postmaster-General may contend that a particular improvement which he proposes is urgently needed, that after a time it will recoup the first outlay or loss by causing an increase of business, but the Treasury official, with the omniscience bred in the atmosphere of that department, knows better and, fearful of the immediate loss to the revenue, advises a refusal. Every Postmaster-General in turn has experienced this, and has seen his proposals overruled by the Treasury. Sometimes, when he is fortunate in being on most friendly terms with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he is able to secure a more favourable response to his proposals ; but as a rule they are rejected or delayed for years until public opinion, acting through the House of Commons, forces them upon the Government. No one at the Post Office has been able to discover on what precise lines of polity these refusals are made ; but it may be assumed that the object is to secure a continually-increasing net revenue. That this is the result, if not the intention, of the Treasury policy, carried out persistently through long years, will be clearly seen from the following table, showing the average annual net revenue for quinquennial periods since 1870, which I have made out from the figures supplied in the last report from the Post Office :—

—	Net annual revenue (excluding capital expenditure).		Capital expenditure on sites, buildings, and telegraph extensions.	Net annual revenue of the two services (including capital expenditure).	Increase of net revenue over average of previous 5 years.
	Postal service.	Telegraph service.			
	£	£	£	£	£
1870-75 ..	1,725,000	172,000	108,000	1,814,000	—
1875-80 ..	2,318,000	282,000	185,000	2,428,000	614,000
1880-85 .	2,813,000	356,000	331,000	2,856,000	440,000
1885-90 ..	3,242,000	183,000	347,000	3,081,000	213,000
1890-95 ..	3,394,000	83,000	400,000	3,048,000	85,000*
1895-1900 ..	3,981,000	108,000	475,000	3,578,000	530,000

* Decrease.

It should be recollected with respect to this table that the reduction of the *minimum* charge for telegrams to 6d. was forced upon the Government by the House of Commons in 1885. Since then the net revenue of the telegraph service has been largely reduced. It still, however, produced a net revenue of about £100,000, irre-

spective of capital expenditure; but this is not sufficient to pay the interest of the £10,000,000 expended in the purchase of the telegraph companies, which was about 50 per cent. above the real value of their concerns. It is, however, difficult to separate the accounts of the postal and telegraph services. There is charged against the telegraph account an arbitrary share of the cost of the joint staff and other expenses (one-third). It may well be that if a true proportion were charged the net revenue of the telegraph service would work out more favourably.

Taking the two services together (which seems to be the fairer course) the table shows that their net revenue to the Exchequer has nearly doubled in the last 30 years, having risen from £1,814,000 to £3,576,000, an increase at the rate of £55,000 a year. During the last five years the increase has been at the rate of nearly £100,000 a year. It is well known to any one acquainted with the Post Office that the effect of this insistence of the Treasury for a continually increasing net revenue has not only been to stifle and delay a multitude of improvements, but also to act as a damper on the Post Office officials. When they find that their recommendations are persistently set aside and neglected, they naturally lose heart in devising and proposing other improvements. Another effect is this; in a department like the Post Office, where an enormous staff is employed, now numbering over 190,000, there ought to be, and are, constant opportunities of effecting economies in its working, by rearrangements of the staff and by the adoption of substitutes for labour and so forth; but when the officials of the department find that their economies only result in increasing the net revenue claimed by the Treasury, and in no way provide funds for further improvements in the service, it is only in human nature that they cease to be as diligent and inventive as they might be in this direction. It is impossible to estimate what is the full effect of this, but no one conversant with the Post Office can doubt its importance.

Yet another direction in which Treasury control has been exercised, with a view to an increase in the revenue from the Post Office, has been in the matter of the salaries of its *employés*. The responsibility of the Postmaster-General for such an immense staff is exceedingly heavy. If he refuses or delays dealing with the application of classes of clerks, messengers, or telegraphists, numbering each many thousands, the pressure may become so heavy and serious as to result in a strike, or almost a mutiny. The control of the Treasury in the interest of the revenue is necessarily exercised without the same sense of responsibility, and has at times caused most serious disaffection in the department which has not infrequently resulted in concessions having ultimately to be made of greater amount than the original demands. Those who recollect what occurred when Mr. Raikes was Postmaster-General, between the years 1886 and 1890, will appreciate this. It is well known that he urgently pressed upon the Treasury the justice and necessity of considerable increases of pay to large classes of telegraph clerks and other *employés*. The Treasury refused. Then resulted what was almost a mutiny. Mr. Raikes had to bear the odium in the department, and the responsibility with the public, for a state of things which would have been avoided if his demands had been acceded to by the Treasury. In the end much larger increases of pay had to be conceded under pressure from the House of Commons and public opinion than were proposed by Mr. Raikes, and which would have contented the staff at the outset of the dispute.

In view of all these matters, by far the most important in Mr. Henniker Heaton's list of recommendations is that proposing that the net revenue to be contributed by the Post Office should be fixed at a definite amount—say, £3,000,000—and that beyond this the Postmaster-General should have a free hand to make what improvements and changes he thinks fit, subject only to the more general supervision which the Treasury has over all departments. The proposal is not a new one. It was first proposed by those interested in the Post Office in the year 1887, and was the subject of a discussion in the House of Commons. It was not suggested that this fixed amount of net revenue should be laid down by Act of Parliament, but rather that it should be an understanding between the Post Office and the Treasury. The effect would be to emancipate the Post Office from a control exercised with a view to an increasing revenue from it, to give a great inducement to improvements of all kinds, and leave the Postmaster-General free to deal with the *employés* under him in the same manner as the heads of other great spending departments, such as the Admiralty and War Office. In the debate referred to the proposal was vehemently opposed by Mr. Goschen, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. It may be interesting to recall the fact that Mr. Hanbury, now Secretary of the Treasury, then a free lance, went far beyond the modest proposal I have referred to. He said:—

> I cannot help regarding the surplus of £2,500,000 as a tax on the commerce of the country, and I cannot believe that the House of Commons will continue much longer to permit this large surplus to be handed over to the Treasury without part of it being spent on affording the public increased postal and telegraph facilities, such as are enjoyed in Germany and other countries, and which would be of great benefit in securing the real federation of the Empire. In every other country in the world surpluses of this kind are appropriated, not to the use of the general exchequer, but in increasing postal facilities. . . . Taking into consideration the tremendous material interests which are concerned in a great commercial country like this, I think it is simply ridiculous to go on appropriating this surplus instead of utilising it in increasing our postal facilities.

I do not know whether it was in any way due to this discussion that for some years after it the point aimed at was practically observed, and the net revenue remained at about the level of three millions, although the gross revenue was increasing at a rapid pace.

In 1895 a further great advance was made in the net revenue claimed by the Treasury, and it has risen from three to over 3½ millions, or nearly four millions, if capital expenditure be excluded, while there has been a delay in carrying out a great number of improvements demanded by the public, the aggregate cost of which would probably not amount to the increase thus established.

It may be confidently expected that if such an understanding were arrived at, and if the Postmaster-General were allowed a free hand in utilizing any excess over the normal net revenue of three millions, there would be an immense impetus to improvements of all kinds, the other difficulties I have referred to would be removed, and we should no longer hear of complaints such as have been so rife lately in the Press.

I am your obedient servant,

September 4. 11.9.00. EXPERT.

THE POST OFFICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—There is another side to the proposal first made by Mr. Shaw Lefevre, and supported by "Expert" in your columns of to-day, that all the net profits of the Post Office over a fixed net revenue should be spent on improvements at the discretion of the Postmaster-General.

How if in any one year the *minimum* of net revenue is not reached? Are all improvements to come to a dead stop?

The plan is, I am satisfied, quite unworkable, and some other solution of a difficult question must be sought.

September 11. 12.9.00 NON-EXPERT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As a subscriber to the National Telephone, I am looking forward to the promised reform by the Post Office, and I have observed in a daily newspaper the statement made by the officials of the G.P.O. that the City and Westminster instalment of the new telephone system will be ready for use by midsummer next.

As Mr. Hanbury, the Secretary of the Treasury, made a statement in Parliament that the Post Office telephone would be in full working order by the end of this year, this is a delay which will not be appreciated by those who are suffering the discomfort of the streets' being up. If only the City and Westminster part of the new system is to be in working order next summer, I should like to know when Cromwell-road is to be favoured in the same way, so that, if necessary, I might give notice to end my present contract with the National Telephone Company.

Yours faithfully,

21.9.00. W. BEYFUS.

93, Cromwell-road, South Kensington, Sept. 20.

8.9.00. *THE POST OFFICE.*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your numerous correspondents have complained of the postal delays, but I think that too little has been said with reference to the increased delay of telegrams and the large number of errors.

Mr. Henniker Heaton has proposed that the Post Office should give compensation for damage caused by the incorrect transmission of messages, and this is, perhaps, the only way to make the department recognize the gravity of the question. The two effects—delays and errors—are due to the same cause—parcimony; and no single individual is more responsible for the state of affairs than the late secretary, Sir S. Walpole. The heads of the Telegraph Department are aware that the insufficiency of staff leads to the accumulation of a great amount of work in all the large offices. Lord Londonderry informed the proprietors of the provincial newspapers that the withdrawal of some of the telegraphic staff for Cape service was the cause of the heavy delays on Press telegrams. As a matter of fact, but three years ago a private circular was sent to all heads of telegraph offices informing them that no notice would be taken if delays on Press messages were permitted to be greater than in former years, and telegraph superintendents were informed that, no matter how efficiently the work was performed, unless they practised economy no promotion would be given to them. Only last year restrictions were placed upon the use of the high-speed Wheatstone apparatus for commercial work; and throughout the country the speed of transmission was lowered—again for the purpose of avoiding an increase of staff. I can, if necessary, quote the official wording of the circulars referred to.

Telegraphic errors are due to various causes—chiefly faulty apparatus, disturbances on the circuit, or careless and inefficient operators. What is the position at nearly all the large offices to-day? The nominal hours of duty are eight per day; the actual time, due to pressure of business, is 11 or 12. It is physically impossible for a clerk to interpret the Morse Code ten or 11 hours per day at the rate of 25 words per minute without the risk of occasionally confusing the signals. The sending clerk must also become tired, and his wrist fails to form the letters so nicely as he would when working a reasonable time. It will be easily seen that Stock Exchange quotations, cipher, code, and foreign messages run considerable danger, as the transformation of a single letter may cause confusion. Added to this, a large number of untrained youths, male and female, are placed on busy circuits. The present Secretary to the Treasury declared that the existing telegraphists are "socially above their work." The Post Office are endeavouring to remedy this defect, and has reduced the salary of the London clerks to lessen the inducement for "socially superior" folk to enter the service. The consequence is that the Press and commercial men have their messages mangled beyond recognition, as youths who should still be learning are forced to deal with most responsible work. Our telegraph system is becoming worse rapidly, and it is well that in future we shall be able to use the telephones instead.

Yours,

September 8. A TELEGRAPH CLERK.

18.9.00. *THE POST OFFICE.*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Having carefully read in your issue of the 11th inst. the letter signed "Expert," I am unable to find any difference between his views and mine on the main question—viz., the control of the Post Office by the Treasury. He charges me with exaggeration in having described the Postmaster-General as a Treasury clerk, but no such remark is to be found in my letter, nor one even like it. I pointed out that the Secretary to the Post Office was an ex-Treasury official placed in the Post Office to guard the interests of the revenue, a fact which I observe is not disputed; what I wrote regarding the Postmaster-General is equally true, he has the nominal responsibility but the power is vested in the officials who use his name at their own discretion.

New, assuming "Expert" to be what he signs himself, he must be aware that the general management of the Post Office over which Lord Londonderry is technically supreme is necessarily exercised by his officials; it could not under the existing state of affairs be otherwise; and when, as is now the case, the principal permanent official of the Post Office is a nominee of the Treasury even this general management, although strictly speaking outside the Treasury's direct control, is indirectly controlled by that department. There can be no real controversy on this point, in every concern whoever it is that holds the purse necessarily possesses the general control also.

No one questions Lord Londonderry's ability. Besides being a talented man he is also a man possessing common sense. Now, if he were asked to accept, for example, the position of general manager to the Great Western Railway Company, does any one imagine for a moment that he could do so on any other terms than those on which he holds his present office—*i.e.*, leave his subordinates to carry on their operations without interference? It is a matter of course that in practice the letters addressed to the Postmaster-General are read and replied to by the under officials without his seeing them; it indeed rests with the officials to decide whether or not a matter should be brought under his notice. The supreme control which "Expert" says is vested in the Postmaster-General is only one of the numerous legal fictions existing in our system of departmental government.

I had not intended to deal with any point of detail, but as the telegraph service has been specifically referred to I beg to be permitted to make some observations in reference to it. Your correspondent "Telegraph Clerk," whose letter appeared on the 8th inst., falls foul of the late Secretary to the Post Office, Sir Spencer Walpole, and holds him responsible for the delays and errors of the telegraph department. There may possibly be some personal feeling on the part of your correspondent. That public official certainly did not during his term of office defer to the views of the rank and file of the Post Office any more than to those of the public; but that is not a ground for finding fault with Sir Spencer, who is a man of ability and experience, and it is certain that, whatever arrangements he made, he was only adopting the course he considered to be the best in the interests of the revenue of the country.

Now in regard to the telegraph service, which popularly was supposed to have been undertaken by the Post Office for the general benefit of the community, the Treasury consistently, and from their point of view properly, sought to make it a source of revenue also, and hit upon an ingenious expedient to carry their views into effect by instructing the Post Office to demonstrate that the service is carried on at a loss and thereby exhibit strong grounds for curtailing expenses and withholding money for improvements.

The Post Office undertook this business in January, 1870. In the first week of their management, ending February 5, 11,918 messages were sent. They increased rapidly, and the total messages sent in that year amounted to 9,606,000. The claims of the various companies from whom the telegraphs were purchased were not finally settled until ten years later. On March 31, 1879, the capital account amounted to £10,120,073, and the then Postmaster-General stated on August 2 following that he expected shortly to be able to close this account, a decision having been obtained that practically disposed of all outstanding claims. The actual capital is now £10,868,663.

How "Expert" arrives at the conclusion that £5,000,000 more than the fair price was paid I have no idea; certainly the various Postmasters-General do not appear to have taken such a view. On the contrary, the remarks made by them from time to time implied that they thought that the department had done rather well in the transaction. For example, the first claims settled were those of the Lancashire and Yorkshire and Great Eastern Railway Companies. The former asked £1,129,814, and they were awarded £169,197—little more than an eighth of their claim; the Great Eastern, who required £412,808, were awarded £73,315, or about a sixth of their demand. The later results were equally satisfactory. Amongst the last claims paid were those of the metropolitan companies and the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire. The former required £433,000 and obtained £51,907, the latter wanted £253,000 and got £39,455. The above figures seem to show that this alleged excess capital payment is only an excess in the opinion of the Treasury officials, some of whom, perhaps, in their zeal for the collection of revenue, may have thought the telegraphs should have been acquired for nothing.

On October 1, 1885, sixpenny telegrams were adopted. The total number of telegrams sent in that year was 39,235,813, over 30 millions more than in 1870. Lord Wolverton, who was then Postmaster-General, stated that in the first year of the new system the actual loss of revenue was only £22,019.

Now some years previously the net revenue of the telegraph department had commenced to shrink in a remarkable manner. In the year 1880 the net revenue was £341,006; it decreased each year, and in 1884 was only £51,255, the apparent cause being the increase in working expenses; but it is impossible to say how much of this increase was due to the penny wise and pound foolish bargain made with many of the railway companies when the purchase of the telegraphs was effected; and until this information is disclosed by the Post Office no statement as to the loss on the telegraph service ought to be accepted.

The railway companies had the offer of free telegraphy, &c., if they reduced their demands. The astute managers of the large companies, perceiving the advantage of the proposal, speedily closed with it; some of the smaller companies, who, like the Treasury, took a narrow view, declined the offer, and have had cause to regret their action ever since. The former now have the full benefit of the telegraph service without paying for it, and obtain also considerable advantages in their electrical and signalling arrangements.

When there is free supply of an article it is only human nature to waste it; and the railway officials constantly use the telegraph instead of writing letters, although, for a reason which will be afterwards referred to, doing so does not deprive the Post Office of as much revenue from letter postage as might be expected. However, the actual result of the bargain is that the Treasury have spent a smaller capital on the purchase of telegraphs than would otherwise have been the case, and therefore the annual fixed loss on account of interest is less than otherwise would have been; but against that the department appears to lose an increasing amount on account of working expenses every year.

By the year 1887 the Post Office succeeded in getting rid of the net revenue figure altogether, showing instead a deficit, which has gone on increasing, and in the accounts for last year this deficit on telegraphs is stated to be £288,438.

The value of telegraph work performed gratuitously by the Post Office for the public departments during the past year is estimated as £70,746. We may rest assured this sum is more likely to be under than over the mark, as the smaller it is the greater the apparent deficit; but accepting the figure as accurate it seems not an unfair conclusion that, if the work performed on account of public offices is equal to about one-fourth part of the deficit, the value of work performed gratuitously for the railway companies would possibly not only be enough to account for the debit balance but also enable a handsome profit to be shown on the whole business. At any rate an attempt should be made to give in the Post Office accounts an estimate specifying the value of the railway work done, in the same way as the value of the Government work is estimated.

I venture to suggest that the wisest method to adopt would be to buy out the railway rights and charge for all telegrams and all railway work and deal with the Government departments in the same way. It might be said that the latter course would only in fact be taking money out of one pocket of the State and putting it into another; but in practice this would not be so. Government clerks as well as railway officers do not object to save themselves trouble when they can. The use of the telegraph enables the officials to avoid writing letters and thereby also to put off till to-morrow what might be done to-day. If every department were debited with the cost of its telegrams, the chiefs would soon hear from the Treasury if this item of expenditure were not kept within reasonable limits; I may mention that doing this would only be following the existing practice as regards foreign telegrams. During the first five years of the performance of the telegraph service by the Post Office the public offices sent their foreign telegrams free as well as the inland (the charge for the former in the year 1875 came to more than the latter), but since then the foreign are paid for. However, as I said in my former letter, until the House of Commons deals with the question of postal reform as a whole, there is very little use in attempting to bring about any particular one; but I do think that so long as the present system is continued the appendix in the Post Office annual report should contain a table showing the value of the work performed by the Post Office gratuitously for the railway companies. Mr. Hanniker Heaton might be able to accomplish this.

I have only to add that my reason for believing that the free telegraph system enjoyed by the railway companies does not cause much corresponding loss of revenue from letter postage is because it is the custom of the larger companies to send letters in packets to the principal centres and distribute them by their own messengers, and so save all expense. There is no secret about this, and as far as I know the Post Office does not question it; strictly speaking the practice is not legal, having regard to the rights of the Postmaster-General; but doubtless the Post Office officials would be able to give as good reasons for not objecting as they will probably shortly do to show the necessity for the discontinuance of the District Messenger Service.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

September 14. 18.9.00. OUTIS.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE TELEPHONES.

22.9.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—During the past two years I have had continuous experience of the delay which your correspondent Mr. Lyell has experienced in one instance, but which, unfortunately, I find practically universal on the Post Office trunk telephone lines. The usual reply to a trunk call is that "there is 40 minutes, or an hour's delay," and the subscriber has to wait or forgo his call.

My case is, however, particularly hard. I have to communicate daily between the City and my house, which is 18 miles out of London, and three miles from the main-line station I use, though it is only ten minutes' walk from a telegraph office.

I found by frequent experience that the Post Office often took longer to transmit and deliver a telegram between the City and my house than it took a District messenger to journey the whole way, including the three miles' drive.

Frequent complaints brought the usual official "acknowledgment" and sometimes a letter of explanation or excuse attempting to justify particular instances of telegrams' taking over an hour to cover this small distance, but never have I been able to cause the officials to deal with the faults which exist in a business like and broad-minded manner.

Accordingly, having a telephone in the City, I decided to arrange for one in my house also, and for local purposes I find it all I can desire, and I am likewise, for London calls, quite satisfied with my London telephones.

However, both my London and country telephones are almost useless for any purposes if the Post Office trunk wires are called in for use.

My complaint is that, in spite of repeated protests, the Post Office have, both as to telegraphs and telephones in my use for the past two years, given me a service which is no quicker and often not so quick as the sending of a messenger, and complaints are either ignored or stock replies are made without any improvement being effected in the deficient facilities.

I should not be troubling you with this personal complaint, though it is, I believe, in respect of the same district as that of which Mr. Lyell complains, but for the fact that, with my London and country telephones I am able to speak from personal experience of most trunk lines within one or two hundred miles of London, and on practically all of them, day after day, a call to London will result in a delay of from 20 minutes to an hour and a half.

The public may, it is true, get used to the unreliability of the letter carrying which still continues; they do seem to have got used to the delay in delivering telegrams, and they have quietly ignored the vexatious messenger system (or want of system) of the Post Office, but what will be their feelings when they awake to the fact that the local exchange telephones which the Post Office are to link up are all to be practically non-effective through deficient trunk communication?

I have done all I can privately to bring the position home to the Post Office officials, but without result, and I am, therefore, led to appeal, on behalf of the public, to the publicity of your columns.

Yours faithfully,

T. F. GODDARD.

St. Michael's-house, St. Michael's-alley,
Cornhill, E.C., Sept. 20.

The date of the appearance of the new 15c. French postage stamp seems now to be definitely fixed for the 15th of next month. Its colour—red—will be that of the first postage stamp used in 1848. The engraver, M. Mouchon, has designed a seated figure of the Republic holding in her hands the tablets of the "Rights of Man."

The *Débats* learns that Major Destenave has been selected as commander of the recently organized military territories of the Chad. Major Destenave, who is now attached to the 115th Regiment, in garrison at Alençon, has seen considera le service in Africa, and was at one time French Resident at the Court of Aguibon, King of Macina, who recently manifested a desire to see him again. 9.10.00.

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE AND THE TELEPHONES.—A correspondent writes:—Telephone subscribers who send many messages to the country are frequently put to great inconvenience by the delays consequent on the trunk lines being worked by the General Post Office, and they will hardly be satisfied at hearing that the General Post Office mean still further to neglect their interests. Urged by many complaining subscribers, the National Telephone Company communicated with the General Post Office with regard to these delays on the trunk lines, and were informed that a *minimum* of 20 minutes must always elapse before any reply could be made as to whether the caller could get on to the town he wished to communicate with. As a consequence the National Telegraph Company has informed its subscribers of this new regulation, and can only hope that pressure will be brought to bear upon the Government authorities to remedy the insufficiency of trunk lines and lack of employés. 9.11.00.

THE TELEGRAPHIC DELAYS.

1.10.00

Lord Londonderry has addressed to the president of the Newspaper Society the following letter with reference to the measures which have been taken by the Department to remedy the delays to Press telegrams, with regard to which a deputation from the Newspaper Society waited upon the Postmaster-General on August 1 :—

"General Post Office, London, Sept. 27, 1900.

"Dear Mr. Palmer,—I readily respond to the request contained in your letter of the 21st inst. for information as to the measures which have been taken by the Department following upon the deputation from the Newspaper Society which I had the pleasure of receiving on the 1st ult. In the first place, special instructions have been issued to those concerned informing them that every effort should be made to ensure the prompt treatment of Press telegrams at all stages and to remove all grounds for reasonable complaint. The necessity for a careful watch being kept for causes likely to produce unusual pressure has been insisted upon and although, of course, the supervising officers are expected to regulate the duties in connexion with the receipt of news with a due regard to the prevention of waste, they have been directed not to shrink from employing extra force and incurring extra expense when circumstances demand it.

"The Press work is, as you are aware, of a very fluctuating character, and I need, perhaps, scarcely repeat the hope which I expressed to the deputation, that the purveyors of news will render the Department every assistance in their power by giving adequate notice of Press messages.

"In the second place, I have issued instructions on a point which has, I believe, in the past given rise to some inconvenience to newspaper editors—viz., the keeping back of pages of reports for the purpose of correcting some apparent mistake. In future, as a tentative measure, any page in connexion with which a query arises will, if fairly intelligible, be sent out for delivery as received, with a docket affixed drawing attention to the query and notifying that if any alteration is found necessary the particulars will be supplied later on.

"Apart from measures of a general character, specific inquiries are being made in various directions, and in some cases, where additional staff appeared to be required, the force has been strengthened. It must, however, be borne in mind that telegraphists require a considerable period of training before they become thoroughly efficient and that we are still without the assistance of the large number of expert telegraphists who have been sent to South Africa.

"The general election will, of course, give rise to a very large amount of Press work and already the pressure has been severely felt. I can, however, assure you that no efforts are being spared to make the best arrangements possible in the circumstances.

"The question of the acceptance before 6 o'clock of Press telegrams intended for despatch at that hour is receiving my best consideration, but I may say that it seems very doubtful whether, apart from the legal difficulties in the way, any practical advantage would result from the adoption of such a course.

"Truly yours, "LONDONDERRY.

"H. J. Palmer, Esq."

UNIVERSAL PENNY POSTAGE.

9.10.00.

Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., writes :—I have just received from the Hon. J. G. Ward, M.P., Postmaster-General of New Zealand, a letter confirmatory of his telegram announcing the introduction of not only Imperial, but universal, penny postage, so far as that colony is concerned, from January 1 next. When Mr. Ward's telegram arrived there was some doubt as to the extent of the reform. He has, however, sent me the following extract from his annual report, which sets the matter at rest :—

"It has been determined to introduce a universal penny letter-post in this colony from January 1 next. The beginning of the new century will fittingly mark the event, which should give widespread satisfaction, and prove an epoch in the history of the colony. New Zealand will by this reform be placed in the forefront of the civilized countries of the world. Not only in the colony but throughout the Empire the penny post will be hailed as an inestimable boon. Judging from the enormous increase in the volume of correspondence which has followed the cheapening of postage rates in New Zealand in the past, only a few years should elapse before the financial loss incurred at the outset is largely, if not entirely, made up."

The question will arise, what would it cost England to lead the van, as she did in free trade, and establish universal penny postage?

The number of letters written by the people of the United Kingdom last year was as follows :—Delivered in the United Kingdom, 2,246,800,000 ; posted for foreign countries, 48,000,000 ; posted for India and the colonies, 12,000,000. Even at the highest estimate we should lose 1½d. each on the postage of 50,000,000 of letters—that is, 75,000,000d., or £312,500—half the cost of a warship.

All sensible people and men of the world who desire to establish friendly relations with France, Germany, and Russia will smile when they see us sending letters for 1d. each to New Zealand *via* France and yet charging 2½d. for a letter from Dover to Calais.

A POSTAL ANOMALY.

17.10.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The Post Office authorities allow me to send, per halfpenny post, type-written circulars with the name of the person to whom each is addressed written on the face of each circular in ink, as well as an ink-written statement of account in £ s. d., the amounts differing from each other.

If, however, my circulars are mimeographs—that is, facsimile reproductions of an original type-written circular—I am not allowed to send them by halfpenny post unless the written name of the intended recipient and the written amount are "precisely identical in all respects" on every circular. Even then I must see that—to quote the Post Office regulation—"(*a*) such circular is posted by being handed in at a head or branch post-office and (*b*) at least 20 copies of such circular, precisely identical in all respects, are posted at the same time," special attention being called to their nature when handing them in.

Allow me to illustrate the absurdity of this regulation by a case in point. In ignorance of the regulation, I recently sent out, per halfpenny post, a number of subscription notices, the body of which was in mimeograph, the name of each intended recipient and an amount in £ s. d.—which amount varied—being written in ink. Some of these circulars were returned to me by the Post Office with the postage stamps obliterated, and accompanied by an intimation that they could only be sent by penny post because they were printed reproductions of a type-written original, and because the ink-written name of the intended recipient and the ink-written amount were not identical on each circular. The Post Office officials admit, or, to put it exactly, do not deny, the absurdity of the regulation, but they courteously say they have only to see that it is complied with.

I had subsequently to make an identical announcement to 19 gentlemen. I had it mimeographed, and, by not writing their names on the face of the circulars, I was, so far, able to comply with the Post Office requirements. But the number sent had to be 20, so to complete my score I sent one to myself. I enclose you this latter and you will see that a special obliterating stamp is employed, besides which the Post Office clerk has to enter particulars of the batch in a book and to stamp a special form which he places with the circulars.

For my own part I fail to see the difference—from a halfpenny postal point of view—between a circular printed by the mimeograph and a circular printed from ordinary type. Neither, to my mind, is the difference between a type-written circular and a legitimate reproduction thereof quite clear.

My opinion is that the sooner a regulation which curtails the usefulness of the time and money saving mimeograph and stultifies the Post Office authorities is rescinded, the better for the public and the G.P.O.

I remain, Sir, yours truly,

PERRY F. NURSEY.

17, Victoria-street, Westminster, S.W. Oct. 10.

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS AT THE FRONT.

26.10.00

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Though there has been a great improvement in the delivery of letters to the soldiers serving at the front, there is still far too much carelessness in the postal arrangements. Considering the time that our men have been out there, one cannot help being disappointed that the machinery does not work more smoothly. It seems that as long as a man is with his regiment he receives his letters with regularity. But once let him leave headquarters for special duty elsewhere, or be invalided in a hospital, no one takes the trouble to forward his letters to him. A sergeant in the 12th Lancers has been in the hospital at Norvals Pont for four months and has not received one of the weekly letters that his wife has written from here. And I hear from eye-witnesses who have returned that such letters lie in thousands on the Post-office floors. It is heartrending to read the many complaints that still come to hand. One would have thought that the medical men would have lent a hand, for among the means to recovery a letter from home may be the most efficacious.

As it seems that we shall have to keep many of our brave men scattered up and down that vast extent of country for some time to come, I would ask you to assist them in this matter by publishing this letter. The authorities are still keeping their "mailed fists" too tightly closed.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CYRIL EDWARDS, Curate of Petersfield.

October 22.

POST OFFICE REGULATIONS.

16. 10. 00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In view of the many comments which have recently appeared in the columns of the daily Press on the subject of postal shortcomings, I think the following glaring instance of "red-tape" and want of consistency in interpreting postal regulations should be widely known and promptly remedied.

As a season ticket holder on the District Railway for many years past I have always received a notice of the date of expiry of my season ticket some few days in advance accompanied by a form of application for a new ticket. The notice was printed and a blank left for the date of expiry, which was filled in in ink; and on the form of application for renewal there was a printed side note, also filled up by hand, stating the amount of the instalment which was due on the new ticket. In July last I received for the first time a notice not giving the actual date of expiry, but stating that the ticket would expire in a few days' time, and the application form did not state the amount of the instalment or the period for which it was to be renewed. On this occasion I made inquiries at the season ticket office of the railway, and was informed that the information which had always previously been given had been omitted owing to the fact that the postal authorities would not permit the figures to be inserted, holding that the communication then became in the nature of a letter and required postage to the value of one penny, whereas without the information it would only require postage to the amount of one halfpenny. I now find on the expiration of another three months that the information is still not inserted, doubtless for the same reason; and apparently the postal authorities have not reconsidered their decision. It would be of interest to ascertain how it is that the postal authorities permit business firms' ordinary statements of account to be forwarded for one halfpenny postage with dates and amounts filled in by hand, and varying in every instance, so that they cannot be considered in the nature of a circular, and yet veto season ticket renewal notices, which, with the exception of a few figures, are obviously in the nature of circulars. The inconvenience to season ticket holders is at once apparent, as they have no means of finding out the amount due without applying at the company's office or referring to the payment for the corresponding period of the previous year. Perhaps the Post Office authorities will give some commonsense business explanation of their decision in this case, or permit the railway companies to revert to their former more convenient procedure without incurring unnecessary expense.

SEASON TICKET HOLDER.

October 13.

POSTAL RATES TO THE ANNEXED TERRITORIES.

23. 10. 00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—By proclamation Lord Roberts, in the name of her Majesty, annexed the then Orange Free State in May last; her Majesty's Post Office, however, is not yet officially aware of the fact.

A letter from Bloemfontein was addressed to me stamped with a 1d. stamp on which I was surcharged 3d.; an inquiry addressed to the secretary of the Post Office produced a visit from an official who informed me that the Orange River Colony "is not a British colony." I inquired whether it is a foreign country or what its position is, but to this he was not officially prepared to reply. I mentioned that the annexation took place some months ago, and naturally expressed surprise that the rate of postage remained unaltered. He answered with dignity that the Post Office "could not make these alterations in a day," meaning, I presume, bringing the postal charges into line with those of the Cape and Natal—namely, 1d. per half ounce. One would have thought that, the annexed territories being under military law, the adjustment of rates would have been done by a stroke of the pen, for it required no reference to a legislative body or other form of local government.

It certainly is high time that those resident in the Orange River Colony should have the benefit of this slight concession, especially our English fellow-subjects, seeing the terrible time they have gone through and the indignities and trials to which they were subjected before and during the war.

Your obedient servant,

October 20. F.P.

Sir,—Yesterday you were good enough to insert a letter of mine on this subject, mentioning a surcharge of 3d. made on a letter stamped 1d. from the Orange River Colony.

It is due to the Post Office to say that to-day this amount has been refunded, thus, I take it, officially admitting that the rate of postage is 1d. per half ounce. Allow me to thank you for your courtesy in publishing the letter which, apparently, has brought about this satisfactory and almost alarmingly sudden result.

Yours faithfully,

October 24. F.P.

25. 10. 00.

THE POST OFFICE.

31. 10. 00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The Postmaster-General requests, I see, in a letter to you that members of the public who think themselves aggrieved by any action of the Post Office will be good enough to communicate direct with him. He further asks that particulars should be given and wrappers enclosed.

The amount of time and money of the nation affected by the question of reasonably prompt dealing with telegrams and telephone trunk wires and the regular delivery of all letters and parcels and quick despatch thereof is so large that I venture to address this letter to you in order that I may point out that the Post Office has for years been meeting the complaints of the public by trying to limit the scope of the complaints and that of the official inquiry to specific instances where a private individual can produce a particular telegram as being unreasonably delayed in transmission, where a trunk call can be referred to as being so blocked as to prohibit its being used, and where a letter or parcel arrives after it ought to have been in the recipient's hands.

By adhering to this policy of specific instances from the public being required before any investigation will be made, and then investigating only as to specific instances, the Post Office has always evaded an investigation of the general want of sufficient facilities which are required to meet the public demand for an adequate, that is a prompt and regular, service in the telegram, trunk wire, and letter and parcel branches of the Post Office.

The information Lord Londonderry asks the members of the public to send him piecemeal is actually in the possession of the Post Office, as I will explain in the next three paragraphs.

It is well known to the telegraph officials that more often than not a telegram from a telegraph office to a house twenty miles out of London, and within ten minutes of a telegraph office, but three miles from a railway station, will take longer (and often much longer) in delivery than a letter sent by a boy messenger.

It is well known that almost any telephone trunk call will not be effective until from 20 minutes to over an hour has elapsed after the call is made.

It is well known that in the case of two letters despatched from the same place on the same day and at the same time to another place one will often arrive by one delivery and one by the other, and it is further well known that the time occupied by many letter and parcel mails is quite out of all proportion to the distance to be traversed or the service to be rendered.

These three main heads of the postal service where serious deficiencies exist at a great loss to the nation require no specific instances to corroborate them. They turn on a question of principle, namely the provision of more telegraph wires and staff; more telephone trunk wires and staff; and an overhauling of the letter and postal arrangements which were in existence years and years ago, before the business of the country developed as it has developed, and in all three heads a sound business determination to produce the best possible service for the public.

If instances were required, I personally could send three, one under each of the above heads, which happened the very day I read the Postmaster-General's letter, and if he is taken at his word by the public the mass of examples of the deficiencies which exist would be so enormous as to block any possibility of improvement for a long time to come, whereas the Post Office can deal with the three main heads, which are by far the most important, above referred to from their own information, which is known to every member of each department; and notwithstanding this knowledge and notwithstanding the continually received instances of the deficiencies the Post Office can see that matters have been allowed to go on practically with no improvement, and devote all their time in inquiring into each instance with a view to showing the Department is not to blame. Instead of going to the root of the matter and in fact treating the disease the Department has limited itself to an inquiry into the instances of defects, which are merely a symptom of the disease.

I think it may be taken as a sound business proposition that where faults arise and continuously arise from insufficient plant and staff and old-fashioned arrangements it is useless to spend time in investigating the instances of the deficiencies as they affect the public. The only thing to do is to go to the root of the matter and judiciously increase both plant and staff, and overhaul the old arrangement.

The question of expense is frequently pleaded by the Post Office as preventing improvement, but it is a well-known fact that the most expensive business to conduct

is that which is being conducted under difficulties, and in addition to this it must always be remembered that the Post Office is a national department and that, even if it were conducted at a loss, the nation would get its profit by the increased amount of business it could do and the rapidity and simplicity with which such business could be done if the Post Office gave the requisite facilities of rapid telegrams, prompt replies to trunk calls, and as quick a letter and parcel service as possible, having regard to modern requirements and the great improvements which have taken place, and are taking place, in locomotion all over the country. I am yours faithfully,

T. F. GODARD.

St. Michael's-house, St. Michael's-alley, Cornhill, London, E.C. Oct. 29.

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FRONT.

30.10.00.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—My farewell letter to my son, a subaltern in the Militia, before he left for South Africa on March 16 last has just been returned to me through the Dead Letter Office. It was addressed to the School of Musketry, Hythe, and evidently missed him by a few hours. The authorities at Hythe immediately re-addressed it "Field Force, South Africa," which is supposed to be the full address required.

The letter must have arrived at Cape Town about the same time as my son, who was detained in Cape Town, eventually guarding Boer prisoners for nearly three months after his arrival, and, although the envelope, which is marked all over with post marks, was in his camp at Green Point; and although his battalion and regiment are given in full, the postal authorities in Cape Town were apparently unable to discover him.

In addition to the post marks the letter bears the official stamp, "Advertised and unclaimed."

It is, therefore, very easy to understand how letters of officers and privates are reported to be missing when the Cape Town postal authorities appear to have been unable to discover an officer who was on duty in their neighbourhood for at least three months.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

FRANCIS W. PIXLEY.

23, Linden-gardens, W., Oct. 29.

POST OFFICE METHODS.—Mr. Alfred Parkin sends us from 24, Albion-street, Hull, copies of an interesting correspondence he has had with the General Post Office. On August 29 Mr. Parkin sent by post a bottle of medicine carefully wrapped in corrugated packing paper. He is in the habit of sending such bottles by post and had had no previous trouble. The bottle was broken and Mr. Parkin asked for 5s. as compensation. In reply he received a circular as follows:—"With reference to your communication, I have to inform you that the careful inquiry which has been made on the subject of the damage to a parcel containing a bottle of medicine addressed to Mr. —— has unfortunately proved unsuccessful. As explained at page 13 of the Post Office Guide, no compensation can be given for damage to parcels containing liquid. No claim therefore can, it is regretted, be entertained in the present case." To this Mr. Parkin at once wrote back:—"I am in receipt of your circular of October 19, saying 'that the careful inquiry which has been made on the subject has unfortunately proved unsuccessful.' To state that I am astounded to receive this reply is only stating the matter very mildly, as I have definite information from one of your officials in Hull to the effect that careful inquiries had already been made, numerous reports had been written by the Post Office *employés*, and that the damage had actually been traced to one of two individuals. Will you kindly explain this discrepancy?" The next Post Office communication, dated October 27, said:—"The bottle appears to have been accidentally broken in the Hull sorting office, but, although careful inquiry has been made, it cannot be ascertained precisely under what circumstances the damage occurred. It is regretted that this information was not communicated to you in the first instance." The communication also pointed out that "although compensation is paid in respect of the total loss of a parcel containing liquid or the abstraction of its contents, responsibility is not accepted when the loss of such contents is in consequence of damage to the parcel." Mr. Parkin replied:—"With regard to the paragraph on page 13 of the Post Office Guide, under which you claim freedom from compensation, I quite fail to grasp your interpretation, as the contents of my parcel were undoubtedly lost through the carelessness of one of your officials, and there is no mention whatever in the paragraph in question of abstraction of the contents of a parcel, as quoted in your letter of October 27. I claim only for loss of the contents of the parcel. Is it usual for the Post Office under such circumstances to expand a paragraph so as to meet their own requirements?" On the 3rd inst. Mr. Parkin received a final letter from the Post Office stating that, "in all the circumstances," the Postmaster-General had decided, "as an act of grace," to make an exception to the rule in Mr. Parkin's favour, and to pay the actual value of the contents of the bottle. In acknowledging this Mr. Parkin wrote:—"I cannot say that I have claimed any favour from the Post Office, but justice merely; nor can I see any act of grace whatever in any part of the correspondence emanating from your side. . . . To my mind it is most regrettable that the officials of a department maintained by the public for the public good should treat one of the public, who assists in paying their salaries, in such an elusive manner." 17.11.00

RAILWAY AND POST OFFICE.—Lord Dysart writes from Buckminster-park, Grantham:—"Will you kindly allow me to add another scandalous example of railway unpunctuality, for which practically the whole of this neighbourhood has to suffer great inconvenience daily? Our mail here at Buckminster is delayed sometimes an hour, and I am informed that in other villages dependent upon Grantham it is liable to be delayed as much as 24 hours owing to a Great Northern goods train from Nottingham to Grantham, which is invariably late. The Post Office appears to have no power at all in the matter of compelling the railway company to keep reasonable time. Such an instance as I mention is hardly credible in the days bordering on the 20th century. Without wishing to discuss the merits and demerits of State railways, I might point to the great convenience it is to the public in Germany to be able to send packages of any size from one part of that country to another, owing to the Post Office and the railway working together under State control. Although there may be no two opinions, especially among those who have travelled, as to our British Post Office being antiquated and utterly unsuited to the needs of the greatest commercial nation in the world, such an instance as I have mentioned would suggest that the Post Office often is blamed for faults which are beyond its powers to amend, because in this case its powers do not extend so far as to allow of the removal of the cause." 13.11.00.

ROWLAND HILL BENEVOLENT FUND.—The Lord Mayor presided yesterday at the Mansion-house over the 18th annual meeting in connexion with this fund, which is for the relief and assistance of Post Office servants and their widows and children. In welcoming the supporters of the fund again to the Mansion-house, the Lord Mayor said he rejoiced to see so useful a fund standing in such a good position. Sir James Whitehead, in proposing the adoption of the report, said he felt that it was greatly to the credit of the 160,000 persons who were employed by the Post Office that, out of that enormous number, only 400 had applied to the fund in the past year for assistance, which had been given to the amount of £1,991. Of these cases, too, 162 were those of subscribers. During the year £1,462 was derived from investments and £1,086 from Post Office contributions, the latter amount being considerably more than in previous years. The trustees had been able to invest £505 during the year from surplus funds—a prudent course in view of the greater demands which would be made on them in the future. Mr. W. H. Collingridge seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously. Sir George Murray, in proposing a vote of thanks to the trustees, stated that the Postmaster-General took the greatest interest in the fund, and he would have attended the meeting but for an engagement in the North of England. Mr. John Ardron seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously. On the motion of Sir Robert Hunter, seconded by Mr. Chuston, M.P., a cordial vote of thanks was passed to the Lord Mayor for presiding and for permitting the meeting to be held at the Mansion-house. The Lord Mayor, after acknowledging the compliment, said that reference had been made to the severe amount of criticism to which the Post Office had lately been subjected. Perhaps he might be forgiven if, as a commercial man, he said one word in reply, namely, that he did not regard the Post Office as being entirely beyond the scope of criticism, and Sir Robert Hunter would agree with him, perhaps, that some of the criticism was deserved. He thoroughly agreed with what Sir Robert had said that the commercial community kept a kindly eye on the servants of the Post Office. 13.11.00.

A POSTAL PHENOMENON.—The Rev. J. F. Bacon Phillips writes from Crowhurst Rectory, Sussex:—"I received to-day through the post a circular, presumably from Glasgow, in an envelope without either stamp, postmark, or any writing whatsoever except my name and address. I am not writing from the standpoint of a Post Office critic, for this institution, so vast and complex in its ramifications, always fills my mind with admiration, but desire to chronicle what appears to me to be a remarkable and interesting incident." 10.11.00.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE PUBLIC.—The scene which occurred at the Sheffield General Post Office last Wednesday was followed by similar scenes, but on a larger scale, on Thursday and Friday, when Mr. J. G. Graves sent greater quantities of parcels to be registered at one time. In the interests of public convenience the Lord Mayor (Alderman John Eaton) intervened on Saturday and suggested that some steps should be taken with a view of settling the dispute. Mr. Graves replied that he was willing to suspend any special action for the present, pending a definite reply from the postal authorities. The postmaster forwarded the Lord Mayor's letter to headquarters and received in reply the following telegram:—"Assure Lord Mayor that under instruction from headquarters you are doing your utmost to meet the general convenience of the public in the emergency which has been created by procedure followed by a certain firm in the city, and that all necessary provision for public business has been made." Yesterday Mr. Graves had a long interview with the General Post Office surveyor for the north-eastern district and the Sheffield postmaster. Various improvements of the postal arrangements in connexion with the business were agreed to. The special point at issue is to be the subject of a departmental decision, and until this is given Mr. Graves has consented to let the matter remain in abeyance and to post his registered letters in the same way that he has followed for the past three years. 27.11.00

PICTURE POST-CARDS IN TURKEY.—Mr. E. W. Richardson, editor of the *Picture Postcard*, writes from 101, Fleet-street :—"It may interest many of your readers to know that by virtue of a decision of the Council of Ministers, authorized by an Imperial Iradé, the Sublime Porte has forbidden the introduction into the Ottoman Empire of picture post-cards bearing the names of God and his prophet Mahomet, drawings of the Kaaba and all other Mussulman religious buildings, as well as portraits of Mahomedan women. The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs has accordingly memorialized all the foreign Legations in Constantinople, asking them to be so good as to convey this communication to all whom it may concern. Following on the Iradé the local police have seized all such cards found in the possession of salesmen of Turkish nationality in Constantinople, and have bought up all they could find in the possession of subjects of other States. This interdiction is founded upon the prohibition in the Koran forbidding the use among the Faithful of the representation of all animal and even vegetable life in any drawing or decoration by Mussulmans. Apart from the religious question (into which, of course, we Christians have no right to enter), one cannot but regret this decision of the Sublime Porte, for it will undoubtedly prove a severe blow to an artistic and perfectly legitimate trade in the Ottoman Empire. For naturally the chief objects of interest to the traveller in Turkey are the mosques and other religious buildings, as well as the open-air religious ceremonies, pilgrimages, and other semi-State, semi-religious, functions—all of which will necessarily be included in this ban. And in its way the prohibition of the placing on a post-card of the features and costumes of Turkish women will be no less annoying to the tourist desirous of either sending to his friends or keeping for his own collection these interesting souvenirs of Turkish women dressed in their peculiar Oriental costume. However, the Iradé has gone forth, and no more Turkish post-cards bearing views of mosques or women will be allowed to emanate from the Turkish Empire with the Turkish post mark upon them. I have received official information that the Turkish Post Office will refuse to accept these cards for transmission out of Turkey, whilst, on the other hand, the Customs have instructions to seize any that may be sent to the country." 28.11.00

POST OFFICE MAIL-BAGS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—We know by experience that complaints avail little with the officials of the Post Office, so I venture to ventilate a grievance through *The Standard*. This evening I had taken my seat next to the door in a second-class carriage at Farringdon-street Station, another passenger being opposite. Suddenly one mail-bag was dropped on my feet, a second pitched above it, a third on my knee; the whole being followed by a postman, who entangled himself in the bags and walked on my toes. The former he presently gathered up and piled in the corner, vacated hurriedly by my *vis-à-vis*.

As the compartment was not full, they caused no inconvenience, but where they would otherwise have gone I cannot say. That Railway Companies now consider the sale of a first or second class ticket only to mean the chance of corresponding accommodation, provided third-class passengers do not prefer it, I am well aware; but I should like to know whether second-class carriages are converted into mail-vans by order of the Postmaster General.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

December 11. 12.12.00. T. G. B.

SALE OF STAMPS AND WAR RELICS.—Mr. J. C. Stevens sold on Thursday at his auction rooms, in King-street, Covent-garden, postage stamps, war relics, &c., among which were three complete sets of Mafeking stamps, 19 in all, two of the sets realizing £24 each and the other £23; two complete sets of Transvaal coins, one "double-shaft" and the other "single-shaft," at eight guineas the set; the official notice of £25 reward for the recapture of Winston Churchill, signed Lovo de Haas,—£3 5s.; and the Staats Artillerie Transvaal uniform coat, which belonged to the late Commandant Pretorius—£2 10s. 15.12.00.

POST OFFICE METHODS.—"A Londoner" writes from West Kensington :—"On December 13 I had occasion to send a letter to an address in Madeley-road, Ealing, W. The letter bears post-marks of West Kensington, December 13, Paddington, December 14, and Ealing, December 14. This evening (December 24) it has come back to me at West Kensington, the addressee having apparently 'gone away.' The remarkable feature is that the 'returned postal packet' envelope in which it was enclosed bears the Birmingham post-mark of December 22, and the inscription 'Returned Letter Branch, Post-office, Birmingham.' It is a far cry from Ealing to West Kensington *via* Birmingham. Perhaps, however, in view of Birmingham's importance, all returned letters go there nowadays." 26.12.00.

POST OFFICE METHODS.—Mr. John Ellis writes from The Lawn, Eastbourne, in reference to the complaint that a letter addressed to Ealing from West Kensington was returned by the Post Office bearing a Birmingham post-mark :—"'A Londoner' may be enlightened by what occurred to me some time ago when in Paris. *The Times* newspaper was sent, and on its being opened a letter stamped and properly addressed to some one in London was found in the fold—no doubt pressed in by the act of sorting. On my return to England I posted the letter at Dover, from which place it no doubt reached its original destination, much to the surprise of sender and receiver." 1.1.01.

THE POST OFFICE.—Mr. G. L. Hinson writes from 50, Richmond-road, Bayswater, to complain of the carelessness of postmen :—"I have had parcels detained," he says, "although marked perishable, till contents were useless, and another a little while ago containing wild fowl never delivered because a figure was badly made in the number and might be read for 3 or 5. They say it was tendered at 30, and, not finding me, it was justification for the postman bringing it back and their destroying it, which any carrier company would not do. Besides, I have been living here for the last four months, receiving letters and parcels, and, as proof that reasonable effort was not made, and seldom is, a letter plainly addressed to 50, Richmond-road, Bayswater, was first sent to Richmond-road, Shepherd's-bush, and so delayed for a day, causing great inconvenience to me, who had to remain here in London over Christmas owing to it. Shameful, and no redress! They might as well have sent to Richmond-road, Putney, and say they were justified in doing so. I would like to know when this carelessness is to be stopped." 28.12.00.

POST OFFICE METHODS.—Mr. Isaac Berrow writes from 36, Alexandra-road, N.W. :—"A letter was once addressed to me from the south of London, and after some time I received it from Western Australia, where it had found its way in the folds of a newspaper. This letter was an order for an instrument, and in consequence of the Post Office muddle I lost the business. I thought I was entitled to some compensation, but all the answer I got was that the postmistress would be reprimanded for negligence." 9.1.01.

BELGIAN POST OFFICE ENTERPRISE.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

9.1.01. BRUSSELS, JAN. 6.

An interesting experiment is about to be tried by the Belgian Postal Department in the partial application of M. Ernest Solvay's method of *comptabilisme social* or bookkeeping controlled by the State, to which the attention of Belgian political economists has recently been directed by the author. The final aim of the new system is to abolish all superfluous transactions between debtor and creditor by means of a public ledger under State control, thus reducing to a *minimum* the entries involved in the ordinary methods of bookkeeping, or the handling of specie which might be necessary under actual conditions of commerce. A single example may be cited, though the idea can of course be extended indefinitely. Supposing two merchants, A and B, both having their account at the same bank, carry on an extensive business with each other. Instead of an elaborate interchange of payments, they simply notify each debit and credit to their banker, who thus keeps their current account automatically without obliging either to pass a single cheque. This may at first sight appear a mere extension of the cheque system which is already carried on in certain cases by private arrangement. But, if the principle is extended to the whole commercial community and the State constitutes itself banker for the nation at large, it is simply a question of bookkeeping on a sort of clearing-house system, and the manipulation of coin is practically abolished. This, it is argued, does away with a frequent cause of commercial panic, and saves an infinite amount of clerical labour. The possibility of such a revolution belongs to the future; but the experiment about to be tried in Belgium leads in the direction indicated. The Post Office in Belgium is extensively used by the public as a medium for collecting amounts due. A creditor fills in a form supplied for the purpose at the nearest office and within a few days he receives an advice that the money is at his disposal. Should a debtor dispute the account the form is returned to the sender. Last year nearly £24,000,000 was collected in this manner, being a higher sum than in any other European country where this system is current. The innovation now about to be adopted by the Government will greatly facilitate the collection of such accounts where a trader carries on an extensive business. Supposing he has 200 small amounts due to him by debtors in various parts of the country, amounting, say, to £1,000. Instead of sending him, as at present, a separate advice as each amount is paid, the Post Office will simply carry the total amount of £1,000 to his credit in the National Bank of Belgium. He will not require to give separate receipts to his debtors, as the original schedule filled in by him at the post-office serves as a formula for completing all record of the transactions to which the separate items refer. The experiment now under notice will, if successful, certainly be extended to other departments of State.

THE LONDON POSTAL SERVICE.—Mr. G. Lyttelton Hinson writes to complain that a letter addressed to him at "50, Richmond-road, Bayswater," was sent to Shepherd's-bush and then returned with "not known" written across it, and that he can get nothing but formal acknowledgments of his letters on the subject from the G.P.O. This is but one of many cases in which both letters and parcels addressed to him have gone wrong. In another instance a parcel was taken back to the post-office and destroyed. He complains of the "unlimited privilege" of the G.P.O. as unreasonable.

15.1.01. —For some time past

THE MAFEKING SIEGE STAMPS.

At the fortnightly meeting of the Junior London Philatelic Society, held in Clapham-hall on Saturday, the president, Mr. F. J. Melville, read to the members a statement which he had received in reply to inquiries addressed by him to Major-General Baden-Powell on the subject of the postage stamps issued during the siege of Mafeking. The president's letter was referred to the authorities of the General Post Office, Cape Town, whose communication in answer contains many particulars hitherto unpublished, corrects some erroneous statements that have got abroad, and will guide philatelists and dealers in avoiding forgeries when acquiring philatelic memorials of the historic siege and defence of Mafeking. The memorandum is in the following terms :—

"Postage Stamps Over-printed and Re-issued at Mafeking during the Siege.

"After careful inquiry into the matter, the following would appear to be the facts so far as can be ascertained in connexion with the over-printing, surcharging, and re-issue of the stamps now known as 'Mafeking Siege Stamps,' a complete list of which, showing the number of each denomination issued, is appended.

"Shortly before the 23rd of March, 1900, it was found possible to forward despatches by runners from Mafeking, both by the north and south routes, and a service was accordingly established by the military authorities. Owing to the high amounts which had to be paid to the runners it was decided to charge special rates for any private letters conveyed, and the following tariff was adopted, viz. :—*Via* the north, 1s. per ½oz. ; *via* the south, 6d. per ½oz.

"From a statement made by the military authorities it would appear that, in order to provide a sufficiency of stamps to admit of the prepayment of private letters, it was further decided to surcharge all the unsold stamps in the possession of the local postmaster, and Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Edward Cecil, under whose supervision the post-office was carried on during the siege, accordingly purchased the stamps at their face value and caused them to be over-printed and surcharged at the works of Messrs. Townshend and Son, the publishers of the *Mafeking Mail* newspaper. On the 23rd of March the stamps as over-printed were issued for the first time at their enhanced values, and, it is understood, the whole of the over-printed issues had been disposed of before the relief of the town was effected.

"Owing to the interruption of communication, the postal authorities at Cape Town could not be consulted in the matter, either as regards the sale or the over-printing, and from the time the stamps originally passed out of the hands of the civil postmaster the Colonial Post Office Department ceased to have any control whatsoever over their treatment. In view of these circumstances, and of the fact that the whole of the additional revenue derived from the sale of the stamps at their surcharged value was retained by the military authorities, the Postal Administration of the Cape Colony and the Bechuanaland Protectorate have decided to regard the stamps in question as purely military issues, and (in the month of November last) official notices have consequently been published in the Government *Gazette* proclaiming their non-availability for the prepayment of mail matter posted either in the Cape Colony or in the Protectorate.

"The average number of letters per week forwarded *via* the north from the 23rd of March was, approximately, 60, a runner leaving Mafeking twice per week, and *via* the south 30, once per week. It is, however, more than probable that many of the runners were captured by the Boer forces, and that the letters being conveyed by them never reached a British post-office.

"The local stamps—viz., those actually manufactured in Mafeking and bearing representations of Major-General Baden-Powell and Sergeant-Major Goodyear, of the Cadet Corps, on a bicycle—were used entirely for a postal service which was arranged within the town and between the various outposts. The whole of the three varieties of these stamps were printed by means of photography, the photograph being taken by Dr. D. Taylor, and the gumming and perforating by Messrs. Townshend and Son. The two varieties of the 'Baden-Powell' pattern were designed by Captain Greener, the Chief Paymaster, whilst the one of the bicycle pattern was designed by Dr. W. A. Hayes.

"It is evident from specimens which have been submitted to the Postmaster-General at Cape Town that extensive forgeries of the over-printed stamps have taken place, the fraud consisting in the unofficial over-printing, surcharging, and, in many cases, date-stamping of genuine Cape Colony stamps.

"General Post Office, Cape Town, December 7, 1900."

LIST OF POSTAGE STAMPS ISSUED BY THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES AT MAFEKING DURING THE SIEGE.

Face value.	Description.	Number of Stamps
½d.	Cape of Good Hope (old design), overprinted and surcharged "Mafeking 1d. Besieged"	7,680
½d.	Cape of Good Hope (new design), overprinted and surcharged "Mafeking 1d. Besieged"	5,280
½d.	Great Britain, overprinted "Bechuanaland Protectorate," surcharged and overprinted "Mafeking 1d. Besieged"	6,080
1d.	Great Britain, overprinted "Bechuanaland Protectorate" and "Mafeking 3d. Besieged"	1,800
1d.	Great Britain, overprinted "Bechuanaland Protectorate" and "Mafeking 3d. Besieged" (smaller type)	1,800
1d.	Cape of Good Hope, overprinted and surcharged "Mafeking 3d. Besieged"	6,000
2d.	Great Britain, overprinted "Bechuanaland Protectorate" and "Mafeking 6d. Besieged"	1,200
2d.	Great Britain, overprinted "Bechuanaland Protectorate" and "Mafeking 6d. Besieged" (smaller type)	1,200
3d.	Cape of Good Hope, overprinted "Mafeking 6d. Besieged"	840
3d.	British Bechuanaland (lilac series), overprinted "Mafeking 6d. Besieged"	3,000
3d.	Great Britain, overprinted "Bechuanaland Protectorate" and "Mafeking 6d. Besieged"	1,440
4d.	Great Britain, overprinted "British Bechuanaland" and "Mafeking 1s. Besieged"	2,320
4d.	Cape of Good Hope, overprinted "Mafeking 1s. Besieged"	1,440
6d.	Great Britain, overprinted "Bechuanaland Protectorate" and "Mafeking 1s. Besieged"	240
6d.	Great Britain, overprinted "British Bechuanaland" and "Mafeking 1s. Besieged"	1,440
1s.	Great Britain, overprinted "British Bechuanaland" and "Mafeking 2s. Besieged"	570
3d.	Local Postage Stamp, with photograph of Lt.-Gen. Baden-Powell's bust (small size)	6,072
3d.	Local Postage Stamp, with photograph of Lt.-Gen. Baden-Powell's bust (large size)	3,036
1d.	Local Postage Stamp, with photograph of Sergeant-Major Goodyear on bicycle	9,476

PENNY POSTAGE STAMPS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—There is, of necessity, an alteration to be made in our postage stamps. At the same time, there is a strong general desire that there should be a change in the colour of our penny stamps. The question is simply and clearly put by a lady correspondent, who says :—

"I want you to ask Lord Londonderry to let us have the old scarlet penny stamp restored to us. Scarlet, of course, is the Royal colour, and much more appropriate for 'an Imperial stamp' (which the popular and profitable penny stamp now is) than the present ugly washed-out mauve thing, which is, as far as I can make out, universally considered the ugliest of all our stamps."

At the Washington Postal Union Congress in 1898, at which the English and all other Governments of the civilized countries of the world were represented, it was agreed "that it would tend to universal convenience, if not to universal amity, if the postage stamps of equivalent denominations in the various nationalities were of the same colour." Accordingly green was adopted for the halfpenny stamp and red for the penny stamp, but England only obeyed the resolution in regard to the halfpenny stamp.

The Duke of Norfolk was in favour of issuing a red or deep scarlet Imperial penny stamp, and I believe that Sir George Murray was also anxious to carry out the idea. But it is alleged that the eminent firm of printers who supply the postage stamps for a consideration to the Post Office put a veto on it by stating the red stamp would cost an enormous sum to print. This objection was not taken by them to the green halfpenny stamp, and why should red cost more than green ?

If the difficulty arises through the expense of printing the stamp in fugitive colours, I hope the Postmaster-General will invite me to point out to him how the amount of the proposed additional expense may be saved. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

BUSINESS MEN AND THE POST OFFICE.

For some time back business men have been in the habit of using what is known as the "open-front envelope," which is an ordinary envelope with a square space cut from the front, in order to enable the name and address written on an invoice enclosed to be seen. It saves the clerk writing the address twice over—once, that is to say, on the invoice, and once on the envelope. The invoice is—or rather ought to be—so folded that the name and address are shown through the open space of the envelope. In the case of a firm which despatches hundreds of invoices every month, the economy of the clerk's time thus obtained is a very valuable consideration. The Post Office authorities have now forbidden the use of this ingenious device.

INTERNATIONAL POSTAL CONFERENCE.

22.2.01

An international conference was opened at Dover yesterday between representatives of the English and French postal authorities and the Northern of France and South-Eastern and Chatham Railway Companies. The conference was held at the suggestion of the postal authorities, with the object of accelerating the transit of mails between England and the Continent across the Straits of Dover, and considering the subject generally with a view to improved public facilities. The conference was held in the board room of the Dover Harbour Board, Mr. A. G. Ferard, of the General Post Office, London, presiding. Commander Neale, superintendent of mails at Dover, was in the vice-chair.

The MAYOR of FOLKESTONE, Mr. D. Baker, who was permitted to attend, explained that he was present to urge the advantages of Folkestone as a point of departure for the Continent as superior to any other. He urged that all the mails should be transferred from Dover to that place, and supported this argument by pointing out that Paris was 25 miles nearer Boulogne than Calais.

SIR W. H. CRUNDALL, the Belgian Consul at Dover, said, in reply, that the facts mentioned by Mr. Baker did not affect the journey between London and Paris, owing to the longer sea voyage from Folkestone, and that the railway time-tables actually showed that the distance between the two cities was covered in a few minutes less time *via* Dover-Calais than *via* Folkestone-Boulogne.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Mayor of Folkestone might, if he desired to do so, send in a statement to the Postmaster-General on the subject.

The conference was afterwards confined to the consideration of departmental questions as affecting the English and French mail traffic. Last night the delegates were entertained at the Lord Warden Hotel. To-day the representatives will deal more with matters of detail and will consider whether any and, if so, what better methods can be adopted to facilitate shipment.

With a view to securing the best results in the transit of mails and to meet the convenience of the public, the Dover Harbour Board are actively co-operating with the authorities on both the English and French sides of the Channel. Electric cranes are to be erected on the Admiralty Pier, and arrangements have already been made for the use of elevators which will transport mails or baggage between ships and the shore at a *maximum* of 50 packages per minute.

EXHIBITION OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—The International Philatelic Union held a very interesting competitive exhibition of postage and other stamps at the rooms of the Philatelic Society, Effingham-house, Arundel-street, Strand, on Saturday evening, attracting a large number of collectors and exhibitors. The grand prize was carried off by Mr. Vernon Roberts with a fine series of excessively rare stamps of the first Cape of Good Hope issue, among which were the 1d. and 4d. errors. Mr. H. R. Oldfield, president of the society, sent (*hors concours*) some of the very rare old Cantonical Swiss issues, notably the 4c. Vaud stamps, including some of the remarkably clever forgeries which have been the subject of police prosecution during the last few days. Mr. M. H. Lombard's series of Gambia and French colonies stamps included several rarities; whilst the two exhibits of Mr. L. L. R. Hausburg and Mr. R. Dalton included respectively the beautiful first issues of New South Wales, with the Sydney views, and Victoria issues. Mr. Warhurst sent some fine specimens of Transvaal stamps, including the rare error "Transvral." Among other exhibits of general interest was that of the hon. secretary, Mr. T. H. Hinton, whose numerous exhibits included a frame of stamps, post-cards, and envelopes of the British Empire, 1840-97, with various postal portraits of the late Queen Victoria in central design V.R.I.—perhaps the most generally interesting of all the exhibits.

THE FO[illegible] 22.2.01

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DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE POST OFFICE.—Mr. J. G. Graves, of Sheffield, being unable to obtain satisfaction from the postal authorities in his grievances as to the collection of registered postal packets, recommenced his campaign against the Post Office yesterday, when 200 clerks wearing sprigs of red tape paraded through the streets to the General Post Office and began to buy penny stamps singly. Each clerk had 10s. worth of coppers to spend. The postal staff was increased and the demand was met, but the public were put to great inconvenience. After the run on the post-office had proceeded an hour and the pressure seemed likely to continue, the postmaster called attention to the inconvenience and said that the line adopted by Mr. Graves in demanding the stamps singly was not legitimate. He asked for the clerks to be withdrawn, and Mr. Graves withdrew his men, but intimated that he should systematically endeavour to obtain his rights. 26.2.01.

DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE POST OFFICE.—Mr. Graves, jeweller, of Sheffield, made no demonstration on Wednesday in continuation of his crusade against the Post Office for the redress of his grievance as to the non-collection of registered postal packets, but this was only in order to give the overworked postal clerks a respite, and not because he has at all relaxed his determination to press the agitation. Yesterday brought more business to the office than Tuesday. For over three hours the increased staff which the postmaster put on was very busily employed in dealing with registered and unregistered parcels and registered letters. The procession through the streets which Mr. Graves arranged was the largest yet carried out. There were 50 cabs, each carrying a banner bearing some appropriate motto, such as "Post haste, less speed," "The public pay the piper, but the Post Office calls the tune," and so on. The procession caused large crowds to gather in the streets. At the post-office similar preparations had been made to those made on Tuesday, and the business was smoothly and quietly performed. Special arrangements were made for the accommodation of the public, and crowding in the office was not permitted. 1.3.01.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE PUBLIC.—Mr. J. G. Graves, the Sheffield merchant whose agitation against the Post Office for the collection of registered letter packets has now attracted the attention of Parliament, did not renew his demonstrations yesterday. In reply to inquiries with reference to the remarks made in the House of Commons on Thursday night, Mr. Graves said he had been officially warned that proceedings would be taken against him if he persisted, but he took not the slightest notice of the threat. He denies that the Post Office has granted him special facilities, except what are in the interests of the department and made far more for its convenience than for that of his firm. It was in July last year that he last applied officially for the collection of registered letter packets, but he had no reply until silence was broken in Parliament on Thursday. He is content to wait a little longer until a decision is given on the main question, but says he will probably organize one more demonstration just to see what happens. He contends that his demand is reasonable. The Post Office already collects registered letters from the banks in London, and he wants the same facilities for Sheffield.

PENNY POSTAGE FROM NEW ZEALAND.—Our Correspondent in Wellington, N.Z., writes on January 1 as follows:—"The penny stamp that conveys this letter over 13,000 miles of land and sea is worth preserving, because of its historic interest. It is the first stamp of its kind sold at the General Post Office of New Zealand by a Government that, as the bells are ringing in the new century, has taken the lead in the inauguration of universal penny postage. The event was celebrated throughout the colony, and many were the congratulations showered upon our Postmaster-General, the Hon. J. G. Ward, and Mr. Gray, the able Secretary of the Department. Half an hour after midnight, at a social gathering held in the Post Office, Mr. Ward was presented with a gold medallion souvenir on which was engraved a *facsimile* of the new stamp. This came from the postal staff throughout the colony, and, appropriately enough, was raised by means of a penny subscription. Mr. Ward, in the course of a lengthy speech, said the reform meant a direct loss of £80,000 to the revenue, but he predicted that this loss would be made up within a few years by the consequent increase in correspondence. That there are good grounds for this prediction is apparent in the steady increase in the correspondence of the colony during recent years. There were, last year, over 35,000,000 letters posted in New Zealand, an increase of 11½ millions within a period of nine years. On New Year's Day there was quite a rush for the new stamp, and the first issue of 100,000 was sold out within half an hour. Before the day was over the stamps were being sold privately at 1s. each. On the following day a further supply of 900,000 came to hand by direct steamer from London, and another million stamps are due by the Gothic, to arrive shortly. Afterwards the new stamp will be printed in the colony." 2.3.01

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER COMPANY.

9.3.01.

We have reason to believe that the District Messenger Company have now come to terms with the Post Office and the Treasury. We said in our leading article last Monday that discussion might possibly lead to a friendly settlement. Such a settlement, we understand, has now been arrived at. The Bill, of which the company had secured the introduction in the House of Commons, proposed that they should be empowered to carry on their business for 42 years from April, 1903, the date when their present licence from the Post Office will expire. The friendly agreement provides, not for so long a period as that, but for a renewal of about 21 years. In addition to this the royalties payable to the Post Office (6d. per call-box and ½d. per letter) are to be considerably reduced, and one or two minor concessions, to which the company attached importance, have been granted to them by the two Departments concerned.

Ample testimony has been borne in our columns to the usefulness of the District Messenger service. There will be a general feeling of satisfaction at the ending of their difficulties with the Post Office and at the prospect of the continuance of the service unimpaired.

THE LONDON AND PARIS MAIL SERVICE.

11.3.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—With reference to the recent Postal conference at Dover upon the subject of accelerating the mail service between London and Paris, I shall be glad if you will permit me to point out what I and others in this country and in France believe would be a great improvement upon the existing arrangements, and, in the interests of the two nations, should be at once carried out.

The mails now leave London at 9 a.m. and Paris at 9 30 a.m., and by reason of the late hour of departure, and by travelling the longer, roundabout route through Folkestone, *via* Dover, Calais, Boulogne, and *vice versa*, they arrive and are delivered in Paris and London respectively after business hours, and cannot be replied to until the following day.

If the mails were despatched at 7 30 or 8 a.m., instead of 9 and 9 30, and travelled by the shorter route, *via* Folkestone and Boulogne direct (thus saving 28 miles and half an hour or more in time), letters could be delivered in Paris and London respectively in business hours and could be replied to the same day, thus saving 24 hours to the community. This point is especially important to correspondence from or to, say, Glasgow, the North, and Midlands, all of which arrives in London in ample time to be sent on by a 7 30 a.m. mail, and the delay of 24 hours is most serious.

Upon my pointing this out at the conference at Dover, an effort was made to make it appear that there would be no saving of time by the shorter route, as the present time-table shows the two routes take about the same time.

This, however, should not be so, and there ought to be a saving of some 32 minutes in favour of the shorter route.

It is generally understood that the Northern of France Railway Company encourage in every possible way the traffic *via* Calais and Dover because they get an extra 5f. per passenger for that, the longer, route, and also use their own boats. Dover is equally anxious to retain the longer route because the Harbour Board would otherwise lose the poll tax levied upon each passenger landing or departing there; thus the additional cost of travelling between London and Paris *via* Dover and Calais is 6s. 2d. (first class) more than *via* Folkestone and Boulogne, the shorter route.

The method adopted to induce the public to travel by the longer route is by depriving them of the advantage of the shorter one by making it (in the time occupied) of the same length as the longer route, and this is easily done by keeping the passengers 61 minutes in Boulogne after the arrival of the Folkestone boat, thus wasting 30 to 40 minutes, and on the return journey from Paris detaining the train at Amiens 25 minutes for luncheon, whilst the Calais train, having luncheon cars, does not wait.

The important point, however, is that the mails should be accelerated, and I mention the two routes to show that, in one, three sides of an unequal square are traversed, whilst on the other route one side only is covered.

There are other matters that I could mention in support of my views, but I think I have said sufficient to show that an improvement might be made, and it is little short of a scandal that the Governments of two great nations (France and England) have not long before this swept aside all petty and local interests, and given that which is essential to the welfare of the two peoples—viz., the earliest and quickest possible mail service, regardless of all other considerations.

Yours truly,

DANIEL BAKER, Mayor of Folkestone.

Mayor's Parlour, Folkestone, March 7.

RECLAIMING LETTERS BY THE SENDERS.

11.3.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The fiction that a letter once posted is the property of the Postmaster-General, and under no circumstance can be delivered to any one but the person to whom it is addressed, has much to recommend it—from the permanent official's point of view. But the answers given to me in the House of Commons by the representative of the Postmaster-General, when appeals have been made to allow a relaxation of the rule, prove that England will soon be alone in maintaining the law as it now stands.

I shall be obliged if you will publish the accompanying interesting letter from Mr. F. L. Outtrim, Deputy Postmaster-General of Victoria, on the subject. I may add that in two of the best Post Offices in the world—the United States and Egypt—letters are returned to the senders.

I am your obedient servant.

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

House of Commons Library.

"General Post Office, Melbourne, January 21, 1901.

"Dear Sir,—As you expressed a desire to be informed of the experience of this Department with regard to the practice of stopping letters in transit through the post and returning them to the senders or otherwise dealing with them, I have much pleasure in furnishing you with the necessary particulars.

"The Victorian Post Office Act, 1890 (consolidated) is unique in that it contains a section which is not found in any of the other Colonial Acts, under which the Postmaster-General is given large powers in connexion with correspondence. The Interpretation Clause of the Act sets out that 'Postmaster-General' wherever the words occur shall for the purposes of the Act include any Deputy Postmaster-General; consequently the Deputy Postmaster-General is authorized to act as defined in the section referred to, which runs thus:—

"'Section 31.—Except in the cases expressly mentioned in this Act, no letter packet, parcel, or newspaper whatever shall under any circumstances be destroyed or returned to the writer or sender thereof without either the consent in writing of the person to whom the same is addressed or the direction of the Postmaster-General, and no letter packet or newspaper shall be delivered to any person not named in the address thereof without such consent or direction aforesaid.'

"It is quite a common thing for application to be made either for the return of a letter to the writer or for permission to alter the contents. The application is always made in a hurry, as mails are frequently despatched during the day, and invariably by persons quite unknown to me. I require, first, the full address to be written out for comparison of handwriting, then a complete description of the contents, the reason for desiring the return of the letter or for alteration, &c., and if satisfied I allow the letter to be opened in my presence and read sufficient of its contents to remove any doubt as to the genuineness of the statements made. Whether the letter is handed back or is altered and re-enveloped I always retain the original envelope, and write on the back a statement of the whole circumstances, and I retain the envelope for a reasonable time, say, 12 months, in case of any subsequent inquiry.

"I may say, however, that in no case has any inquiry or complaint ever been made, and the section has been a boon to many a troubled applicant.

"To give you an idea of the nature of the cases I cull a few examples from the envelopes now on hand.

"1. A gentleman in a great state of agitation called on me one day and said he had that morning posted a letter to his daughter's affianced husband addressed to another colony. The letter was written hastily under a false impression, and its nature (which he described) was such that if delivered it would seriously interfere with the happiness of two people. I obtained the letter, found the contents as stated, and handed it to the gentleman, who tore it up in my presence and gave what the Post Office rarely gets—heartfelt thanks for the relief which had been afforded to him.

"2. A young gentleman, not too steady in appearance, asked for permission to take out a card of invitation to a smoke night which he had by inadvertence enclosed in a letter to his father in England. He explained that his 'governor' had sent him out here to effect his reform, and had allowed him only a reasonable monthly remittance. He had just written home detailing his good resolves and better mode of living, his churchgoing instead of theatres, &c., in the hope that a bigger remittance would follow, but, after posting the letter, he missed the invitation upon which were scribbled some comments in his own handwriting, and he guessed at once what had happened. The letter was found to be exactly as described, and the applicant was delighted when the compromising card was in his hand and the letter freshly enveloped. In the exuberance of his heart he invited me to take a drink, and received in reply an admonition to go and sin no more.

"3. A leading bank asked to be allowed to open a heavy registered letter addressed to England in order to remove three drafts on South Africa which had been wrongly enclosed. The necessary search was made and the proper contents replaced in a new envelope with fresh stamps.

"4. A gentleman asked for permission to substitute a type-written sheet for one sheet of a type-written letter which contained two lines of a severe and libellous character. The tissue letter-book was produced containing a copy of the letter in question. The letter was obtained, the sheets exchanged, and possibly a serious breach between two friends was thus avoided.

"5. A pawnbroker had posted to a country town a watch which he had in pawn. The owner had forwarded to him a cheque, which, contrary to his usual practice, he accepted without inquiry, and immediately posted the watch in a registered packet. He then sent the cheque to the Melbourne Bank on which it was drawn, and had it returned marked 'No account.' The registered letter receipt was in this case sufficient evidence.

"The cases cited above will show you how the power under the section is used, and generally with what beneficial results.

"I may mention that at the recent Postal Conference held at Sydney I succeeded in obtaining the introduction of the section above quoted in the Federal Post Office Bill which we drafted for consideration of the Postmaster-General.

"I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

"F. L. OUTTRIM (Deputy Postmaster-General of Victoria).

"J. Henniker Heaton, Esq., M.P., Carlton Club, London."

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL AND THE POSTAGE OF MAGAZINES.—A deputation from the Cyclists' Touring Club waited upon the Postmaster-General yesterday to call his attention to the fact that whereas a newspaper post existed, whereby periodicals which appeared not less frequently than at seven-day intervals were conveyed irrespective of their weight at a cost of ½d., all periodicals published at less frequent intervals, and which exceeded the limit of the book post scale (2oz.) were charged for as though they were letters. It was contended that this regulation bore with undue severity upon every class of publication not technically qualified for admission to the newspaper post, and inflicted serious hardship upon associations and bodies formed for the promotion of some public end. It was suggested that the present regulations applying to the newspaper post should not be disturbed, but that there should be instituted a magazine post upon the basis that any magazine published at not less frequent intervals than once per month should be eligible for registration at the General Post Office for transmission by magazine post, and that the postage charged should be 1d. for 8oz. and under, and 1d. for every succeeding 8oz. It was pointed out that the postage of the club magazine involved the club in an expenditure of between £4,000 and £5,000 per annum, and it was predicted that the suggested magazine post would eventually result in largely increased profits to the Postal Department. Lord Londonderry, who was accompanied by Sir George Murray, the Permanent Secretary of the General Post Office, expressed his sympathy with the object the deputation had in view, but drew attention to the fact that he was unable to discriminate between various sections of the community. Furthermore, he doubted whether the suggested magazine post could be instituted without fresh legislation. He, however, admitted that the proposal came to him as a new one, and he promised to give it careful consideration. 23. 3. 01.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE PUBLIC.—The secretary of the Nottinghamshire and Midland Merchants' and Traders' Association has received the following letter from Sir George Murray, Secretary to the Post Office, under date March 18:—"The Postmaster-General directs me to thank you for your letter of the 12th inst. conveying a resolution passed by your association, in which, while disapproving of the course recently followed by Mr. Graves at Sheffield in obstructing the transaction of business by the general public at that office, they express the opinion that the Post Office as an institution for the public convenience should adapt its arrangements to local requirements. In reply, I am to point out that the particular requirement in this instance—viz., for the collection of registered letters in bulk—is one for which no demand had been previously made by the public, and no provision has hitherto been authorized for affording any such service. It was not practicable therefore for the postmaster of Sheffield to comply at once with Mr. Graves's demands under the existing regulations, and the Postmaster-General regrets that any attempt should have been made to enforce those demands by embarrassing the postmaster in the performance of his duty. Lord Londonderry has had under his consideration, however, the difficulty which arose on the occasions referred to owing to there being no provision under existing arrangements for the collection of registered articles when sent in large quantities; and with a view to meeting the convenience of the public he has now decided to modify the rules, so that it may be practicable for persons or firms desiring to post a large number of registered letters or parcels at one time to have them collected from their own premises by post-office messenger in future." 23. 3. 01

OFFICIAL COLLECTION OF POSTAL PACKETS.

29. 3. 01.

The following notice has been issued by the General Post Office:—

UNREGISTERED PACKETS.

The department undertakes to collect from private firms and others, free of expense, postal packets, including parcels, when the postage amounts to not less than £10 in the case of letters and circulars, and in the case of parcels when the number to be collected amounts regularly to as many as ten at a time or 50 a week.

Firms or persons requiring accommodation of this kind must observe the following regulations:—

1. An application marked "immediate" to be addressed to the postmaster or senior officer on duty, and contain the following particulars:—(a) The number of articles and their approximate total weight. (b) The description of the articles. (c) The destination—i.e., whether local, for one particular town, or for general distribution. (d) The time at which it is desired that the collection be made. Not less than three hours' notice to be given to the post office. 2. The postage to be paid by affixing stamps. 3. The articles to be securely tied in bundles, and the addresses all faced one way. Articles for local delivery to be kept separate. 4. Circulars in imitation type-writing characters or reproduced from type-written originals by a mechanical process must, if other matter is collected at the same time, be tied in separate bundles labelled "Imitation Type-writing Circulars." If the whole collection consists of such circulars only the facts must be stated in the application, and it will not then be necessary that the bundles should be labelled. To entitle such circulars to pass at the book-rate not less than 20 copies must be posted at the same time. 5. When a van or hand-cart is used the vehicle must on no account be left unattended, and must be loaded by the sender under the superintendence of the officer of the Post Office. 6. The officer of the Post Office must not be unduly detained, and every facility for the collection must be afforded.

REGISTERED PACKETS.

In the case of registered packets the following additional rules will apply:—

1. The collection can only be made between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., or between such other hours as may be arranged locally. 2. The number of registered packets to be collected shall be not less than 50. 3. The name and address on each packet and the amount of the fee shall be entered in duplicate (by the manifold process) in a book provided by the Post Office for the purpose; one copy of the list to be removed from the book for use at the Post Office, and the other to be signed by the officer receiving the packets. 4. The number of the entry on the list shall be marked on the corresponding packet near the top left-hand corner of the address, in order to facilitate examination on transfer. 5. Proper accommodation shall be afforded at the sender's premises for the examination and transfer of the packets. 6. The registration fee and the insurance fee (if any), as well as the postage, must be prepaid by means of postage stamps affixed to each article.

Note.—The sender of the packets, whether unregistered or registered, must satisfy himself that the person applying for them is duly authorized by the Post Office to receive them. Collections will not be made on Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday, or Bank Holidays. The Postmaster-General will discontinue the collection of postal packets (whether registered or not) from any firm or person if he is of opinion that his officers are unduly detained, or that there is any other difficulty which makes it contrary to the public interests that the collections should be continued.

MILITARY POSTAL SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

6. 4. 01

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

As Lord Roberts has publicly expressed his opinion that the Post Office Corps has done good work in South Africa exceptionally difficult circumstances, and as so much adverse comment has been heard from other ranks of the Army and their friends, it may be well to note what those circumstances are.

The work of the corps may be divided into four branches—(I.) transmitting and delivering to the Army in the field letters, parcels, and newspapers sent by correspondents from all parts of the world, chiefly Great Britain, but also in considerable numbers from India, Canada, and Australasia; (II.) remitting home letters, parcels, and newspapers from the Army in the field; (III.) remitting home money in postal orders and cashing postal orders in the field; (IV.) maintaining communication by letter between all parts of the Army spread over the whole of South Africa.

It is chiefly in connexion with the home mails branch and the local service branch that the adverse comments are made, little being heard of branches (II.) and (III.). Correspondents at home are content to receive their letters from the Army regularly week by week without considering the difficulties under which the letters are collected over the area occupied by the troops; and few people realize that between £8,000 and £14,000 are safely transmitted home week by week by the soldiers in the field to their friends and relatives at home through the agency of the Army Post Office. The latter work is of immense value to the Army in general, and in itself justifies the existence of the corps. But no comment is ever heard on the subject, though the safe conduct of large stocks of postal orders and the maintenance of the supply to the branches in the field is no very easy task; and many of the branches turn over £1,000 a week, no light responsibility for the sergeant in charge when the conditions under which the work is carried on, and the fact that it is only one side of their work, are considered.

As regards the delivery of home mails and the local service, it is apparent that the greater part of the Army views the despatch of a letter from one point to a person at another point as a simple matter, in consequence of the unfailing rapidity and exactitude with which the operation is carried out under peace conditions. There are, however, some who realize that a letter passes through many hands and along well-known routes under these conditions, but above all that it then goes only as it is addressed. In fact such a letter is addressed to a name, a house and street, and a town, while a letter to the Army in South Africa bears only the name and the unit. The former letter is first sorted to the named town, and it is of no concern to this sorter what the rest of the address states. It is then sorted to the street without regard to the name of the house, and finally delivered to the house without regard to the presence there of the addressee, and no intelligent person expects the letter to take any other course or to blame the Post Office if any of the particulars on the envelope are wrong; and, what is less obvious, if any of the various sorters who have handled the letter sort it to the wrong place the error can be corrected without the public's being any the wiser. Lastly, the circulation of a letter from one place to any other place is well established by many years' experience, and is maintained by a train service as safe and sure as human agency can arrange.

Let us compare these conditions with those under which the Army Post Office works. Assuming the address to contain correctly the particulars required—namely, rank, number and name, unit, Field Force, South Africa—the letter, after being sorted to the Field Force, has to be delivered to a unit without the preliminary sorting to a town and a street. If, therefore, a letter is wrongly sorted, the error is patent to the post orderly of the unit and probably to some others in the unit. Now, he is a bold man who will say that the titles of the British Army units are clearly distinguishable even if clearly written. Some examples are 6th Dragoons, 6th Dragoon Guards; 1st M.I. Battalion, 1st. M.I. Corps; 4th King's Own and the 4th Battalion K.O.R Lancaster Regiment; the 6th R. Warwicks and the 6th Battalion R. Warwicks; the Durham Light Infantry, the Durban Light Infantry; the D.C.L.I., K.S.L.I.; the 1st Yorks, 2nd E. Yorks, the 3rd Yorks, the 4th W. Yorks; the 2nd Brigade Division Ammunition Column R.F.A., the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column R.F.A., the 2nd Brigade Division Ammunition Column R.H.A.; the C.I.V., the 1st City Volunteers; No. 2 Field, No. 2 General, No. 2 Stationary, No. 2 School Hospitals; and many others, all different units, but requiring special knowledge on the part of the sorter. There are at least 800 separate units in the Field Force, and most of them either have two names or are now subdivided into at least two portions.

So much may be said for the address if correctly given; and one can realize the difference between sorting letters neatly addressed to towns and letters addressed to these units.

Many letters, however, come to hand addressed simply R.A., R.E., A.S.C., R.A.M.C., civil surgeon, or nursing sister. Again, many officers on special service have their letters so addressed, and many prefer to have their regiment named on the envelope whether they are with the regiment or not—an unfortunate habit which may be useful on visiting cards and harmless under peace conditions, but is very likely to cause errors in sorting on active service. Addresses for all these have to be determined; but the most difficult task, and the one which has to be compared with sending a letter to a definite town in peace time, is that of ascertaining where every unit or part of a unit is week by week; and, as quite half the units are frequently on the move, it requires unremitting watchfulness and an elaborate organization to keep the despatching office up to date in this knowledge. It is a mistake to suppose that it is possible to apply to any one source for this information. No department possesses the information except the Army Post Office, which has to accumulate it with immense difficulty from the headquarters of the various branches of the Army and from information received from the units themselves, but little credit being attached to the Post Office department for their efforts.

Now, a telegram from the Transvaal to Cape Town as a rule takes three days in transit, and the return mails four days. Therefore, seven days will elapse between the despatch of a fresh address or location and the receipt of a mail at that location. During those seven days, the unit may have changed its location again to a place 100 miles or more away. Further, supposing the mail to have caught the unit, having survived the risks attendant on the journey by rail, whether by the act of God or the King's enemies or owing to the absence of trained railway guards or regular travelling post-offices, the unit probably contains barely two-thirds of its members. The remainder may have lost their horses, if mounted men, and so been left somewhere along the line, or may have taken civil employment or be sick in hospital, or have gone home, or be dead. Now, it is an unfortunate fact that when a man once leaves his unit he is lost to that unit entirely unless he himself writes to the unit to say where he is. Each unit in South Africa has consisted of a fair proportion of its men collected together and officially described as the unit, while the remainder, sometimes amounting to half the total strength, are scattered all over South Africa. All their mails come out addressed to the unit and are delivered to that unit, the responsibility for their distribution amongst the members of the unit lying with the unit and not with the Post Office. If every unit had remained intact the complaints of non-receipt of mails would have been infinitesimal; and if every unit had adopted some recognized system by which their men sent back information as soon as possible of their location when separated from the unit by any cause, the unit could have re-directed their mails correctly, and the mails would have followed the detached men, and the units would not have found it necessary to advertise in the public Press in order to find where their men were, as has been done in some cases. Owing to this failure of units to keep in touch with their men, large numbers of letters are returned by the units without redirections, and every mail brings out additional matter, with the result that the Army Post Office is compelled to endeavour to keep a directory of the whole *personnel* of the Army, a large proportion of whose addresses are rarely the same from week-end to week-end.

To facilitate a comprehension of the position in South Africa, let a parallel state of affairs be considered as occurring in England. Let Penzance represent Cape Town, and Aberdeen the Army in the Transvaal. Penzance receives and forwards mails for the inhabitants of Aberdeen. It is ascertained that just after the mails left Penzance a third of Aberdeen's inhabitants left it for Dover, a sixth have gone into hospital at Glasgow and Edinburgh, but it is not known in Aberdeen in which hospitals they are; some have changed their houses in Aberdeen, but have not left their new address anywhere; others were sent into the infirmary at Aberdeen, but were discharged convalescent and sent down country by train; it is not known where they would stop. The remainder are sure that they ought to have received more letters than have arrived. To keep the parallel, it was ascertained on arrival at Aberdeen that the inhabitants who left for Dover have stopped at Cardiff. It should also have been stated that some of the inhabitants of Aberdeen were spending a fortnight at Penzance and required their letters stopped there, and those on their way to Dover passed the Aberdeen mail and were very much annoyed because they could not intercept and take the mail with them. One might extend the parallel further by describing how the number of inhabitants in Aberdeen was brought up to normal strength by a draft from Exeter, who left representatives sick in hospital at Manchester and York on their way up. No information of the moves was received by the Post Office at Penzance or at Aberdeen for a week after they took place, and none of the inhabitants have left their new address at their previous abodes. We need, however, go no further, provided that it be understood how such a state of affairs repeated in half-a-dozen towns all over England would exactly correspond to the moves of the present military inhabitants of South Africa.

Under such conditions in England would the inhabitants expect their letters to be sent elsewhere than to the address given on the envelope, or to receive their letters unless they one and all sent their new addresses to their last abode? Surely complaints would be met with

little sympathy unless they took this course; and if a whole community were to take to similar wandering habits, it would be fair to express wonder that they had any postal service at all.

The parallel thus drawn may help those unacquainted with the distribution of the Army in South Africa to realize what it means to distribute a weekly mail to the Army. Comparison has been drawn by others who know something of the position between the work of the Army Post Office and that of the A.S.C. or the R.A.M.C., pointing out how they have always got their food and medical stores when wanted, but that their mails were often failing them. Now it should not be necessary to point out that they would not have got food or medical stores unless they indented for them, and not even then unless a supply depôt was at hand, which depôt can equally well supply any troops who come along, provided that trains and convoys have brought up the requisite stocks. A comparison can only be drawn between such supply depôts and the Army postal depôts so far as the sale of stamps and postal orders is concerned. Every brigade has had a postal depôt attached. If it was not always at hand when the brigade wanted it, the brigadier would be able to explain where he had put it or left it. If any comparison is to be made between the supply of food and of home letters, it must first be stipulated for an example that, as each man is entitled to a ration of half an ounce of pepper weekly, this item of food supply should be separately packed by the grocer nearest to the place where each man in the Army lives at home, and addressed by the grocer to that man individually (and in bad writing), and the A.S.C. should then be called upon to distribute each packet to the addressee named, and to no one else. The A.S.C. might be given one penny per packet for the work involved, but what would the A.S.C. officer say to such an undertaking, and how would the Army fare for pepper? If only the Army Post Office could order a million letters, newspapers, and parcels weekly and send them to the depôts for general distribution according to indent inspection of addresses, how easy it would be in comparison!

As regards the local postal service, it is a question how far it is possible to establish a rapid and accurate exchange of correspondence when the points of exchange are scattered along 2,000 miles of railway or connected by hazardous and varying convoy routes, both railways and convoy routes being subject to interruption for days at a time. The difficulty of sorting to these points of exchange is considerably greater than that of sorting the home mails to units, owing to the fact that the garrisons mainly consist of detachments, and the flow of posted letters consists of an intermingled mass of redirected home mails, letters for home, official correspondence, and private letters all posted in one bag. No bags are safe unless personally escorted by a Post Office man, and the larger the number of bags the greater the risk of loss. It is, therefore, necessary to maintain large depôts at various centres where the postings are sorted and forwarded. This course, although inevitable, naturally causes delay over and above the time a man would take going from point to point, and allowance should be made accordingly.

The vast majority of the complaints are due to the failure to make allowance for the difference between the maintenance of postal communication in time of peace, along well-established routes between definite and permanent addresses worked by exchanges running as smoothly as a well-regulated clock, and the maintenance of similar communications between constantly changing addresses where the system has to be built up day by day, and is always liable to sudden dislocation or suspension by the failure of transport, the breaking of the line, or the wholesale capture or sickness of staff. In fact, the Army Post Office has had to cope with a problem as difficult as any the war has produced, and a full appreciation of the difficulties should be aimed at before any one can venture to speak confidently as to the results of their efforts. 6.4.01

LORD LONDONDERRY'S DEFENCE.

1.5.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Lord Londonderry has been good enough to say that out of 30 postal reforms suggested by me to him in August last, several had been carried, nine would require the sanction of Parliament, 13 the sanction of the Treasury, and six the consent of colonial and foreign Governments.

From a high authority I learn this morning that Lord Londonderry has appealed in vain to the Treasury to carry out these and also other reforms which he himself contemplates.

In dealing with the most serious of the Postmaster-General's statements I have the happiness of knowing that I shall not be misunderstood, for our private relations are such that I can express myself with the utmost freedom. His speech was necessarily mainly from the brief prepared by the Mandarins at St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Lord Londonderry states that the concessions we wrung from the Post Office during past years bore favourable comparison to the revenue. He then makes the astounding assertion that if he granted all my demands not only the net revenue of the Post Office would be swept away, but from 40 to 50 millions of capital would have to be raised by loan.

The answer is that if we carried every article great and small through the Post Office for a halfpenny each there would be no loss whatever. And if we carried every postal article free, without any charge whatever, the total loss would only amount to £8,840,000—that is, the total expenditure on the Post Office for 1900. Where, then, is the implied loss of 40 or 50 millions?

The whole of the reforms I have asked for would not cost £50,000 a year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer estimates an increase of £500,000 in this year's postal revenue.

Let me point to the following figures, taken from an official return recently issued:—

PROFITS OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE.

1869-1870	Net profit (excluding sites and buildings purchased)	£1,451,034
1879-1880	" "	2,769,426
1889-1890	" "	3,697,133
1899-1900	" "	3,995,237

In other words, the surplus has grown £2,500,000 in thirty years. The reforms for which I am in any degree responsible have certainly not cost £100,000 a year; and I still maintain that there is no correspondence between the growth of the surplus and the expenditure on improvements. I am entitled as the challenged party to choose my weapons. I would therefore remind you that against the £100,000 which I will admit my reforms have cost I may fairly set off:—

(1) £40,000 a year saved on the cost of the Trans-Continental (Calais-Brindisi and Calais-Naples) mail trains;

(2) £120,000 a year saved on the Peninsular and Oriental mail subsidy;

(3) £20,000 (roughly) saved by permitting the posting of "open envelopes" in England.

It is now surely clear that the country does not lose on the whole by postal reform; it either directly saves or indirectly gains. One of the items of expenditure in the postal department is that for the purchase of stamps and stationery. I sat on a Select Committee of the House of Commons on this subject many years ago, and the result of our deliberations was to effect a reduction of over £40,000 a year in the contractors' profits. Recently the vigilant Secretary to the Treasury thanked me for calling attention to our printing ink contracts. We pay 3s. 4d. a lb. for poor ink, and the Postmaster-General of America pays only 1s. per lb. for much superior ink.

But have my reforms cost £100,000 a year?

I have before me the revenue and expenditure of the Post Office for the 16 years of my Parliamentary life, and I have carefully traced the effect on the revenue of all the important concessions in the postal branch. I am unable to find a single instance in which the Post Office was permanently or seriously damnified. When we forced the Government to reduce the postage to India and Australia from 5d. and 6d. to 2½d. per letter the threatened heavy loss did not appear. When extensive improvements in rural deliveries were effected no check to the surplus resulted. When porterage on telegrams was mainly abolished there followed an increase in the revenue. Imperial penny postage has been extended to nearly all parts of the Empire, and still I find an increase in the revenue.

WHERE IS THE LEAKAGE?

Lord Londonderry says "the growth of the net surplus revenue has been accompanied by large concessions made to the public."

I repeat, I am unable to find that the upward movement of the net surplus has been stopped at any time during the past 16 years by any concession to the public. But there have been staggering losses of net revenue through additions to the expenditure on wages; but those are certainly not "concessions to the public."

THE INSATIABLE POSTMAN.

And here I would call attention to the skill with which, by innuendo as deft and gentle as the wave of Saladin's scimitar which cut in two King Richard's silken scarf, Lord Londonderry attributes the alarming growth in postal expenditure to "concessions to the public" instead of to the real cause. We have here the gravest question which he, as Postmaster-General, will have to face; and nobody is more profoundly acquainted with

its intricacies and dangers than the Postmaster-General himself. I refer to the question of salaries and wages of the *employés*. Let these figures speak for themselves.

THE BRITISH POST OFFICE SERVANTS.

1869-70—percentage of salaries to total revenue, 25·44; 1899-1900—percentage of salaries to total revenue, 44·52. In 1869-70 the amount paid in salaries and wages was £1,291,243; in 1899-1900 the amount paid in salaries and wages was £5,963,539.

No less than £400,000 more was paid for salaries and wages this year than last year.

It is said, and I believe it to be true, that many hundreds of poor postmen and sub-postmasters and telegraphists, particularly in the country districts, are shamefully underpaid, and have other real grievances which should be remedied. On the other hand, I have the highest authority for stating that there is a terrible waste of money and power in the metropolitan district. I offer to produce, under a guarantee of freedom from injury to his prospects, a high official for 20 years in the Post Office, and who has under his control a large number of men. He states that he could easily save £280,000 in expenditure in London alone.

I entirely object to a statesman of high character and ability (I mean Lord Londonderry) taking on himself the full responsibility for rejecting the demands of the people when it is known he is opposed by the Treasury. Take two cases as examples:—The petty, miserable, extortionate charge of 2d. for a receipt for a sixpenny telegram was appealed against in vain by Mr. Raikes. He publicly confessed in the House of Commons his inability to persuade the Treasury to abolish it because it brings in £200 a year.

What reply, too, has Lord Londonderry to make to the following letter:—

"Orillia Packet Office, Ontario, Canada, Aug. 20, 1900.

"Dear Sir,—I have had a short conversation with Mr. Mulock, our Postmaster-General. He says he is, and has been, in favour of reduced postage on newspapers between Canada and the mother country, and prepared a paper on the subject for the Convention. But the Duke of Norfolk asked him not to press it, as his Grace would 'have to oppose it.' Mr. Mulock also tells me he favours the interchange of postal orders, and he does not know why Mr. Walpole opposed the arrangement for Canada, and it was granted Newfoundland. Mr. Mulock's concluding remark was, 'Work for these reforms in the old country, and when they are willing they will find me ready.' Pardon my troubling you. Yours faithfully, G. H. HALE.—J. Henniker Heaton, Esq., M.P."

I have a hundred complaints before me of postal grievances of various kinds, but I have said enough without wearying your readers.

I shall simply add that while I am writing this Lord Londonderry is unveiling a memorial to two postal reformers in Bath. The historian says of one of them:—"For years he (John Palmer) encountered the most violent opposition from the British Post Office, and he only carried his great reform by the aid of Pitt, who was member for Bath."

I am your obedient servant, 15·01

Carlton Club, April 25. J. HENNIKER HEATON.

FOREIGN POST-OFFICES IN TURKEY.

Mr. GIBSON BOWLES (King's Lynn) asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he was aware of any treaty or any other international document giving either to Great Britain or to any other foreign nation the right of maintaining its own post-office in Turkey; if not, by virtue of what authority was the British post-office maintained there; did the maintenance of foreign post-offices in Turkey deprive the Turkish Government of any portion of the postal revenues which would otherwise accrue to it; was he aware that the mails consigned to these foreign post-offices and distributed by them often conveyed packets of watches and other valuable articles, which thus evaded the Turkish Customs duties; and did his Majesty's Government propose themselves to continue to maintain in Turkey a system of foreign post-offices which lent itself to an evasion of duties and a diminution of a portion of the securities pledged to foreign bondholders.

VISCOUNT CRANBORNE.—In pursuance of the provisions of the treaty of 1783 the Russian mails have been distributed by a special Russian post-office in the Consulate-General for many years. French, British and German post-offices were subsequently established on the ground that those countries are entitled under their treaties with the Porte to the same privileges as are enjoyed by others. These arrangements, therefore, are of long standing and have been necessitated by the absence of any security that the Turkish Government can efficiently replace the foreign post-offices. No doubt the Turkish revenue suffers to some extent in consequence; but it is quite understood that articles which would otherwise be liable to Turkish Customs dues are not transmissible by letter post through our post-office in Constantinople, and articles sent by parcel post are delivered through the Turkish Custom-house. In accordance with what I have said above, his Majesty's Government are not prepared to admit that any portion of the securities pledged to the bondholders are infringed. With regard to the continued maintenance of the foreign post-office, I have nothing to add to my answers of the 9th and 13th inst., in which the attitude of his Majesty's Government was fully explained. 18.5.01

THE NEW POSTAGE STAMPS.

Mr. ELLIS GRIFFITH (Anglesey) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether the designs for the new postage stamps had been entrusted to an Austrian sculptor; and, if so, whether this was due to the fact that there was no British artist competent for the work.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN (Worcestershire, E.).—It is the case that the portrait of his Majesty which has been used in the preparation of the designs to appear on the new postage stamps is by a foreign artist, there being in existence an excellent profile portrait executed only last year by the Austrian sculptor Mr. Fuchs, who is now resident in London. It is not to be inferred that no British artist was considered to be competent for the work.

Mr. ELLIS GRIFFITH asked who had the right of selecting the artist.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—I must have notice of that question.

LORD BALCARRES (Lancashire, Chorley) asked how the unsuitability of British artists was determined.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—I have expressly stated already that the unsuitability of British artists was not to be inferred from the choice made.

Dr. FARQUHARSON (Aberdeenshire, W.) asked if the opinion of the President of the Royal Academy or other leaders of the artistic profession was taken before the selection was made.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—I have already said twice that I must have notice of any further questions. (Hear, hear.) 24.5.01

On the vote to complete the sum of £9,328,810 for salaries and expenses of the Post Office, 8.6.01.

Mr. BRYCE (Aberdeen, S.) complained of the public inconvenience caused by the delay in the building of a new post-office at Aberdeen, and asked for an assurance that the work should be accelerated.

SIR M. STEWART (Kirkcudbright) called attention to the increase of Sunday labour in the Department. With

6.30 many of the Post Office *employés* this Sunday labour was a matter of conscience, and he was sure the House would not stand between the men and their consciences. He would like to know whether the men had to do Sunday work or resign their employment. As one of the largest employers in this country, the Post Office should set a right example in this matter. The Sunday rest from secular work was one of the greatest blessings this country enjoyed. (Hear, hear.) If hon. members agreed in that view, they should do their utmost to give those over whom they had authority and control the same privilege which was precious to themselves. This country could not have attained its present supremacy without this Sunday rest. Other nations had tried to do without it, and had failed. We went fresh to our work on Monday morning after our Sunday's rest, and we did more work than any other nation on God's earth. (Hear, hear.) To put himself in order the hon. baronet moved to reduce the vote by £100.

Mr. E. MORTON (Devonport) asked why, when the outdoor *employés* of the Post Office were allowed to solicit and receive Christmas and New Year's gratuities, the allowance of from 2s. to 9s. a week to indoor *employés* in lieu of those gratuities had been stopped. Could it not be re-established?

Mr. A. CHAMBERLAIN said the Postmaster-General and the heads of the Post Office were anxious to keep down Sunday labour as much as possible, but it was obvious that a certain amount of urgent work must be done on Sundays. Before 1898 Sunday work was undertaken voluntarily, but the men who had entered the service of the Post Office since that date did so on the express condition that they should take Sunday duty if called upon to do so, and therefore those men had no cause for complaint.

Mr. BAYLEY (Derbyshire, Chesterfield) asked the Government to grant the demand of the Post Office *employés* for a committee of that House to go thoroughly into their grievances and to report to the House on the subject. The Post Office *employés* had a great number of friends who wished to see them fairly treated. If the committee decided against them the Post Office *employés* would loyally abide by their decision.

7.0 Mr. J. A. DEWAR (Inverness) urged that improved postal communication should be given to the remote rural districts of Scotland. There were districts in his constituency which had a delivery of letters only once a week, and he asked that the service should be improved at least to the extent of a delivery of letters twice a week.

Mr. J. C. WASON (Orkney and Shetland) supported the claim made by the hon. member for Inverness, and pointed out that, in certain circumstances, the post-office was the only means of communication which the inhabitants of Orkney and Shetland had with the mainland. It was no answer to the demand they made to say that the additional service would not pay. They must regard the Post Office service as a whole, and as a whole the service did pay. He trusted that the matter would receive the earnest attention of the Post Office and the Treasury. 8.6.01

Mr. SCHWANN drew attention to certain grievances felt by postal *employés*. He said that the unestablished men in the engineering department of the telegraphs claimed that they ought to have the same benefits as were secured to the unestablished men in other departments of the Post Office. It had been used as an argument against unestablished engineers receiving the stripes, which carried extra allowance, that auxiliaries, who did not work a full day, ought not to have this advantage. But the

unestablished engineers did now work the whole day. They were as much daily workers as any other *employés* in the service. As the probability of a man's receiving a pension was taken into account in fixing the wages of a postman or telegraphist, he thought that, when either of the latter died, some portion of this deferred pay should be awarded to the widow and children. A large percentage of *employés* did not reach pension age.

7.30 Mr. J. F. HOPE (Sheffield, Brightside) thought that any lack of initiative or enterprise on the part of the officials of the Post Office should be ascribed to the present financial system of the country. The position of the Post Office should either be assimilated to that of other departments and the Postmaster-General abolished, or greater latitude should be given to the Postmaster-General and his able officials. He suggested that about £3,000,000 should be the yearly tribute of the Post Office to the general revenue of the country, and that the surplus profits above that amount should be divided, half going to the Treasury and half being devoted, at the discretion of the Postmaster-General, to the extension of the business of the Post Office.

Mr. BELL (Derby) hoped a committee would be appointed to inquire into the grievances of Post Office *employés*. Such a step would not do any harm, and might do a great deal of good. If grievances were allowed to accumulate too long there would be an explosion.

Mr. HAY (Shoreditch, Hoxton) thought the appointment of a committee of inquiry would remove the agitation and general unrest which undoubtedly existed among a very considerable section of Post Office *employés*.

SIR W. FOSTER also supported the claim made to an impartial committee of inquiry into the alleged grievances of the Post Office servants. While the agitation among these men continued, he regarded the matter as one of urgent importance, and asked the Government to consider whether it would not be best to hold an inquiry. As to other matters connected with the Post Office, he wished to say that, when the postal service was producing profits of millions a year, it was disappointing and ominous of bad management that, after all the changes that had been made in the postal arrangements in London, in many respects Londoners were worse off than before. Retrogression of the kind was discreditable to a great State department. There ought, among other things, to be increased facilities for answering letters at every post-office. The way to do business was to facilitate transactions with customers. He also wished to say that, in his opinion, many post-offices in the country were not only badly equipped, but were ill suited to the work that went through them.

Mr. A. CHAMBERLAIN said that the Post Office must have some regard to the value of the object to be obtained by improvements and to the cost that would be incurred in carrying them out. On this occasion they were dealing with an expenditure which, on the postal and telegraph services combined, showed a greater increase than did the corresponding income. Improvements such as those that had been asked for could only be carried out gradually. He thought the object of the hon. member for Chesterfield was to urge the Government to consent to a committee of inquiry to examine into the alleged grievances of the staff; and he said that if an impartial committee was appointed all the supposed grievances of the men would be explained, that they would feel that they had had a fair hearing, that they would be satisfied with such a tribunal, and that no more would be heard of the questions raised year after year in the House when the Post Office vote was down for discussion.

8.0 It was only a few years since the Tweedmouth committee, which was an impartial committee, inquired into this matter with great care; and every recommendation they made the Government accepted and carried into effect. Subsequently another inquiry was made, and further concessions were granted. What chance was there, if these two inquiries had failed to produce a cessation of agitation, that another inquiry would do so? On behalf of the Postmaster-General, he deprecated any reopening of inquiries, so recently undertaken, which had resulted in large changes in favour of the staff. He submitted that no case had been made out for reopening the inquiry, and, even if there were, that a committee of that House would not be a proper or efficient tribunal to investigate the question at issue. With regard to the allowance to indoor men in lieu of Christmas-boxes, when those allowances were discontinued the men's wages were raised. New men were not in the same position, but they fully understood what the conditions of the service were. 8. 6. 01.

Mr. E. MORTON said his point was that permission to ask for Christmas-boxes had again been granted to the outdoor men, but the allowance to indoor men had not been renewed.

Mr. W. ALLAN (Gateshead) wished to know why the Government dreaded the appointment of a committee to investigate the grievances of the postal staff. If the recommendations of the Tweedmouth Committee had been carried out there would be no grievances, but they had not been carried out. Why had the £190 limit not been given?

Mr. J. WILSON (Glasgow, St. Rollox) said he did not know whether the postal staff had grievances or not; but, whether they had grievances or not, why should they not have this inquiry which was demanded by the whole body of postal officials? If they had grievances the committee would define them, and they ought to be remedied. The position the hon. gentleman had taken up was not satisfactory.

Several other members having also spoken in favour of an inquiry,

Mr. BALFOUR said he had listened with great interest to the debate, and, he frankly confessed, with considerable anxiety as to the future of the public service if pressure of the kind which had been put upon the Government to-night was persisted in by this House. This House was omnipotent. It could make and unmake Governments. It could decide what, when, and how public money was to be expended. But, with that omnipotence, he would venture to urge upon members their great responsibility in dealing with a subject like the present. Everybody knew that a great organized body like the Post Office had it in its power to put great pressure upon members. But he would earnestly urge upon members that, unless they took their courage in both hands and said that, though most desirous that all legitimate grievances should be dealt with, they could not permit the Government, as a great employer of labour, to have this kind of pressure put upon them, then he thought the future of the public service was in peril. He could assure the Committee that he spoke with a great sense of responsibility. (Hear, hear.) In this very case the Post Office *employés* had brought forward their grievances year after year. Two Commissions had been appointed, and no one had ever ventured to impugn the ability of the members or their impartiality. The Commissions had made the fullest examination into the case put before them, and had reported at length. As a consequence of that report, the taxpayers of this country were now paying half a million sterling a year more than before, so that the Commissions had been productive of great pecuniary advantage to the Post Office *employés*. [illegible] none of the speeches had any specific complaint been [illegible]ght forward, no point was really urged which would suggest the necessity of further inquiry, but only the statement that there was a feeling of uneasiness and a desire for further examination, and that, when such a desire was expressed, it was proper that the House should listen to it. They could not keep the Civil Service in a sound and healthy condition if they were going to examine into it by a committee every five years. If the House of Commons was to yield to the very natural temptation of granting a committee such as has been asked for, though members might escape an inconvenient division, they should be unworthy, in his opinion, of bearing any longer the great responsibility of being the enormous employer of labour they were. They should not be carrying out their duty to the public, and they should—worse than all—aim a blow at the Civil Service, which was the boast of the country and the envy of the whole world, because they would become the Parliamentary creatures of every organized body of public servants who chose to use the great power which the Constitution gave them for ends which he was sure they believed to be right, but which the House could not yield to in the manner in which they were asked to yield to it to-night without derogating from the high functions and the spirit of pure impartiality which this House must maintain if members were to do their duty by their constituents. (Cheers.)

Mr. BURNS (Battersea) said the leader of the House, not for the first time, had told them that, if public servants pressed for redress of their grievances, such pressure would be inconvenient and fraught with danger to the public service. But was not that a reason for the House of Commons to consider whether the present method of dealing with grievances was the right one? He suggested a better course.

8.30 He suggested that for every spending Department there should sit regularly or periodically a small but strong committee of the House of Commons, who would not yield to unfair pressure, but who could be trusted to do their duty to the State. 8. 6. 01.

9.0 On the return of the CHAIRMAN after the usual interval,

Mr. STUART WORTLEY (Sheffield, Hallam) was opposed to the appointment of a Select Committee, but thought there should be some sort of permanent tribunal for the consideration of the grievances of Civil servants. In order to secure for such a tribunal the essential attributes of impartiality and independence, it should not be composed of either members of the House, who were subject to pressure from their constituents, or representatives of the Government department whose action was at issue.

Mr. WEIR complained of the inadequate postal facilities in remote rural districts, especially in Scotland.

9.30 The hon. member went on to complain of the want of sufficient money order offices and Post Office savings banks in remote parts of the islands and Highlands of Scotland. Referring to the loss of postal orders in transit, he suggested that each order form should have a counterfoil, to be retained by the sender for purposes of identification. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. A. CHAMBERLAIN denied that the intentions of the Post Office in initiating desirable reforms were defeated by officials of the Treasury. Both the Post Office and the Treasury were anxious to extend postal facilities in remote districts as far as circumstances would permit. A great step in advance was made when the Duke of Norfolk was Postmaster-General. The gross profits of the Post Office were divided between a contribution to the revenue of the country and improvements in the postal service. The mails to Stornoway cost three or four times as much as the profits derived from them, and many other facilities were provided at a loss. The suggestion that with every postal order there should be issued a counterfoil which the sender might retain for purposes of identification was a point well worthy of consideration, which he would submit to the Postmaster-General. With regard to the telephone system in the metropolitan area, he had nothing to add to the answer he gave a few weeks ago, when he expressed the hope that the service would be in operation before the close of the year. 8. 6. 01.

Mr. FLYNN (Cork, N.) complained that the Department paid no regard to the representations of the chamber of commerce and business men in deciding upon plans for the Cork post-office.

Mr. MOON (St. Pancras, N.) and Mr. NANNETTI (Dublin, College-green) supported the suggestion for a committee to examine the grievances of Post Office *employés*.

10.0 Mr. BANBURY (Camberwell, Peckham) called attention to the poor condition of many of the horses employed for the mail cart service. It was not creditable to the Post Office that these horses should not be kept in as good a condition as the horses of the London County Council or the omnibus companies. As to the grievances of the Post Office *employés*, it must be remembered that Lord Tweedmouth's Committee held a fair and impartial inquiry, with the result that wages were increased by £400,000, and that another inquiry, held by the Duke of Norfolk and the right hon. member for Preston, resulted in a further increase. He should vote against the particular inquiry now asked for, and had told his constituents before the last election that he should do so. If another inquiry were made, he hoped it would be made not by a committee of the House, but by persons who had a knowledge of the business and were not likely to be biased one way or the other. A Select Committee of the House would be the worst tribunal to which the matter could be referred.

Mr. SCHWANN moved the closure, which was agreed to.

10.30 The Committee divided, and the numbers were—

For the reduction of the vote	103
Against	148
Majority...	—45

Mr. BALFOUR then claimed that the main question be now put.

The Committee divided—

For the vote	168
Against	93
Majority	—75

On the vote to complete the sum of £781,085 for the expenses of the Post Office packet service,

Mr. WEIR complained that the Stornoway mail was conveyed *via* Mallaig since April 1 by a boat 40 years old. He urged that a modern and swift steamer should be secured for the service. As a protest against the present state of matters he moved the reduction of the vote by £100.

Mr. A. CHAMBERLAIN, in reply, repeated the answer he gave on an earlier vote to the complaint of the hon. member. He hoped the mails to Stornoway might be accelerated during the course of the summer, as he believed the railway company contemplated doing. It was true the packet steamer was 40 years old, but she was still a good seaworthy boat. He believed the Victory was 40 years old when Nelson selected her for his flag. This service was now run at very considerable loss. The subsidy was £3,000 a year. The cost was £4,270 and the revenue £1,258. In these circumstances the Post Office could not be said to be dealing ungenerously with Stornoway, and, after all, the Department had to consider the wants of the country as a whole, and the debate had shown how numerous were the claims on the Post Office.

11.0 The Committee divided and the numbers were—

For the reduction	86
Against	166
Majority against	—80

Mr. DILLON raised the question of the accommodation provided for lascar seamen on the P. and O. steamships. He said that the Home Secretary, when President of the Board of Trade, promised that the company should be compelled to observe the law in this matter, and he wished to know what had been done.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said there was an action now being brought by the Board of Trade against the P. and O. Company, and while it was pending it was impossible to discuss the question.

Mr. DILLON said it was very satisfactory, after all these years, to have got so far; but he should like to hear when the action was commenced and how soon it would be heard. 8. 6. 01.

Mr. G. BALFOUR said that entirely depended on the Courts. It was a question whether the law had been infringed, and the agreed upon action was to test that.

Mr. DILLON said this was very unsatisfactory. Was this the usual way in which the Board of Trade proceeded to test whether the law had been broken? Here was a great and powerful company employing cheap Asiatic labour to the exclusion of white labour, and now, after years, they were told that there was to be an agreed upon action to test the legality of the company's proceedings; and, even now, they could not find out when the action would be tried. He moved to reduce the vote by £50,000 in respect of the contracts for the conveyance of mails to Asia and Australia.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Cantorbury) regretted that the Committee had not been able to discuss the question of the Postmaster-General not being in that House. He contended that the whole of the Packet Vote should not be charged to the Post Office, and particularly objected to the sum of £60,000 for the mail service from Vancouver to Hong-kong.

The CHAIRMAN said that question could be discussed on the next item.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON complained of the time taken by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamers in going to Australia, and said it was a scandal and a disgrace to this country. He had the greatest respect for the Peninsular and Oriental Company; but it was a great wrong to this country that the Post Office authorities did not form the tenders for mails to Australia until six months before the time for the expiration of the contracts, because this meant that other companies could not compete. The absence of the Postmaster-General and the inability of his hon. friend to explain the vote was a sufficient condemnation of the way in which the vote was brought before the House.

CAPTAIN NORTON asked the Attorney-General whether all ships sailing under the British flag from British ports were not bound to conform to the Board of Trade regulations. He asked whether

11.30 sailors, coloured or not, were not entitled to certain cubic space on all ships flying the British flag.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Sir R. Finlay) said the proceedings which had been referred to were for the purpose of having it determined whether the Board of Trade regulations applied in the case of the Peninsular and Oriental Company as to the employment of lascars. The company maintained that they were subject to Indian Acts, which were different in effect. Both parties were anxious to have the point settled once and for all. The hearing of the case was fixed for the 18th inst., or thereabouts.

CAPTAIN NORTON complained that British seamen were being "squeezed out" of British ships by lascars. Men were wanted for the Navy, which was being starved because the merchant service was starved. He protested against subsidies being given to the P. and O. Company in preference to other steamship companies which employed British seamen.

Mr. WARNER said the question before the Committee was whether this subsidy should continue to be given to a company which did not comply with the Board of Trade regulations as to the provision of sufficient space. This was quite independent of any question of law.)

Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR (Liverpool, Scotland) reminded the President of the Board of Trade that his predecessor in office some 12 months ago expressed his opinion that the P. and O. Company should be compelled to comply with the Board of Trade regulations. After that it was naturally expected that the Department would take action, but after those valorous words it appeared the only result was a more or less friendly action initiated by the company.

Mr. GERALD BALFOUR said the action was taken by the company in consequence of the action taken by the Board of Trade. Upon the petition of right on the part of the P. and O. Company would be decided whether the company were entitled to engage their Lascars upon the Indian regulations.

Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR said, whatever the decision on that point might be, it would not affect the duty of a Government in the interest of the Navy to exact from a company enjoying a subsidy of £300,000 a year such conditions as would assist the employment of British seamen, and ensure the safety of the lives and health of passengers.

Mr. DILLON expressed his opinion that it was monstrous neglect of duty for the Department to allow the company to set the regulations at defiance long after the late President of the Board of Trade had strongly condemned such conduct.

Mr. RITCHIE admitted that the hon. gentleman had said truly that when he had to speak as President of the Board of Trade on this subject he expressed his own opinion, which was based on that given to him by the law officers, that the P. and O. Company were by law obliged to conform with the regulations of the Board of Trade. In consequence of the company's not conforming with the regulations the space occupied by the crew was disallowed; the effect of which was to compel the P. and O. Company to pay much larger dues than they otherwise would have done. The Board of Trade, therefore, did give effect to the legal advice which they received. He understood that the practice of disallowing space had been in operation for some years now, and was still continued, and consequently the P. and O. Company were being penallized in every ship that was carrying lascar labour out of this country. Whether the Board of Trade would be able to establish their case or not would have to be decided by the Court of law after considering the case.

Mr. DILLON.—But the P. and O. Company still persist in their course. 8.6.01

Mr. RITCHIE.—Yes, and their crew space is still being disallowed.

Mr. DILLON said that this disallowance had been going on for the last four or five years. Why did the company go on defying the law? Because it paid them to do so, as they made more money by refusing to comply with the regulations. This company, which they were subsidizing, had set a pretty example to shipowners by successfully defying the opinion of the law officers for four years. He should certainly take a division on the subject.

Mr. E. MORTON said the object of inflicting fines, which was a criminal punishment, was not to get the fine, but to stop the crime (hear, hear), and yet this crime was going on. The Government would have to take some other course, and their most obvious duty was to stop the subsidy to this particular line as long as it failed to comply with the regulations.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said the suggestion that whilst this question was pending or as long as the P. and O. Company refused to accept the Board of Trade view of their obligations the subsidy should be stopped was one which could not be carried out. The subsidy was payable for a term of years which had not yet expired. The question might, however, be considered at the expiration of that term, which would take place in, he believed, from three to six years.

Mr. WARNER asked whether that applied to all subsidies paid to the P. and O. Company.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—Yes.

12.0 The Committee divided, when there voted—

For the amendment	76
Against	153
Majority against	—77

Mr. WEIR rose to continue the discussion, when—

Mr. BALFOUR moved the closure.

The Committee divided, when there voted—

For the closure	150
Against	68
Majority for	—82

The Committee next divided on the vote—

For the vote	148
Against	68
Majority for	—80

The House resumed. 8.6.01.

POST OFFICE ASTUTENESS.—"The Addressees" write, under date June 7, from New-inn, Strand, W.C.:—"Permit us to provide an experience quite different from that of Professor Laughton, as stated in your issue of to-day. A letter was, on 6th inst., posted to us addressed with extraordinary incorrectness, 'Messrs. ——, solicitors, Fulham.' The proper address was written on the envelope by the Post Office authorities, and the letter reached us here only a few hours late. We enclose you the envelope." 8.6.01

THE POST OFFICE.—Mr. L. Marion Haynes writes under date May 31:—I see in *The Times* of to-day that Mr. Allen, of South Hampstead, gives his experiences of Post Office red-tapeism; mine, unfortunately, are somewhat similar. Some time ago I sent from Bournemouth two postal-orders, value 25s., to my son in Westminster. Receiving no acknowledgment, I wrote again and heard by return that no letter containing orders had reached him. I at once made inquiries at the Bournemouth head office, where I filled in a form answering numerous questions. A few days later the usual formula from the General Post Office arrived stating my complaint should receive attention. A week elapsed and I heard again saying the two orders had not been presented for payment, and further that if they were not cashed within five months the "Postmaster-General would consider whether he could properly issue duplicates thereof, and, if so, on what conditions," also advising me to apply again at the end of five months. Three weeks later I received another communication informing me officially the two orders had been cashed, and that "any person who desires to secure compensation for a postal-order in the event of its being lost in the post should not only keep a record of its number and amount, but should also enclose it in one of the registered letter envelopes provided by the Postmaster-General and should register the letter at a post-office." The five months having ended, I wrote again, hoping I might get my money refunded, and received the reply from an official stating he was "directed by the Postmaster-General to inform me with an expression of his regret that there was now reason to believe that the letter was stolen and the postal-orders enclosed therein negotiated by a Post Office servant who has since been arrested on charges of stealing post letters." Further, that he was to add "that when an order has once been paid, to whomsoever it is paid, the Postmaster-General is not liable for any further claim," ending with—"The Postmaster-General regrets that in the present case there are no grounds upon which he can entertain the question of compensation." 5.6.01.

On the resolution to confirm the vote for the salaries and expenses of the Post Office, 11.6.01

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) said he desired to enter his protest against the absence of any direct representative of the Post Office in that House. (Opposition cheers.) His hon. friend who represented the Department had shown great intelligence and courtesy; but it was a fact that he had never been in the Post Office until he took up his present position, that he knew nothing of the Post Office, and that on three occasions last week he had to ask for notice of questions which a direct representative of the Department would have been able to answer at once. (Opposition cheers.) During the past five years only three questions had been addressed to the Postmaster-General in the House of Lords, while some thousands of questions affecting the Department had been asked in the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.) He would move that the vote be reduced by £100 in order to test this question. He would mention two or three grievances in regard to the Post Office in order to illustrate the utter inability of the Postmaster-General to get reforms, and how necessary it was that the House of Commons should assert its authority in matters of this kind. For a receipt for a 6d. telegram, which did not cost a farthing, the Post Office charged 2d. The late Postmaster-General appealed to the Treasury to abolish this charge, but appealed in vain. An annoying charge of this kind should be abolished at once, and it would only cost the Treasury about £120 a year. It was not generally known that the profit on lost postal orders amounted to about £15,000 a year. That being the case, the Post Office should deal liberally with the public in regard to postal orders. But postal orders not presented within three months were subject to fines, and the result was that in a very short time the fines amounted to so much that the postal orders were not worth presenting. A man who presented in Dublin a postal order for 1s. was asked to pay 1s. 4d. in fines. (Laughter.) He also complained of the inability of the Postmaster-General to issue postal orders having a greater variety of amounts. The public often paid more for postal orders for 19s. 6d. than for postal orders for £1. He particularly regretted the inability of the Postmaster-General to issue a postal order for a guinea, and also that postal orders had not been extended to Australia and other colonies. His chief complaint was that the charges were considerably in excess of the charges in any other country in the world. If he sent 5s. to France he had to pay 6d. for the money order, but a Frenchman could send 5s. to London for 1d. That ought not to be tolerated. Frequent complaints had been made, and the Postmaster-General had announced his inability to deal with the matter. He also wished for a reform in regard to the charge for sending a few pence to this country from the colonies. At present it was impossible to send a few pence from the colonies. The remedy was simple. There should be one room at the Post Office and at the principal post offices in this country where stamps of the Empire and of foreign countries could be exchanged for a small commission. He did not wish to detain the House. (Cries of "Go on" from the Opposition.) He thought the time had come when they ought to have for that great City of London an alteration of the whole system of administration of the Post Office in various directions. (Hear, hear.) He thought they should have three classes of postmen—the first class to deliver letters, the second newspapers, and the third parcels. What did they see now early in the morning? They saw the postman, carrying letters, loaded with heavy bags of newspapers and parcels mixed up. A reform of this kind would, he believed, work very well indeed. The arrangements with regard to post-cards and the delivery of parcels required looking into, and he was told that great saving might readily be effected. He was not then entering into the details on that occasion because he knew it would be absurd to expect any improvement while the present Administration continued. (Opposition cheers.) He, however, asked the Government to make this a party question; and in order to test the feeling of the House he begged to move the reduction of the vote by £100. 11.6.01

Mr. KEIR HARDIE reminded the House that whatever success the Post Office had attained was due to the efficiency of the men who were employed in the various departments, to whose complaints the First Lord of the

12.0 Treasury turned a deaf ear. He proceeded to deal with certain grievances suffered by rural postmen as to the amount of their wages and as to the method of payment for Sunday work and extra work at Christmas and other times. If the Government, he said, persisted in turning a deaf ear to the demand of the Post Office servants for an impartial inquiry, their patience would be exhausted, and the Post Office system might be totally disorganized.

Mr. BROADHURST (Leicester) complained that the House of Commons had no means of communicating with the Post Office except through the Treasury messenger.

Mr. J. A. DEWAR (Inverness-shire) urged that there should be more frequent deliveries of letters in remote rural parts of the kingdom where now there was only a weekly or a fortnightly post.

Mr. GILHOOLY (Cork County, West) complained of the inadequacy of the postal arrangements in Baltimore, county Cork.

Mr. LOUGH complained of the unsympathetic attitude of the Department to real cases of grievance.

After some remarks from COLONEL NOLAN (Galway, N.),

12.30 Mr. BURNS (Battersea) maintained that the Postmaster-General ought to be in the House of Commons, so that hon. members who had questions to bring before him could do so in the lobby or the smoking-room, instead of taking up the time of the House in the small hours of the morning. He suggested that a small committee of members of the House should be appointed to assist the Postmaster-General in the management of his Department.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, in answering various points which had been raised, said that such had been the eagerness of the men in the Post Office to take Sunday duty that the Postmaster-General had felt bound to put restrictions on the amount of Sunday duty which one might perform. That was in the interests of the public service. With regard to the complaints of the hon. member for Canterbury, the hon. member seemed to think that for the Postmaster-General to sit in the House of Commons would be a specific for every grievance. But the business of the Post Office was very difficult and complicated, involving a great mass of detail; and he was not sure that it was not a positive advantage for the Postmaster-General to have the greater freedom and the larger leisure of the House of Lords. (Cries of "Oh!") The process of forming a Government was already difficult enough; but it would be infinitely more difficult if the rule were laid down that this or that particular office must be held by a member of the House of Commons. It had been said that, if the Postmaster-General was to be represented in the House, the worst person to represent him was the Financial Secretary. He did not agree with that view. The Post Office and the Treasury were necessarily brought into close contact. If it were the case that the Treasury delayed and thwarted Post Office reform—which he did not admit—there was no better remedy for it than to make the representative of the Treasury also the representative of the Post Office, and therefore the scapegoat for its misdeeds. The Treasury having under our present system to exercise

same control over the Post Office as a revenue department, it was not altogether a misfortune that the Treasury should have to answer for it in the House of Commons. Some people objected to Treasury control, but if the Treasury did not occasionally focus different demands, did not compare the urgency of one with the other, if there was not some department to exercise this control over the different departments, he was afraid the complaints of hon. members against increased taxation would be even louder than they were. With regard to the other large question discussed by the hon. member for Merthyr, if the Postmaster-General consulted only his own interest his tendency would be to give way for the sake of peace and quiet. No grievance had been brought forward that evening which had not been considered by the Tweedmouth Committee, and which had not been dealt with if recommended by that Committee. What was asked for was a new Court of inquiry; and, as long as a simple request was not granted to these demands, if once conceded, there would be no end, while pressure would continue to be put on members of the House of Commons.

1.0 The conditions of service in the Post Office were such that there was no difficulty in filling places. On the contrary, there was great demand for them, and he did not think the Post Office servants would be so ill-advised as ever to act on the threat held out by the hon. member for Merthyr. The Postmaster-General had often expressed his readiness to receive representatives of any class and to listen to anything they had to say. He would add that when he received communications from members of the House the Postmaster-General would do his utmost to get them answered at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. W. REDMOND (Clare, E.) protested against hon. members being compelled to sit up all night if they wished to call attention to the shortcomings of the Post Office. 11. 6. 01.

1.30 Mr. O'MARA (Kilkenny, S.) continued the discussion.

Mr. BALFOUR moved that the question be now put. (Nationalist cries of "Oh.")

The House divided, when there voted—

For the closure	139
Against	77
Majority	—62

The House again divided, and the numbers were—

For the reduction	81
Against	136
Majority against	—55

Mr. BALFOUR then claimed the main question.

The House divided—

For the vote	140
Against	70
Majority	—70

The House adjourned at 2 o'clock.

SALE OF STAMPS AT RAILWAY STATIONS.

In reply to Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury),

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN (Worcestershire, E.) said,—Endeavours were made in 1892 and again in 1897 to arrange for the sale of postage stamps by persons keeping book and other stalls at the London railway stations as well as at those in the larger provincial towns, but without much success. The chief newspaper vendors have hitherto declined to undertake the sale at their railway bookstalls, and the Postmaster-General is not aware that they are prepared to reconsider their decision. Licences have, however, been granted in recent years to certain persons for the sale of stamps, &c., at railway stations and other public places by means of automatic machines, but it is feared that the demand has been too small to encourage a larger provision of these machines. 30. 7. 01.

7. 8. 01. POST OFFICE TELEPHONES.

In reply to Mr. JOHNSTON (Belfast, S.),

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN (Worcestershire, E.) said,—The establishment of the Post Office telephone system in London will not affect the provision of private wires of moderate length by the Postmaster-General. They will continue for the present to be provided at the same rates and under the same conditions as now. It is, however, hoped that in many cases the Exchange service will serve the same purposes as more costly private wire systems.

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE.

12. 8. 01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

Sir,—It is only by calling public attention to the incompetency of the General Post Office that any improvement can be hoped for. I shall, therefore, be glad if you will allow me to call attention to the fate of an "express" parcel—sent thus because it contained proofs needing immediate attention. The parcel was duly handed in at a district office (S.E.) before half-past nine, and was addressed to Leamington. It did not arrive there until the next morning by the ordinary post, thus causing the delay which its object was to avoid. I may say that two or three months back a similar parcel, sent to the same address, did not arrive till the evening.

It would seem to me, and, I think, to most folk, that the General Post Office has no right to undertake and accept payment for work which it cannot perform.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

August 8. G. S. S.

THE NEW GREEK POSTAGE STAMPS.—A correspondent writes:—When, some six months ago, the Greek Postmaster-General sent a magnificent New Year's greeting card to his colleagues throughout the world bearing impressed upon it by the original dies the designs of the new Greek stamps to be issued to the public six months afterwards, great interest was aroused in official postal circles by the promise of a striking and handsome set of stamps. This promise has now been fulfilled by the issue of a complete set of 14 new and beautiful postage stamps by Greece. The new stamps in design, colour, and execution are among the most beautiful ever issued. The "motive" of the design is, as it has always been in the case of the stamps of Greece, a figure of Hermes, with his petasus, or winged cap, his wings on his heels and his caduceus, or serpent-entwined and winged wand, denoting his office as herald. The particular form of the Messenger of the Gods portrayed on the stamps is that of the statue of Mercury by Giovanni da Bologna. Of the new stamps there are 14 different values embraced by three distinct designs, the central figure being always the peculiarly appropriate Hermes, the difference consisting only in the framework, and, in the case of the four highest values, in the size of the stamp. The third group, consisting of four long stamps for the values of one drachma, and the 2,3, and 5 drachmæ, has the simplest and most severely classical design, though this is, of course, relieved by the richness of the colours, which are black, with bronze, silver, and gold respectively. The design consists of a simple Greek ornament border, enclosing the figure of Mercury, with the word "Ellas" at the top, and the value in drachmæ at the bottom. The new stamps are all alike most delicately engraved and beautifully coloured, and reach the greatest excellence of printing and production—the perforation and "centring" of the first impressions alone leave something to be desired. They are printed on strong paper, water-marked with "E. T." and a crown, for the Hellenic Government, by Messrs. Perkins, Bacon, and Co., to whom much praise is due for these beautiful specimens of the engraver's and colour-printer's arts, the technical excellence of which says much for at least one branch of British industry. 31. 7. 01.

AN IMPERIAL AND AN INTERNATIONAL POSTAGE STAMP.

7. 8. 01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Our kith and kin beyond the seas are signalizing their desire for closer connexion with the mother country by asking for an Imperial postage stamp. Recent mails from Canada, from New Zealand, and from Jamaica brought me letters, which I send you, on the subject.

It is not only for sentimental but for business reasons that an Imperial stamp is desired.

My Canadian correspondent writes:—

"I have long thought some method should be invented by which a few cents could be sent to England to make some small purchase, or to secure a sample copy of some publication. It would promote trade in the Empire and be an ever present evidence of our unity."

The Jamaica correspondent is flattering. He says:—

"I am writing to thank you for obtaining Imperial penny postage for us colonists, and I should feel inclined to send you 1s. or even 6d. as a tangible proof of my gratitude, but I find it would cost me 3d. to remit even this small sum. I do hope that you will press forward and obtain for us a system of Imperial postal stamps or orders by which we can remit small sums home for a reasonable commission. It would be more of a convenience than can be easily understood."

The New Zealand correspondent writes:—

"Hokitika, N.Z., April 10.

"Hon. Henniker Heaton, M.P., London. Hon. Sir,—I am taking the liberty of addressing you on the following matter in connexion with Imperial postage stamps.

"When writing home for catalogues and price lists to different manufacturers it frequently happens that they require either postage stamps for the cost of lists or for cost of postage to the colonies. Now we are in a corner in this connexion, for we either must have a collection of British postage stamps on hand, or else send the coin nearest in value to it, as colonial stamps are of no use to English houses. The question naturally arises then, What is to stand in the way of the mother country and all her colonies printing and circulating a universal stamp which, while not interfering with the present issue of the different designs of each colony, will obviate the difficulties above referred to?

"I need hardly point out that such an idea will help to strengthen those feelings of kinship, &c., between the colonies and the mother country.

"If you think that the matter is worth taking up, I presume that now is the time to press it home in view of the fact that at no time have the feelings of loyalty and love to the mother country been more strongly developed. I feel sure that the step would be highly appreciated amongst British commercial houses.

"I have the honour to be yours obediently,

"JOHN PATERSON."

An American, writing from Illinois, sends me a 5 cent unused United States stamp (with a portrait of President Grant on it) that I might send him a copy of *The Times* containing what is known as my "Letter to Lord Londonderry." He says, with the Canadian, that anybody who likes to read an English paper or wishes to get any particular one must have experienced the difficulty of having no method of petty exchange by which very small sums might be remitted to the old land or to any

part of the world without trouble. There are times when we should like to ensure an answer to a communication as far as it is possible, and it is only proper that the person, often a stranger, in England should not be put to the expense of paying postage in reply.

I will now briefly state the reasons why the Post Office of Great Britain and Ireland finds a difficulty in arranging for an international or an Imperial postage stamp. The reasons are an absence of a common coinage, and our financial gain by correspondence. Englishmen write five letters abroad and receive about four. Under the Postal Union the English Government keeps all its own postage receipts on the five letters and has only the trouble and expense of delivering four letters. Fifteen years ago I made a calculation showing that under the Postal Union arrangement England gains £228,000 a year over and above any other Government. For 15 years (up to 1900) I could post 120 letters from Austria to England for £1, but only 96 letters from England to Austria for £1. If we had an international stamp it would pay the English merchant to buy foreign stamps. To-day you can send 100 letters from France or Germany to England for £1, but only 96 letters from England to France or Germany for £1.

My Turkish correspondent, under date June 12, sends me this note:—"The British post offices in Turkey give 120 of the 2½d. stamps for £1, so it only costs us 2d. a letter from here to England. This is due to the difference in exchange."

On this subject one of the greatest authorities in this country writes to me as follows:—

"There are very few foreign countries where more stamps cannot be obtained than in England; even in the United States and Canada there are 97 to the pound. The only countries I can think of where the reverse is the case is Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Uruguay; in the first three named only 90 stamps of 20 ore, and in Uruguay only 92 of 5c., can be had for £1. In Italy more stamps can be got for £1 than in France, as Italian paper is at a discount, the lira being only 9d. People who advocate an interchangeable stamp can form no conception of the disastrous effect it would have upon the postal revenue of this country. The new stamps would of course be purchasable in every country included in the Universal Postal Union, and as soon as business firms became aware that they could be bought so much cheaper abroad they would no longer buy them in England.

"I have correspondents in every country of the world where stamps are used, and am kept posted on rates of exchange, &c., and if an interchangeable stamp was adopted I could soon make a fortune by buying them wherever they were cheapest and selling them here at 2d. each instead of 2½d. I think just now the cheapest place to get them would be Guatemala, in which country the paper currency has depreciated to 10d. the peso (or dollar); yet the postage to England remains, I believe, still at 10 centavos, which would actually mean 240 2½d. stamps for £1. Another striking instance is Korea, where a stamp of 10 cheun pays the postage on a letter to any country of the Postal Union. There is a curious anomaly existing in this little-known country; at Seoul (the capital) and the principal ports Japanese money is the usual currency, and all taxes and Customs duties are paid by its means, but at the post-offices either Japanese or Korean money is indiscriminately accepted for stamps when bought in small quantities, no distinction in the rates of exchange being made. Now there is a wide difference between the value of 100 cheun Korean and 100 sen Japanese, as the former currency is almost entirely in nickel and bronze, the latter being silver. The rate varies from time to time, 120 to 140 cheun being the equivalent of 100 sen. If, therefore, you change an English sovereign for Japanese silver you get 10 yen, which buys 100 stamps of 10 cheun each. If, however, you again change your Japanese money into Korean you can get from 120 to 140 (generally the latter) stamps of 10 cheun with the same money. But the Post Office will only accept Korean money for very small amounts, and large buyers of stamps are compelled to pay in Japanese money, hence the anomaly of a small buyer being able to get his stamps cheaper than a large buyer can. Money orders are issued on Korea and are always paid in Japanese currency, so stamp dealers ordering by post have to pay for the stamps at the rate of 2s. per dollar. I have, however, through a local agent got over the difficulty of the currency, and am able to get Korean stamps to any amount at the cheaper rate, and have imported some 40,000 or 50,000 of various denominations within the last few months. My orders exhausted the whole stock at the post-office several times, and my agent had to wait for weeks for completion, the stamps being printed in Seoul in such a primitive manner and with such poor materials that they can only turn out a few hundreds a day. My orders quite staggered the worthy postmaster.

"An international stamp is an impossibility, even if the greatest care were taken to equalize the cost of the stamp in every country; the rates of exchange in some places, particularly in some of the South and Central American Republics, are subject to such great and sudden fluctuations that it would not be long ere I could find out where I could buy more than 120 2½d. stamps for £1. There are, however, three other European countries from which letters can be sent for less than 2½d.—Spain, Turkey, and Greece. The rate from Spain is 25 centimos, which should be equal to 2½d., but in consequence of the depreciation of Spanish paper money it is really only 2d., the rate of exchange being 30 pesetas=£1. In the case of Turkey the rate is one piastre, or 40 paras; the rate of exchange varies in different parts of the Turkish empire—from 112 piastres=£1 in Constantinople to 120 piastres in other parts. There are British, French, German, Austrian, and Russian post-offices in many Levant ports, where they use their own stamps, but have to receive Turkish money in payment of the postage. Formerly ordinary 2½d. British stamps were used at the British post-office, but when some sharp person discovered that they could be bought for Turkish money at 2d. each and sent to England at a big profit the use of ordinary stamps was stopped, and now they are overprinted with the value in Turkish money, and are only available at British post-offices in Turkey. The stamps of other countries having Levant post-offices are similarly overprinted. In the case of the Austrian there exists an absurd anomaly to which I have recently called the attention of the Postmaster-General, who has communicated with the Vienna post-office on the subject. The Turkish postage rates require stamps of the denominations of ten and 20 paras and one piastre; the Austrian stamp of 25 heller, being the one used for international single letter rate, is overprinted '1 piastre' at the bottom, for use in Turkey, but, there being no Austrian stamp of 12½ heller, that of ten heller is overprinted '20 paras,' or ½ piastre. Now if two of these stamps are purchased at 20 paras each and put on a letter they should be sufficient, as one piastre has been paid for them, which is the correct amount, but, incredible as it may seem, the two stamps are treated separately as if they were ordinary ten heller Austrian and the letter charged a penny on delivery, as if it was prepaid 2d. instead of 2½d. I think for crass stupidity this would be hard to beat, even in the Post Office.

"From Greece no less than 133 letters can be sent to England for the equivalent of £1. The rate is 25 lepta, which, as in Spain, should be 2½d., but is not, owing to the same cause—depreciated currency. The present rate of exchange is 40 drachmæ=£1, at which rate there would be no fewer than 160 stamps of 25 lepta to be had for £1, but the Greek post-office charges 30 lepta each for 25-lepta stamps, possibly to meet the loss on exchange, but even at this enhanced price it will be seen that 133 can be had for £1."

It will be seen from this how difficult it is to have an international or an Imperial postage stamp—at least until England adopts the decimal system of coinage.

There is, however, a very simple and convenient method to meet the difficulty of sending small sums, under 1s., which I have advocated in *The Times* and in Parliament very often during the past 15 years. It is that until an Imperial, and, if possible, also an international, stamp be brought into use, a room should be set apart in each of the more important post-offices in the United Kingdom for the sale of foreign and colonial stamps (as is done in some of the colonies now), in order to enable the people of this country engaged in trade and otherwise to exchange or send stamps for replies, &c. (See *The Times*, August 24, 1895.)

In Australia English postage stamps are sold, not to exceed in value 5s. to any one person, with the most satisfactory results. I shall indeed be sorry if Lord Londonderry refuses to oblige the people in this matter in the direction indicated. He has definitely refused to be a party to the introduction of an Imperial stamp because no feasible solution of the difficulties I have sketched has been placed before him. I appeal to him to try the experiment of selling small quantities of foreign and colonial stamps.

I am, your obedient servant,
J. HENNIKER HEATON.

7.8.01.

THE GERMAN MONEY ORDER SYSTEM.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he was aware that, in the case of money orders drawn in England in favour of persons in Germany, it was unnecessary to write to the persons to whom they were addressed, because the German postal authorities took the money direct to the houses of the addressees and received receipts; and whether he would introduce this practice in England if the German postal authorities supplied evidence that the system worked well both as regarded telegraph and postal money orders. 10.8.01.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—The Postmaster-General is aware of the arrangement referred to by the hon. member. The question of introducing it into the United Kingdom has already been fully considered in all its details, with the assistance of the German Post Office; and the Postmaster-General is convinced that from the point of view of the public as well as of the Post Office the arrangement would be much less satisfactory than that which already obtains here.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON asked whether the Postmaster-General would give the system a trial.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—I understand that in the opinion of the advisers of the Postmaster-General the difficulty of identification would be greater in this country than in Germany, where more is known about individuals, and money orders would miscarry and fail to reach the persons for whom they are intended.

REGISTERED LETTERS.—Messrs. McCorquodale and Co. (Limited) send us from Cardington-street, Euston-square, specimens of the envelopes of various sizes now on sale at all post-offices for the transmission of registered letters. They are certainly convenient and well adapted to their purpose, stout, very easily distinguishable, and as safe as envelopes can be made, the stamp for postage being placed over part of the flap, so that when the flap is opened the stamp must be torn. As Messrs. McCorquodale point out, "the advantages they offer to stockbrokers, company solicitors, and the general public for the despatch of transfers, scrip, and other documents by post are obvious, both as regards convenience and security in transmission." 17.8.01.

A POST OFFICE REGISTRY FOR SERVANTS.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether, in consequence of the increasing scarcity of servants, particularly farm hands, in Great Britain, he had any objection to a list being kept at country post-offices of servants wanted in the neighbourhood, the expense being met by a fee of one penny to be paid by those whose applications were placed in the book to be provided at the country post-offices.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN (Worcestershire, E.).—The Postmaster-General does not think it desirable to add the business of keeping a registry office for servants to the other functions of the Post Office.

13.8.01. ADDRESSES IN TELEGRAMS.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether he could explain why in telegrams Westgate-on-Sea was charged as one word but Birchington-on-Sea as three words.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—The name of the second place mentioned by the hon. member is "Birchington," and if the words "on-Sea" are added in any case they are charged for because they are superfluous. (Laughter.)

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON.—May I ask why Camden-town is charged as one word and Woodford-green as two?

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—I informed my hon. friend of the reason for that about a week ago.

In answer to a question put by Mr. JAMES LOWTHER (Kent, Thanet),

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said,—Westgate-on-Sea is the proper address, and is, therefore, charged as one word. In the case of Birchington the words "on-Sea" are not necessary, and if any one puts them in a telegram he must pay for them.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON.—Is there not a rule that the names of all places in the United Kingdom shall be charged as one word?

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—I am not prepared to state the rule, but I think my hon. friend knows the purport of it.

THE GREEK POST OFFICE.

22.8.01

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Mr. Henniker Heaton's correspondent, in the letter published in your issue of the 7th, is incorrect in stating that the Greek Post Office charges 30 lepta for the 25 lepta stamp for foreign letters. That stamp has since July 1 been obtainable at its face value, which (the exchange being at 160 or thereabouts) means 160 stamps, 90 to the £ sterling.

Yours faithfully,
VINCENT E. H. CORBETT.

Commission Financière Internationale,
à Athènes. Aug. 16.

THE POST OFFICE IN 1900-1901.

24.8.01.

The 47th annual report of the Postmaster-General on the Post Office was issued yesterday as a Blue-book. The contains a full account of the transactions of the Post Office for the year ended March 31, 1901.

It is estimated that the number of postal packets delivered in the United Kingdom during the year was 3,723,817,000, an increase of 3·8 per cent. over the previous year and an average of 90·8 packets to each person in the population. The letters numbered 2,323,600,000. The letters have increased by 23 per cent. since 1896-97, the year previous to the Jubilee reduction of postage; and a large part of the increase has been in the rural districts. The letters delivered in London last year show an increase of 5 per cent. on the previous year. The remarkable increase in the number of circulars and book packets is largely due to the general election. The growth of parcel post business has been exceptional. Parcels have increased 27 per cent. since the reduction of postage in 1897. Of the total number delivered in 1900-1901, 69,612,956 were rail-borne, while 11,403,916 did not pass over a railway. The total number of express services was 804,447, as compared with 720,381 in 1899-1900, an increase of 11·7 per cent. In London 818,959 articles were delivered by express messengers, including 307,051 letters sent out for delivery in advance of the postman. Since the Post Office express service was established ten years ago, the number of services has risen from 64,000 to 530,000 in London, and from 108,000 to 304,000 in the United Kingdom. During the year there has been a considerable extension of the use made of the arrangement under which single letters can be despatched by any train selected by the sender and can be met and delivered by special messenger at the place of destination. It has been decided to grant an extension of the licence to work the call box system and of the authority to deliver letters, which were granted to the District Messenger and Theatre Ticket Company in 1891 for a period of 12 years—that is up to April 14, 1903. The new licence of the company will be granted for a further period of 19 years, ending March 31, 1922, and the principal conditions will be as follows:—(1) The payment of a percentage on the company's gross receipts (excluding theatre ticket business) in lieu of the existing royalties for call boxes and letter carrying, with a *minimum* payment of £500 per annum; (2) the company to be allowed to give a return signal from their office to the subscriber's call box; (3) the number of letters which may be carried by one messenger at one time to be raised from six to ten.

More than 382,000 postal packets addressed to South Africa were returned to this country as undeliverable; and nearly 25,000 letters sent from the South African Field Force to addresses in this country could not be delivered, and had to be sent back. The large increase in the number of undelivered post-cards, book packets, and circulars is due in great measure to the general election. There has been a further very large increase—more than 12 per cent.—in the number of articles found loose in the post, which were more than twice as numerous as four years ago. The coin, which had escaped from packets, alone amounted to £902, or £122 more than in the previous year. No fewer than 345,690 packets were posted unaddressed. These contained £251 in cash and bank notes, and £7,203 in bills, cheques, postal orders, stamps, &c. The total value of property found in undelivered letters, which had to be opened in the returned letter office, was £681,335.

As to South Africa the report states that the Army Post Office is still in operation. The staff now consists of seven officers and about 540 men. The weekly mail for the Army Post Office contains on an average 204,000 letters and 115,300 packets of printed matter; and it is estimated that during the year ended March 31, 1901, 11,551,300 letters were sent to the troops and 9,250,000 were received from them. During the same period the parcels sent out to the forces in South Africa by post amounted to 534,245, the largest number despatched on any one occasion—namely, on December 1, 1900—being 19,672. About 8,745 such parcels are now sent each week.

As to the magnitude and difficulties of the work of the Army Post Office, the report quotes the following paragraph from Earl Roberts's despatch of April 16 last:—

"The magnitude of the task set the military postal service may be appreciated when it is realized that the Army mails from England have exceeded in bulk the whole of the mails arriving for the inhabitants of Cape Colony and Natal, and contained each week little short of 750,000 letters, newspapers, and parcels for the troops. No little credit is therefore due to the department under Major Treble in the first few months, and for the greater part of the time under Lieut.-Colonel J. Greer, Director of Military Postal Services, for the way in which it has endeavoured to cope with the vast quantity of correspondence, bearing in mind the incessant manner in which the troops have been moved about the country, the transport difficulties which had to be encountered, the want of postal experience in the bulk of the *personnel* of the corps, and the inadequacy of the establishments laid down for the several organizations."

His Majesty has been pleased to confer the honour of C.M.G. on Messrs. Greer and Treble in acknowledgment of their services.

With regard to the Post Office Savings Bank it is stated that the net expenditure of the bank for the year was £487,025, representing an average cost per transaction of 5·73d., as against 5·75d. in 1899. The ratio of the expenses to the total sum standing to the credit of depositors was as 7s. 2¼d. to £100. The corresponding amount in 1899 was 7s. 3¼d., and five years ago it was 8s.

While for the four previous years the expenditure exceeded the income, in 1900 there was once more a balance of profit amounting to £10,465.

The number of telegrams sent over the wires of the Department during the year was 89,576,861, showing a decrease of ·92 per cent.

The decrease in the number of ordinary inland telegrams was 1·30 per cent., as compared with an increase of 2·88 per cent. for the previous year. The local traffic in London showed a decrease of 2·11 per cent., and Stock Exchange telegrams a decrease of nearly 14 per cent. The revenue shows a falling off of 1·83 per cent., the average value of an inland telegram being 7·40d., as compared with 7·44d. last year, and with 8·12d. in 1885-86, the first year after the introduction of sixpenny telegrams. Foreign telegrams show an increase of 1·58 per cent., the total of 7,641,090 being the highest on record. The number of Press telegrams also exceeds the number sent in the previous year, the increase being at the rate of 2·18 per cent. The receipts from these telegrams, however, show a decrease. The average weekly number of words in Press telegrams was 16,065,602, as compared with a weekly average of 15,721,802 for the previous year.

The circumstances attending the death of her Majesty Queen Victoria gave rise to a large amount of telegraph business. On February 1, the day preceding the funeral of her Majesty, the number of telegrams (199,155) passing through the Central Telegraph Office, London, was the highest number ever dealt with in one day at the office. There was also great pressure at Cowes, Portsmouth, and Windsor; and 63 telegraphists were withdrawn from London to supplement the ordinary staff at those offices. His Majesty the King was graciously pleased to express his appreciation of the way in which the special arrangements were carried out.

The number of post-offices open for trunk telephone business on March 31 last was 312, an increase of 13 in the year. The trunk circuits in use consisted of approximately 76,831 miles of wire, and 7,700 miles of wire were in course of construction. Out of the sum of £2,300,000 authorized by Parliament for the purchase and development of the trunk system, the expenditure up to March 31 last was approximately £1,695,822. The expenditure during the year was approximately £164,189.

The total number of trunk transactions during the year was 8,975,148, or, reckoning each transaction as involving at least two spoken messages, a total number of 17,950,296 (an increase of 10·87 per cent. over that of the preceding year). The revenue was £211,209 (an increase of 10·18 per cent.), and the average value of each transaction was 5·64d., practically the same as in the preceding year.

The provision of the Post Office metropolitan exchange system is progressing satisfactorily. In connexion with the works now proceeding, there are to be exchanges at Queen Victoria-street, E.C. (Savings Bank Buildings), Westminster, Kensington, Chiswick, Putney, Richmond, Twickenham, Kingston, Wimbledon, and Croydon. Ultimately there will be about 40 exchanges in the London area.

In the City the greater part of the underground work has been completed. About 160 miles of pipes have been laid, into which about 20 miles of cables (each containing from 200 to 434 wires) have already been drawn. In the other districts (Westminster, Kensington, &c.) about 110 miles of pipes have been laid, and about 16 miles of cable drawn in. As soon as these sections of the system have been completed, work will be begun in other parts of the Metropolitan area, but a considerable time must of course elapse before the whole area can be served. Owing to unforeseen difficulties which have been met with in carrying out the underground work, and in obtaining and adapting buildings for the exchanges, it has not yet been practicable to bring the system into operation. During the year telephone licences were granted to the corporations of Belfast, Grantham, Huddersfield, and Tunbridge-wells; and since March 31 a licence has been granted to the corporation of Brighton. Applications for licences from other corporations and local companies have been received.

The revenue from the Post Office telephone and private wire system was £155,694, as against £148,250 in the previous year. The rates were reduced during the year, and subscribers were given the option of renting their circuits at inclusive or at toll rates.

The amount of the royalty paid by the National Telephone Company was £140,148.

Finally, as to finance the report states that the postal revenue of the year, including the value of services rendered to other departments, has been £13,995,170, an increase of £601,135 on that of the previous year. The postal expenditure has been £10,064,903, an increase of £380,904 on that of the previous year. The net profit was thus £3,930,667, or £220,231 more than last year.

The telegraph revenue of the year, £3,459,353, shows a decrease of £1,139, and the telegraph expenditure £3,812,569, an increase of £63,485 upon the previous year. The net deficit on telegraphs was thus £353,216, or £64,624 more than last year. If allowance be made for interest on the capital—£10,868,663—created for the purchase of the telegraphs, the deficit on the year is raised to £652,104. These figures are, necessarily, partly estimated.

24.8.01.

THE MAILS AT DOVER.—As a result of the recent international postal conference, the first of the new time-saving appliances for transshipping mails and baggage in connexion with cross-Channel services at Dover was brought into operation yesterday. An electric travelling gangway was used between the mail steamers and the shore with most successful results. The gangway, which is on the principle of an endless platform, brought packages of any weight on shore at the rate of one in 15 seconds, when only working at moderate speed and at a sharp incline caused by the low tide. Some of the packages yesterday weighed as much as 7cwt. Half the ordinary time was saved on transshipment. 29.8.01.

THE GREEK POST OFFICE.

28.8.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As I happen to be the authority quoted by Mr. Henniker Heaton in his letter published in your issue of the 7th inst., perhaps you will allow me space to reply to Mr. Corbett's letter in your issue of the 22nd inst. My letter to Mr. Heaton was written in March last, at which time the Greek Post Office was charging 30 lepta each for 25 lepta stamps. Since the appearance of the new Greek stamps last month, however, the 25 lepta stamps have been, as stated by Mr. Corbett, sold at their face value, but as 40 drachma can be obtained for £1 sterling, it follows that 160 stamps of 25 lepta, which is the denomination used for foreign postage and supposed to be the equivalent of 2½d., can be obtained for the same sum.

I quite fail to see how Mr. Corbett makes out that only 90 can be had for £1. I have myself imported largely at the rate I have mentioned.

Yours faithfully,
C. WHITFIELD KING.

Mosnethhouse, Inverish, Aug. 24.

THE POST OFFICE.

27.8.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—You end your article of to-day's date, on the Postmaster-General's 47th Annual Report, with the words:—"It is no disparagement of the real merits of the Post Office to say that there is still plenty of room for his [Mr. Henniker Heaton's] efforts."

This no doubt is true enough, but there is one point with which the department, having an ex-Treasury official as its permanent head—who, presumably, has been trained in finance as well as in administrative business from his youth upwards—ought to be able effectively to grapple, even without the persistent co-operation of this indefatigable M.P.

The report you reproduce puts the telegraph revenue of the year at £3,459,000 and the expenditure at £3,812,000, leaving a deficit in receipts as against working expenses of £353,000; or allowing for interest, and not apparently allowing for a sinking fund, of £652,000. Surely it is bad finance so to conduct a gigantic business as to land it in a growing deficit year after year. With increasing competition from telephones, the deficit, unless otherwise checked, is likely still further to grow, not only in amount, but in its ratio of progression.

Many causes might, in my opinion, be assigned for this unsatisfactory result—some unavoidable, such as the alleged loss on Press-message rates; some technical and some administrative; others being failures to grasp the real problems involved in the postal management of telegraphs. But chief of all is the strangely mistaken idea that a secretarial board can originate principles and manage and contrive new departures as well as administer and control a mass of detail. Nothing is probably more perfect than the way in which the secretarial work of the Post Office is done—it may not be rapid, but it is exact; and "papers" are registered, docketed, referred, noted, minuted, and "marked off" in the most complete and conscientious way. But where comes in the genius of management? How is an official pressed eight or ten hours a day with the settlement of innumerable questions sent up for decision, to brush his brain clear of the reams of foolscap on his desk and cast about him for large measures of economy and progress? He is as a surveyor, or other chief official, who, taking up his promotion with a zeal for reform, finds but too soon that while new ideas are troublesome to originate they are still more so to carry through; and that the word "routine" is at least as blessed in its influence as "Mesopotamia" or even "inevitable."

What is wanted in the Post Office, for all classes of postal work, is a directing, originating headpiece—a general manager, in short, whose functions should be entirely distinct from the Secretary's. The Postmaster-General might try the experiment of giving Sir George Murray a free hand and a salary of, say, £5,000 a year as general manager; turning over the minuting of official papers and other routine work to a subordinate.

Then the Treasury would have a chance of showing what Whitehall training, bestowed upon a man of their own choice, is really worth. Or, if they do not like this plan in all its bearings, let them copy the policy of the North-Eastern Railway Company and make the postal solicitor a general manager, giving Sir Robert Hunter the £5,000 a year which I have generously ear-marked for Sir G. Murray.

Yours obediently,
AN OLD HAND.

August 24.

THE POST OFFICE ADMINISTRATION.

29.8.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—"An Old Hand," in his admirable letter, hardly realizes the full extent of the losses incurred. He agrees with the Postmaster-General that, including interest, £652,000 is the annual loss on the working of the telegraphs in this country. With monumental audacity the authorities at St. Martin's-le-Grand credit themselves under the item "Receipts for telegrams" with £150,000 royalties received from the National Telephone Company, for which they incur no risk whatever. The loss on the telegraphs may, therefore, be set down at £800,000 a year. Any private firm presenting their accounts of "business" done and including in it a gift of £150,000 would be charged with issuing a false balance-sheet.

What is required is a business man at the head of the Post and Telegraph Department. In November last I wrote to Lord Londonderry—who is the best of the Postmasters-General of my day—that "the arrangement by which a peer outside the Cabinet administers the Post Office is too plainly designed to deprive the House of Commons and the public of all power and influence over that department." The late Mr. W. H. Smith wrote a remarkable letter with the object of placing the Post Office on a business footing. The letter is to be found in Sir Herbert Maxwell's life of the right hon. gentleman. Mr. Hanbury, a strong politician, and the future Chancellor of the Exchequer, who supports Mr. Smith's views to the full extent, does not conceal his desire to work the Post Office on the plan of the Army and Navy Stores, with a board of management, at the head of which would be the Postmaster-General—a great permanent official of the Sir George Murray stamp.

I am glad to learn this morning that my friend Sir Edward Sassoon, who is chairman of the Telegraph Committee of the House of Commons, will move for an inquiry "why sixpenny telegrams do not pay."

I am your obedient servant,

August 27. J. HENNIKER HEATON.

POST OFFICE ADMINISTRATION.

30.8.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As telephone royalties accrue to the Postmaster-General because he is the holder of a legal monopoly of telegraphs for public use, it might be contended that the £150,000 which Mr. Henniker Heaton attacks is as much of the nature of revenue as the produce of a sixpenny telegram and so justly is entered on the credit side.

Be that as it may, I think Mr. Heaton would be on safer ground, in seeking to pile up the agony higher than I have done, did he claim as a debit repayment of the loans (about 11 millions sterling) raised under the Telegraphs Acts, spread over 30 years (a period, by the way, which has already largely expired). An average annual payment, as sinking fund, would raise the total annual loss to about a million of pounds sterling.

Such a total ought to satisfy even Mr. Henniker Heaton, give point to the intentions of Sir Edward Sassoon, and possibly attract the notice of that august functionary who, with bated breath, is reverentially referred to in Whitehall as "the Chancellor."

Yours obediently,

August 29. AN OLD HAND.

POSTAL FACILITIES IN ARGYLLSHIRE.—A correspondent signing himself "Southend" writes, under yesterday's date:—"Seeing the very large profit that is made by the Post Office, surely something ought to be done for this district, Southend, Kintyre, Argyllshire. Southend is ten miles from Campbeltown, and Campbeltown about 50 miles from Greenock. For over nine months in the year a letter posted at Southend about 11 30 a.m. on a Saturday does not reach Glasgow or Edinburgh till Tuesday evening—most likely delivered on Wednesday—and London never before Wednesday. The reason of this is the mail leaves Southend about 11 a.m. and the letters posted at 11 30 a.m. lie at Southend Post-office till Monday morning and get to Campbeltown that afternoon, but lie there till Tuesday morning, as the steamer that carries the mail leaves at 8 a.m. Surely it is only necessary to call public attention to this through *The Times* to interest men of influence like Mr. Henniker Heaton to take the matter up and bring it before the authorities and so end this ludicrous mail. Government have been applied to several times but say they cannot afford to make a change, but I cannot see how running a mail gig every evening, or early morning, from Southend to Campbeltown to catch the mail boat at 8 a.m. would materially affect their large surplus of over three millions." 10.9.01.

THE GRIEVANCES OF POST OFFICE SERVANTS.

2.9.01.

Mr. Brynmor Jones, K.C., M.P., presided at Swansea, on Saturday, over a conference of postal and telegraph *employés*. There were present also Sir George Newnes, M.P., Mr. Atherley-Jones, K.C., M.P., Mr. R. Bell, M.P., and Mr. B. Pickard, M.P.

The CHAIRMAN said that above all the departments of State the Post Office was the one which ought to give the most liberal terms and set the best example to all other business departments. What he would like to see was the permanent officials getting over departmental stupidity and stodginess; and he was persuaded that when the profit was rightly and fairly earned the only way in which efficiency could be secured was by seeing that the unit of this great business system was a contented man, which meant that he should have fair and just conditions of labour and that the department should treat him, not only as the best private employer should treat him, but even better. It was no use having a departmental committee to deal with their grievances; for though such committees could be useful within a very limited range, when they were dealing with hundreds of thousands of men under the control of a high officer himself controlled by a number of permanent officials, such a committee was no good at all. It was like making a man judge of his own case, and was opposed to the fundamental principles of jurisprudence. He therefore advised them to be content with nothing but either a Select Committee of the House of Commons or a Royal Commission with very large powers indeed, which would enable them to speak freely as to the grievances under which they undoubtedly suffered.

Mr. GARLAND moved a resolution demanding the appointment of an impartial Parliamentary committee of inquiry into the grievances of postal and telegraph *employés*, and said that what they really asked for was in the nature of a board of arbitration such as the Government itself had advocated as a means of maintaining harmony between employers and discontented workmen.

Mr. GARDINER, who seconded, said that their desire was that the Postmaster-General should receive representatives of the *employés* whenever they were deputed to represent grievances to him.

SIR GEORGE NEWNES expressed his great sympathy with the objects of the conference, and promised to do everything in his power to further them.

Mr. ATHERLEY-JONES said that, being satisfied that they had substantial grievances, these could only be redressed by consolidated action. They must rely on their own organization and their own strong right arm. They knew what had been done by trade union representation in the House of Commons, and it would probably be well if they followed Mr. Steadman's advice—to return a direct representative to Parliament.

The motion was carried unanimously.

On the motion of Mr. C. E. HALL, seconded by Mr. TAYLOR, and supported by Mr. R. BELL, a resolution was carried demanding official recognition of the organisations of Post Office servants in such a manner that the responsible representatives of the associations may directly submit to the Postmaster-General any case affecting the whole or part of the members of their respective bodies.

POST OFFICE REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.—The two annual returns of revenue and expenditure of the Post Office and Post Office Telegraphs for the year ended March 31, 1901, are in the usual form. They show the almost steady small expansion year by year of the Post Office gross and net revenue, and the constancy within narrow limits of the proportion of expenses to gross revenue. The Telegraph Department, as is well known, is in a very different position. Its gross revenue increases, it is true, but the expenditure, especially since 1883-84, has, as a rule, absorbed more than the revenue. In 1900-01 the expenses were 110·21 per cent. of the receipts and the deficit was £353,216. By deducting expenditure on sites and buildings and on extensions, the result of which operation is shown in a separate column, the net revenue may be made to look larger, but even this questionable mode of dealing with the figures fails to avert a deficit of £11,980. In 1893-94, however, the deficit, after these deductions, was as much as £27,770. Of course, the profits of the postal department make up the losses incurred on the telegraphs. 3.9.01.

POSTAGE TO LAS PALMAS.—Mr. M. F. Gallard, writing from Las Palmas under date September 21, says:—"The post office of this town returns to England every mail a large number of letters addressed to the passengers and crews of the several liners calling at this port on account of their being insufficiently prepaid. It will be a boon to the intended receivers of these letters and to their families at home to be informed that the one penny postage stamp system is established with the British colonies only, and that all letters addressed to foreign countries, like the Canary Islands, must be prepaid at the rate of 2½d. per every ½oz. The above reasons will excuse my trespassing on your valuable time." 1.10.01.

TRANSVAAL STAMPS.—Mr. E. Goldreich, writing from Johannesburg on August 15, says :—So much interest has of late been shown in Transvaal postage stamps that philatelists will no doubt be pleased to hear of the following rarity. In one of the numerous actions which the I.L.H. has had the honour of adding to their roll we had the good fortune to mortally wound a Boer field postmaster. As usual, we did not lose time in going through his pockets, and discovered in a satchel a number of Transvaal V.R.I. penny and halfpenny stamps with the V.R.I. crossed through and Z.A.R. substituted. We further elicited the information that not above 50, which he had personally obliterated, had been used on about 20 overseas letters, which were either posted on a foreign vessel or in Europe, and that, together with those we had taken, they formed the whole issue. Our friend the enemy would, however, not inform us as to the manner in which they had procured the stamps from the British, but after a little gentle persuasion he gave us the address of a few addressees, and we have since been able, by a little diplomacy, to obtain the stamps off two envelopes—viz., four penny and two halfpenny, which were posted in France and Holland respectively. The remainder we have not been able to trace. If any of the obliterated should turn up (the unused are all in possession of a friend) I shall be pleased to vouch for their genuineness if they are submitted to me. 12.11.01

POST OFFICE PUZZLES.

11.11.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—A young lady in my employment recently sent to the General Post Office to apply for the return of sixpence, on account of an unused prepaid telegraphic reply form. The messenger, on returning in an hour's time (our warehouse is within three minutes of the Post Office), explained that he had to go to the Secretary's Office, and to fill up two forms, and was then told that the money would be forwarded in due course. A fortnight later, having learnt meanwhile, on inquiry, that the matter was having every attention, but that it had to go through a number of hands, a postman called with the sixpence, which was duly handed over to the claimant after the signing of a third form, giving her full name and address, the name of her employers, and—by special instructions—filling in the amount and the date of receipt in words, not figures.

The strain on the Department, when it receives a claim for sixpence, even when it is accompanied by an unused prepaid form, must be enormous; and as "to know everything is to forgive everything," I think you will agree that the Post Office officials must be complimented, with such a system, on being able to get any work done at all.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
W. F. S.

November 8.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—On the 20th of September of this year, by the first post, I received an unsealed envelope, bearing a halfpenny stamp, and containing p.p.c. cards. An hour or two later an exactly similar envelope, unsealed, also bearing a halfpenny stamp, addressed in the same handwriting to my next door neighbour, was surcharged one penny. Why the difference?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
11.11.01 MAY BERRY.

The Royal Dockyard, Woolwich, November 9.

POST OFFICE PUZZLES.

12.11.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—Some years ago I found my firm's cashier was going through the process described by "W. F. S.," and collecting sixpence from the Post Office for an unused prepaid telegraphic reply form. When the sixpence was actually recovered, I sent for him, and asked why the form had not been used to send a telegram on from our own office. He had never read it, and was dumbfounded. The forms expressly state they may be used from any telegraph office.

I wonder how many telegrams "W. F. S." sent while putting his people and the officials in the Post Office to so much trouble!

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
LIVERPOOL MERCHANT.

Euston Hotel, N.W., November 11.

"POSTAL INTELLIGENCE."—"A Homeless Wanderer" writes :—"It may interest your readers to know the explanation given by the Post Office for the return to the sender of a telegram addressed to 98, Portland-place on the ground 'number unknown.' The result of ten days' investigation shows that in the course of transmission from a village in Berkshire to London 'Portland-place' became 'Falkland-place.' So far the explanation is comparatively simple, but when the London telegraph clerk reported to Berkshire that the number was unknown in Falkland-place by a wonderful coincidence the word 'Falkland' changed itself back to Portland. This singular correction by the wires of their own mistake is the more remarkable in that there does not seem to be any resemblance between the telegraphic signs for 'Falk' and 'Port'; that the original difficulty was the number and not the address; and that there does not seem to be any Falkland-place in the London Directory. Still, truth is often stranger than fiction."
14.11.01

"POSTAL INTELLIGENCE."—"A Homeless Wanderer" writes to us from 98, Portland-place :—"An important telegram, addressed to this house, has been returned to the sender by the Post Office 'in consequence of the number unknown.' For some ten years the Post Office has delivered daily, with varying delay, circulars, letters, newspapers, and telegrams to the same address, and I have before me a letter from a former Secretary of the Post Office complaining, good-naturedly, that the frequent complaints from that address rendered his official life unbearable. Is this the revenge of his successor, and will he tell me where I do live?" 31.10.01

THE POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK.

31.10.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—May it be allowed to one who belongs to that class who (probably because they are invited to be trustees more frequently than any other class, amiably assent, and do more gratuitous business than most) are stigmatized as "bad men of business" to make a suggestion? I am not presuming to say that what I propose is far better than all other schemes for staving off the insolvency of the Post Office Savings Bank which have been named in your columns; I only venture to say that it is an alternative worth considering, and it is long experience that leads me to think so, and emboldens me to write. I have managed most successfully penny banks for 40 years; and I dare prophesy that if interest be allowed, not on every completed pound, but on every completed £5, the profit on the multitude of sums of £4 19s. 11d. and under will be amply sufficient to counterbalance the lowering of Consols; that labour of management will be greatly reduced; that depositors, a reasonable body, will, seeing the necessity, be perfectly content, and will infinitely prefer this to any shifting and uncertain scale. I have found change to be the bane of confidence, and confidence the root of success.

Yours obediently,
ANDREW WOOD.

Great Ponton Rectory, Grantham, Oct. 25.

ROWLAND HILL BENEVOLENT FUND.—The annual meeting of the Rowland Hill Memorial and Benevolent Fund was held yesterday at the Mansion-house. The fund, of which the King is the patron, has for its object the relief of Post Office servants who have fallen into necessitous circumstances, and it also affords assistance to their widows and orphans, for whom no provision is made under the Superannuation Acts. Among those present, in addition to the Lord Mayor, who presided, were Mr. Alderman and Sheriff Bell, Mr. Sheriff Marshall, Sir James Whitehead, Sir Robert Hunter, Mr. Causton, M.P., Mr. Alderman Truscott, Mr. W. H. Collingridge, and Mr. C. Eden (secretary). The Lord Mayor said he was pleased that the first function to be held at the Mansion-house in his year of office was in connexion with a fund which appealed so strongly to the City as this did. Including those employed more or less temporarily, there were more than 170,000 servants in the Post Office throughout the United Kingdom. Many of these, especially those who were not regular hands, were not entitled to pensions, and it was in such cases that this fund had been doing so good a work for about 20 years. The fund unostentatiously assisted those who tried to help themselves, and he felt certain that if the trustees—who were men of high repute in the City—should consider it necessary to make a more public appeal for support than had hitherto been done it would be generously responded to. Sir James Whitehead, in moving the adoption of the report, said that during the year ended June 30 last grants had been made in 436 cases, amounting in the aggregate to £2,243, as compared with a total of £1,991 granted in the previous 12 months in 400 cases. There had been an increase of 30,000 in the number of hands employed by the Post Office since 1898, but the applicants for relief had increased by only 44. Of the 436 persons assisted by the fund during the past year 100 were over 70 years of age and under 80, 40 were over 80 years of age and under 90, and four were over 90. Mr. Causton seconded the motion, and the report was unanimously adopted. On the proposition of Mr. Lamb, who gave particulars of the large sums annually raised by Post Office servants for assisting their unfortunate colleagues, a vote of thanks was accorded to the trustees of the fund. 12.11.01.

POST-OFFICE PUZZLES.

19.11.01

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—May I call attention to another idiosyncrasy of the Post Office, which really seems absurd? A client sent me a telegram this morning, and enclosed a voucher showing he had paid one shilling for twenty-four words to enable me to wire to him and another person. Upon my clerk handing in the two messages, however, he was informed that unless the sender utilised the twenty-four words in one message, he must lose the benefit, and in this case, although the two messages together contained less than twenty-four words, another sixpence was demanded and paid.

I might mention, in conclusion, that the message to me clearly conveyed the request that two replies should be sent.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
November 18. OLICITOR.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH POSTS.

26.10.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Critics of the British Post Office often seem to suggest that we are much behind our neighbours on the Continent in postal advantages. It may perhaps, therefore, interest your readers to know something of the kind of service the French Post Office gives in a rural district.

I have been staying for a time in a large village on the other side of the Channel, which I will call X. It numbers 2,300 inhabitants, who seem to be mostly well-to-do. It is a small port—tidal, but well sheltered—with a considerable connexion with the Newfoundland and Iceland cod fisheries; and it entertains a few visitors in the autumn for bathing, the sands being excellent. It is eight miles from a station, but has a regular correspondence with the railway by diligence.

The postal service proper is tolerable; there are two despatches (one in the middle of the night) and one delivery, about 8 30 in the morning. But it must be remembered that France has no penny post and no halfpenny post-card. The letter rate of postage throughout France is 15c. or three-halfpence, and an inland post-card, like a foreign, requires a penny stamp. Let us turn to telegraphs. About two or three kilomètres distant is another large village with which intercourse is constant—we will call it Y. It is quite useless to telegraph to Y, because, though there is a telegraph office, there is no means of delivery. The postmaster of Y, if he happens to see some one who lives near the address of the telegram, may ask him, as a favour, to deliver it; but if no such opportunity offers the telegram lies in the office till the next morning, when it is sent out with the letters! Moreover, the post-office of Y is closed from 12 to 2 every day.

Again, in theory, money may be obtained at X through the post-office. The good people of the place know better. When an expected remittance is applied for, the applicant will probably be informed that the post-office has no money, and he must wait till it has.

But the parcel post is the most eccentric institution. France is supposed to have an Inland Parcel Post, and to be a party to the International arrangement for the interchange of parcels. "Colis postaux" is an official phrase, and rates are officially published. The French Post Office has, however, nothing to do with the circulation of parcels; it is delegated to the railway companies. The result at X is peculiar. Parcel post business is transacted at a little café, in a room where several men are usually to be found sitting on forms at a long table, drinking; there is no separate entrance or office. The proprietress of the café has no means of weighing parcels; if the sender states the weight, she will tell him how much to pay, and take in the parcel. It is impossible, however, to send a parcel to England or any other foreign country, because none of the forms prescribed by the International regulations are to be obtained, no Customs declaration or *bulletin d'expédition*. Nor will the driver of the diligence which conveys the parcels to the rail undertake to fill up the forms, and despatch the parcel from the station; and nothing is known at the café about the conditions of the post as to prohibited articles or other matters.

So much for outgoing parcels. Incoming parcels have a chequered career. They are not delivered at the house of the addressee, and they may (even if marked "perishable") lie at the café for a day or two until some accident gives opportunity for notice to the intended recipient. Very often the driver of the diligence forgets to leave a parcel at the café, and takes it on to the next village. Sometimes he leaves one parcel charged with a surtax applicable to another. For instance, I was expecting a parcel from Paris, sent *contre remboursement*, and also a parcel from England. On inquiry the parcel from England was produced and a payment of 6f. 20c. was demanded. As the contents of the parcel were worth about 1f. 50c., I naturally refused to pay, and the parcel was sent back to the railway station. The next day the parcel from Paris, which had, no doubt, been in the diligence the day before, was brought in by the driver, and it was admitted that the 6f. 20c. were due upon that, and that nothing was payable on the English parcel, which, however, I did not receive for some days! Of course, it is impossible to use such a post for a regular supply of any article; anything of this kind wanted from the neighbouring town must come by private carrier.

Now, compare this with the English post. The rural place I know best in England has a smaller population than X, and is not a seaport, though it has a railway station. The facilities afforded by the Post Office are precisely the same in character as those given in a large town, and there is no uncertainty in the services.

When comparison is made between English and foreign postal arrangements, it should not be forgotten that while the administrations of the Continent undertake a great variety of work, their performance very often falls far short of English standards. Germany is supposed to be a bright example of postal efficiency. Yet friends of mine, living for months in the third largest town of the German Empire, have informed me that they were never able to ascertain at what exact time the principal post for England left. An approximate time was stated; but the bags were apparently made up a little before or a little after as it suited the convenience of the staff; and it is of no use complaining of any official in Germany.

May I add two remarks with reference to our own service? The system of postal delivery of parcels *contre remboursement* is a great convenience; and it is difficult to imagine any good reason why it should not be adopted in England. And secondly, the International letter postage between European countries is ridiculously high. Twopence halfpenny for half an ounce, with an additional 2½d. for the slightest excess, is absolutely restrictive of correspondence. If a letter can be sent to India, across France and Italy by specially organized and expensive services, and through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea by highly subsidized steamers, for a penny, why should it cost two and a-half times as much to deliver it on the other side of the Channel?

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

October 19. 26.10.01. CITIZEN.

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Post Office Absurdities.—Messrs. J. and A. Churchill, writing from 7, Great Marlborough-street, W., say:—"As fellow-sufferers with correspondents who have recently addressed you, we would add our evidence as to the difficulty of knowing what may, or may not, be sent through the post for a halfpenny, and to the unequal treatment of papers which any ordinary person would regard as commercial or literary. For several years we have been in the habit of sending out a circular asking for information for "The Medical Directory"—(*a*) concerning the name, address, appointments, &c., of the person to whom we address the circular, (*b*) concerning the names and addresses, &c., of other persons, and (*c*) containing an order form for a copy of the work. The 40,000 interested persons from whom information is sought have been in the habit of returning these circulars to us for a halfpenny, evidently thinking that they would pass as manuscript for the Press and orders for goods; and judging by the fact that we were only very rarely surcharged, the Post Office apparently held the same view. This year, however, without any previous warning from the Post Office, we have been compelled to pay penny fines amounting to about £12. Like one of your correspondents, we have asked for an explanation from the Post Office, and, not being satisfied with the explanations given, we have appealed to the Treasury, as directed by section 5 of the Post Office Act of 1875. We can support your correspondent's opinion as to the courteous way in which complaints are attended to, but we have had to wait a very long time for answers to our letters. For instance, our letter to the Post Office of September 19 was answered on November 30, and our letter to the Treasury of September 27 was answered on December 9. Now, Sir, like your correspondent, we submitted a test case to the authorities. We asked if it was correct to surcharge us when the information sent to us was confined to Class A.—*i.e.*, had reference only to the correct entry in the directory of the person's address, &c., to whom we had applied. The Treasury replied as follows:—'The specimen (filled-in) form enclosed in your letter under reply could not pass for a postage of a halfpenny as, although it may perhaps come under the category of manuscript for the Press, it infringes the conditions laid down by the Inland Post Warrant, 1900, in that it contains printed matter which does not refer to the arrangement or correction of the type or the execution of the work.' If this explanation is correct, we think it is quite clear that it is not consistent with the intention of the Legislature, and we ask if it is not time that the whole question of the postage of circulars be placed upon a simpler basis. Commercial men and others are constantly in uncertainty upon this point. It occurs to us that the Post Office and Treasury, in their zeal for the public income, are driving the proverbial coach-and-four through Acts of Parliament, and that they are thus placing obstacles in the way of those legitimate enterprises which the Legislature desires to encourage." 14.12.01

FRENCH AND ENGLISH POSTS.

26.10.01.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Critics of the British Post Office often seem to suggest that we are much behind our neighbours on the Continent in postal advantages. It may perhaps, therefore, interest your readers to know something of the kind of service the French Post Office gives in a rural district.

I have been staying for a time in a large village on the other side of the Channel, which I will call X. It numbers 2,300 inhabitants, who seem to be mostly well-to-do. It is a small port—tidal, but well sheltered—with a considerable connexion with the Newfoundland and Iceland cod fisheries; and it entertains a few visitors in the autumn for bathing, the sands being excellent. It is eight miles from a station, but has a regular correspondence with the railway by diligence.

The postal service proper is tolerable; there are two despatches (one in the middle of the night) and one delivery, about 8 30 in the morning. But it must be remembered that France has no penny post and no halfpenny post-card. The letter rate of postage throughout France is 15c. or three-halfpence, and an inland post-card, like a foreign, requires a penny stamp. Let us turn to telegraphs. About two or three kilomètres distant is another large village with which intercourse is constant—we will call it Y. It is quite useless to telegraph to Y, because, though there is a telegraph office, there is no means of delivery. The postmaster of Y, if he happens to see some one who lives near the address of the telegram, may ask him, as a favour, to deliver it; but if no such opportunity offers the telegram lies in the office till the next morning, when it is sent out with the letters! Moreover, the post-office of Y is closed from 12 to 2 every day.

Again, in theory, money may be obtained at X through the post-office. The good people of the place know better. When an expected remittance is applied for, the applicant will probably be informed that the post-office has no money, and he must wait till it has.

But the parcel post is the most eccentric institution. France is supposed to have an Inland Parcel Post, and to be a party to the International arrangement for the interchange of parcels. "Colis postaux" is an official phrase, and rates are officially published. The French Post Office has, however, nothing to do with the circulation of parcels; it is delegated to the railway companies. The result at X is peculiar. Parcel post business is transacted at a little café, in a room where several men are usually to be found sitting on forms at a long table, drinking; there is no separate entrance or office. The proprietress of the café has no means of weighing parcels; if the sender states the weight, she will tell him how much to pay, and take in the parcel. It is impossible, however, to send a parcel to England or any other foreign country, because none of the forms prescribed by the International regulations are to be obtained, no Customs declaration or *bulletin d'expédition*. Nor will the driver of the diligence which conveys the parcels to the rail undertake to fill up the forms, and despatch the parcel from the station; and nothing is known at the café about the conditions of the post as to prohibited articles or other matters.

So much for outgoing parcels. Incoming parcels have a chequered career. They are not delivered at the house of the addressee, and they may (even if marked "perishable") lie at the café for a day or two until some accident gives opportunity for notice to the intended recipient. Very often the driver of the diligence forgets to leave a parcel at the café, and takes it on to the next village. Sometimes he leaves one parcel charged with a surtax applicable to another. For instance, I was expecting a parcel from Paris, sent *contre remboursement*, and also a parcel from England. On inquiry the parcel from England was produced and a payment of 6f. 20c. was demanded. As the contents of the parcel were worth about 1f. 50c., I naturally refused to pay, and the parcel was sent back to the railway station. The next day the parcel from Paris, which had, no doubt, been in the diligence the day before, was brought in by the driver, and it was admitted that the 6f. 20c. were due upon that, and that nothing was payable on the English parcel, which, however, I did not receive for some days! Of course, it is impossible to use such a post for a regular supply of any article; anything of this kind wanted from the neighbouring town must come by private carrier.

Now, compare this with the English post. The rural place I know best in England has a smaller population than X, and is not a seaport, though it has a railway station. The facilities afforded by the Post Office are precisely the same in character as those given in a large town, and there is no uncertainty in the services.

When comparison is made between English and foreign postal arrangements, it should not be forgotten that while the administrations of the Continent undertake a great variety of work, their performance very often falls far short of English standards. Germany is supposed to be a bright example of postal efficiency. Yet friends of mine, living for months in the third largest town of the German Empire, have informed me that they were never able to ascertain at what exact time the principal post for England left. An approximate time was stated; but the bags were apparently made up a little before or a little after as it suited the convenience of the staff; and it is of no use complaining of any official in Germany.

May I add two remarks with reference to our own service? The system of postal delivery of parcels *contre remboursement* is a great convenience; and it is difficult to imagine any good reason why it should not be adopted in England. And secondly, the International letter postage between European countries is ridiculously high. Twopence halfpenny for half an ounce, with an additional 2½d. for the slightest excess, is absolutely restrictive of correspondence. If a letter can be sent to India, across France and Italy by specially organized and expensive services, and through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea by highly subsidized steamers, for a penny, why should it cost two and a-half times as much to deliver it on the other side of the Channel?

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In the penny stamps the existing mauve colour will no longer be in use. Its place will be taken by stamps of a dull crimson. It is in contemplation to use the colour for other stamps of higher value, the price being plainly indicated in figures to prevent confusion. But this is a matter that is understood to be still under consideration. The designs of the stamps of highest value have not yet received the King's approval, and it is probable that those in most general use will be the first issued. As in the case of the coins, it is not intended to stop the issue of the Victorian stamps until the reserve in hand has been exhausted. These are likely to be on sale at the out-offices for some considerable time.

POST OFFICE ABSURDITIES.—Messrs. J. and A. Churchill, writing from 7, Great Marlborough-street, W., say :—"As fellow-sufferers with correspondents who have recently addressed you, we would add our evidence as to the difficulty of knowing what may, or may not, be sent through the post for a halfpenny, and to the unequal treatment of papers which any ordinary person would regard as commercial or literary. For several years we have been in the habit of sending out a circular asking for information for "The Medical Directory"—(*a*) concerning the name, address, appointments, &c., of the person to whom we address the circular, (*b*) concerning the names and addresses, &c., of other persons, and (*c*) containing an order form for a copy of the work. The 40,000 interested persons from whom information is sought have been in the habit of returning these circulars to us for a halfpenny, evidently thinking that they would pass as manuscript for the Press and orders for goods; and judging by the fact that we were only very rarely surcharged, the Post Office apparently held the same view. This year, however, without any previous warning from the Post Office, we have been compelled to pay penny fines amounting to about £12. Like one of your correspondents, we have asked for an explanation from the Post Office, and, not being satisfied with the explanations given, we have appealed to the Treasury, as directed by section 5 of the Post Office Act of 1875. We can support your correspondent's opinion as to the courteous way in which complaints are attended to, but we have had to wait a very long time for answers to our letters. For instance, our letter to the Post Office of September 19 was answered on November 30, and our letter to the Treasury of September 27 was answered on December 9. Now, Sir, like your correspondent, we submitted a test case to the authorities. We asked if it was correct to surcharge us when the information sent to us was confined to Class A.—*i.e.*, had reference only to the correct entry in the directory of the person's address, &c., to whom we had applied. The Treasury replied as follows :—'The specimen (filled-in) form enclosed in your letter under reply could not pass for a postage of a halfpenny as, although it may perhaps come under the category of manuscript for the Press, it infringes the conditions laid down by the Inland Post Warrant, 1900, in that it contains printed matter which does not refer to the arrangement or correction of the type or the execution of the work.' If this explanation is correct, we think it is quite clear that it is not consistent with the intention of the Legislature, and we ask if it is not time that the whole question of the postage of circulars be placed upon a simpler basis. Commercial men and others are constantly in uncertainty upon this point. It occurs to us that the Post Office and Treasury, in their zeal for the public income, are driving the proverbial coach-and-four through Acts of Parliament, and that they are thus placing obstacles in the way of those legitimate enterprises which the Legislature desires to encourage." 14.12.01

POST OFFICE ABSURDITIES.—A correspondent writes:—"I was reading in your columns a few mornings ago a complaint made by a lady against the Post Office arrangements in connexion with letters sent by the ½d. rate of postage, a question on which I have of late had a very considerable correspondence with that branch of the public service, and, although I entirely disagree with the views of the Post Office authorities in the matter, yet I am bound to admit that I have never during a public life of nearly a third of a century known a public body act with greater courtesy or take more trouble to convince one than it has done in connexion with the matter at issue between us. This question arose out of an order from a customer which was sent to my house of business, which was on a printed order form, and everything perfectly conformable to the Post Office regulations except that the sender had at the end written these words 'and oblige.' For this act of courtesy as I considered it, and of delinquency as the General Post Office considered it, my people had to pay an additional 1d. postage. Upon writing to the authorities about it the reason they assigned was that the addition of those words made the order partake of the nature of a letter. To that I replied that it could in no sense by any number of twists and turns be said to be of the nature of a letter, and that it was simply one of those little courtesies of life of which I was afraid that there were rather too few in the present day. On this one of the officers of the General Post Office waited upon me, and told me that he had been instructed to call upon me to say that not only were the words 'and oblige' not allowed to pass by the ½d. rate, but that you might not even use the words 'please' or 'send.' With respect to that, I told him that, as the Post Office had no liking for politeness, I was prepared to drop the words 'please' and 'and oblige,' but I wished to know how a person, if he or she required goods to be sent to a certain place, could give the order for them unless the word 'send' were allowed to be used. He seemed to be on the horns of a dilemma, but called again a few days after to say that the word 'send' could be used if it were printed, but that it must not be typewritten or in handwriting. In writing to the General Post Office I said that if this were so then it was one law for the rich and another for the poor, and that it was a positive injustice to those persons who had not, like us traders, printed books or order forms. I then enclosed two sample orders for goods, one of which was wholly in handwriting and the other was also in handwriting with the exception of the word 'send,' and I asked the General Post Office if they would say whether either or both of them could go by the ½d. post. The Post Office said that the one wholly written could not pass, but that the one on which the solitary word 'send' was printed could go by the ½d. rate. As there is nothing in the instructions against a wholly written order passing under the ½d. rate, I sent another sample order, and this time I used the word 'consign,' and my reason for using that word was because the General Post Office in their instructions say that one may put in handwriting anything which relates to the mode of consignment of the articles one may happen to require. My sample order ran thus:—'W. Whiteley, Westbourne-grove. "Consign" by parcel post one York ham to W. U———, of 107, P——— road.' And in my letter enclosing this sample order I asked if that word would meet with the approval of the General Post Office, and if it would not do so would the department say what word or words would be allowed to pass under the ½d. rate. I was somewhat surprised at the reply, which said that the word 'consign' would not be allowed to pass. My own view is that the word 'consign' fully carries out the instruction of the General Post Office, when it says that one may put in writing any matter referring to the mode of consignment, and I believe that view would be upheld in an English Court of law; and I can only say that I think it is a great pity that a great department, which on the whole is so admirably managed, should by these petty little pin-pricks give annoyance to so many of the community."—"D. E. T." writes:—I think I can cap all the stories that have recently appeared. As editor of a year-book, I had occasion to send out a large number of reply cards, on which I desired to paste down a slip of printed matter. Before sending them, however, I thought it wise to ascertain whether such cards would "pass." A letter to the Post Office authorities elicited the extraordinary information that no printed matter could be pasted down on post cards, but, if I chose to avoid using the words "post cards," such missives would be allowed to pass under the regulations applying to "book post." And they did pass, for not one of my cards has, so far, been surcharged. 6.12.01.

PILLAR-BOXES AND CHRISTMAS.—"Zetetes" writes under date, December 13:—"Pillar-boxes, for the convenience of the public, bear notices of the times at which they are supposed to be cleared, but it is the practice of Post Office officials shortly before Christmas to obscure those notices by pasting over them notices to post early. To those who have letters of importance to despatch, and there are such persons even at Christmas time, this is an unnecessary nuisance; for even if they know the usual time for clearing a box it leaves them in doubt as to whether the ordinary service is suspended. I hope you will kindly find space for this letter and allow me to suggest that a notice of 'Kindly post early' placed above or below the table of times of clearing would be at least equally efficacious, and perhaps more so; for it would be but in accordance with human nature if persons who are inconvenienced by the practice to which I allude were to post early their important letters, since they do not know when they may be collected, and post in a batch, at the last moment, their many Christmas cards, if they send any." 18.12.01

MORE POST OFFICE ABSURDITIES.—"Country Hostess" writes:—"About a fortnight ago three cards of invitation from different ladies reached my house by one post, in open envelopes; two were surcharged as containing communications of the nature of a letter. As all three were exactly identical I wrote to ask an explanation of the postal authorities and was informed that the words 'At home' being written excluded them from half-penny post privilege, and that the third card ought to have been similarly surcharged. As this latter came from the wife of the editor of a leading weekly it occurred to me that the local postmaster, wiser than his sapient superiors, had hesitated to draw down the pungent remarks of that journal on such postal imbecility. As written 'At home' cards have been passing unquestioned ever since the introduction of half-penny unsealed envelopes I think you may consider the matter worth your notice, as it affects hundreds of ladies. I notice that written words of the 'objects of a meeting' are allowed to pass; surely the fact of finding Mrs. ——'at home' is just as much an object of a social gathering as to dismiss a secretary or to give a testimonial at a purely business meeting. I would also draw the attention of Radical members to the fact that the great lady who can afford to have her invitation cards printed can send them at half the rate of her humbler sisters, and also to suggest a Parliamentary return of the money accruing to the Post Office from issuing unintelligible rules and then fining people for not obeying them." 2.12.01.

THE NEW POSTAGE STAMPS.

18.12.01.

We have received the following from the Post Office:—

On and after January 1 next, new postage stamps bearing the King's portrait, of the value of ½d., 1d., 2½d., and 6d. respectively, will be on sale at the various post-offices in the United Kingdom. The colour of the new 6d. stamp being the same as that of the present 1d. stamp, care should be used to avoid mistaking one for the other. New stamps of other denominations also bearing the King's portrait will be issued afterwards.

All the adhesive stamps of the present issue bearing the portrait of the late Queen will still be available; a description of them is given below:—

Value.	Colour.	Value.	Colour.
½d.	Green or Red	6d.	Purple on Red Paper
1d.	Purple	9d.	Purple and Blue
1½d.	Purple and Green	10d.	Purple and Red
2d.	Green and Red	1s.	Wholly Green or Green and Red
2½d.	Purple on Blue Paper		
3d.	Purple on Yellow Paper	2s.6d.	Purple
		5s.	Rose
4d.	Green and Brown	10s.	Blue
4½d.	Green and Red*	£1	Green
5d.	Purple and Blue	£5	Orange

*This stamp will no longer be supplied when the existing stock is exhausted.

The stamps with the late Queen's portrait embossed or printed on envelopes, wrappers, post-cards, and letter-cards will also be available.

No other stamps are valid in payment of postage.

POST OFFICE NOTICE AS TO ENVELOPES.—With regard to the use of red envelopes and envelopes bearing printed matter on the address side the Post Office has issued the following notice:—Attention having been called to the fact that red envelopes are being supplied for the purpose of enclosing Christmas and New Year cards, the Postmaster-General finds it necessary to give notice that, inasmuch as red envelopes have for years been used for a particular class of letters intended to be called for at night, the use of envelopes of this colour for other correspondence must lead to mis-sorting and delay, and therefore to public inconvenience. The practice of printing advertisements over the greater part of the address side of postal packets is also a source of inconvenience. The regulations provide that nothing may be written or printed on the address side of any postal packet, which, either by tending to prevent the easy and quick reading of the address, or by any inconvenient proximity to the postage stamps or in any other way, is likely to embarrass the officers of the department in dealing with the packet; and any packet posted in contravention of this regulation is liable to be withheld from delivery. In order to comply with the regulation at least the right-hand half of the front of a packet should be reserved exclusively for the address and the postage stamps. The Postmaster-General trusts that the public will assist the work of the postal staff by refraining from the use of red envelopes except for the special purpose for which they are officially recognized, and from printing matter on the right-hand half of the front of the envelopes, &c., and thus relieve him of the necessity to exercise the legal powers entrusted to him of prohibiting the transmission by post of packets enclosed in covers to which the above mentioned objections apply. 18.12.01.

THE POST OFFICE.

2.1.02.

We have received the following letters, of the same nature as the complaints published in our issue of December 31, complaining of the delivery and of the non-delivery of *The Times* by the Post Office :—

London, Dec. 31.

Sir,—I have no doubt that there are many of your subscribers who, like myself, do not complain to you about the non-arrival of their paper by post, because they know it is not your fault, and have become weary of complaining to the Post Office, because they get no redress. I live so near *The Times* Office that I could easily go to it and get my paper and bring it home inside of an hour and a half, even with no better conveyance than an antediluvian omnibus. Yet it is quite a common occurrence for *The Times* to be delivered about 11 o'clock. I have complained a few times, but all one gets is a visit from a person profuse in expressions of regret who obviously has his tongue in his cheek all the time.

But that is not all. The Post Office is distinctly worse than it used to be, and has become notably worse within the last three years. My experience is that you cannot reckon with any confidence upon the delivery of any letter within a margin of from four to six hours beyond the normal time. It may be delivered and often is, but then very often it is not.

But what can you expect? The collection and distribution of letters is a business calling for business capacity and training. The Post Office is run by Government clerks from whom no evidence of initial business capacity is required, and whose whole training from the moment they enter the service is one of slavish acquiescence in established routine, and ignorant contempt for every outside opinion. Even if a man begins with brains—as he may by some accident—by the time seniority places him in a position to use them, they are either crushed out of him by the machine or they are accustomed to be employed in work quite outside the Post Office.

The administration of the Post Office shows in every part the hand of the pettifogger. The department has no progressive policy of its own, springing from grasp of facts and determinate purpose. Its "reforms" are all forced upon it by outside clamour, and as such clamour must always be inspired by some particular grievance, real or fancied, and can never envisage the concern as a whole, the resulting reforms are all patchy and incoherent. How to save a few pence here and there by vexatious regulations, paring the edges of concessions involving tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds, is the problem in solving which the Post Office really shines.

West Kirby, Dec. 30, 1901.

I find that Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son can deliver *The Times* here by hand five hours sooner than it arrives by post.

I shall be glad to know on what terms my current subscription for the year (to September) can be transferred to W. H. Smith and Son.

No change to be made until I write further.

Dover, Dec. 30, 1901.

My *Times* has not arrived to-day. You will remember that it missed so lately as on the 21st, and again in a third instance about a month ago, of which I have not, however, a note as to the date. These papers are not only delayed, but never reach me.

2/1/02 TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In *The Times* of yesterday appeared a series of complaints with regard to the delivery of that paper. I notice no signature is appended to any of the communications, so it is impossible for me to approach the writers directly; but I feel, in justice to the General Post Office, I must write you briefly on the subject.

While regretting any inconvenience that may have arisen, I do not think the cases mentioned are very culpable, considering (1) that it was Christmas time, and (2) that there were no morning mail trains out of London on either December 25 or 26, so that papers ordinarily delivered by the second post on the day of issue could not possibly reach their destination before the next day at the earliest. I confess I do not understand why your correspondent living at Queen Anne's-mansions should wish to have his *Times* by post and pay ½d. for doing so, instead of getting it from a newsagent close by.

With regard to the comparisons between the methods of the General Post Office and the newsagents, I must say a word.

The newsagents wrap up their papers in large bundles, and do the distributing at the other end.

We are expected to deliver a particular paper to a particular person, and naturally require a longer time to do the work.

The Times talks of our "competing with" the newsagents, but I cannot admit that that is our business.

They deliver all the newspapers that are within easy reach (I may say the cream of the business) and we are left to do the rest; for instance, to serve your correspondent, the Warwickshire clergyman, who possibly would find it difficult to get his newspaper delivered by a newsagent if he paid 6d. per day for it.

I feel I could not allow the leading organ of the Press to attack the Department of which I am the head without immediately writing a few lines in its defence.

I fully recognize and regret the inconvenience that frequently occurs in the delivery of letters, papers, and parcels; but if the public at large could fully realize the vast dimensions of the business for which the General Post Office is responsible, I think that they would allow that on the whole the business is fairly well conducted.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

LONDONDERRY.

Wynyard-park, Stockton-on-Tees, Jan. 1.

THE POST OFFICE.

3.1.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Of the five letters of complaint against the Post Office published in your issue of Tuesday, all but one complained of other days than Christmas and Boxing Day, and that one was from Queen Anne's-mansions, so that the plea that on those two days there were no morning mail trains out of London is hardly to the point.

The Postmaster-General does not understand why a resident at Queen Anne's-mansions should have his copy by post instead of by a newsagent, and he is quite anxious to save him the halfpenny a day which he is contributing to his Majesty's Exchequer. This official altruism is touching and of a piece with his repudiation of the idea that he should do anything so commercially vulgar as to compete with newsagents. It does not appear to occur to the unbusinesslike mind of the head of a great business department that it is the newspaper which pays the cost of distribution, whether by the post or by a newsagent, and that the subscriber pays exactly the same.

Nor does he seem to see that he is competing with the newsagent, but competing so badly that he leaves the "cream of the business" to his rivals.

The Postmaster-General says :—"We are expected to deliver a particular paper to a particular person, and naturally require a longer time to do the work."

This is a pure fallacy; the person who gets his paper through the Post Office, is no more anxious than the person who gets it through the newsagent to get any particular copy. He wants a copy—any copy—of each day, exactly as the other does. It is the Post Office, and the Post Office alone, that insists on our making it a particular copy for a particular person; and, having made us do all this unnecessary work, says that they must naturally have a longer time to do it in! To do what? All the work has been done in the newspaper office, and it has been delivered to them one hour before their rivals come to fetch their copies.

In conclusion—is it not almost pathetic to hear the head of the British Post Office saying that "on the whole the business is fairly conducted"? Would any business man regard this as anything but a confession of failure? Yours,

MANAGER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As Lord Londonderry in the letter which you publish from him to-day has done me the honour of singling out my complaint for special notice, may I convey to him through your columns my thanks for his well-meant advice not to pay the Post Office any longer a daily ½d. for conveying my *Times* to Queen Anne's-mansions, but to get it from a newsagent close by? Such an altruistic piece of advice from the head of a great business is truly novel and refreshing. I should have thought the Postmaster-General would have been glad of the extra halfpennies contributed, superfluously in his opinion, by guileless persons like myself, if only to recoup himself for the unremunerative service he is under contract to perform for that clergyman in Warwickshire. I certainly cannot imagine Sir Blundell Maple or Sir Thomas Lipton stepping forward to tell one of his clients he is a fool to come and deal with him instead of ordering what he wants from a shop nearer home where he would be much more efficiently served. To paraphrase the last sentence of Lord Londonderry's letter, if the public at large realized the futility of placing at the head of a great business department men with such naive conceptions of business as his lordship seems to possess, they would perhaps cease to be astonished that the Post Office is not better conducted than it is. Yours obediently,

VALENTINE CHIROL.

Queen Anne's-mansions, S.W., Jan. 2.

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THE POST OFFICE.

4.1.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Lord Londonderry is inadequately informed by his department.

Suppose that newsagents do send their papers in bundles to distribute them at the other end, how does that put them in a better position than the Post Office? You have told us that the Post Office gets its papers, sorted for the different lines, earlier than the newsagents get theirs. It can do the detailed sorting on the way. The advantage is all on its side.

But the newsagents send numbers of single papers. Years ago I had occasion to have *The Times* sent to me in a little Scotch town. For one quarter I had it through the Post Office, which delivered it at 9 p.m., and several times failed to deliver until the following morning. For a year I had it through Smith and Son's between 3 and 4 in the afternoon, and they never failed me once. The paper arrived singly, in a wrapper addressed in London. It is true that the service cost me three farthings instead of a halfpenny, but that is another story. I am yours, &c., R.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The hypothetical explanation of the Postmaster-General with reference to the grievance of the Warwickshire clergyman may be plausible, but it does not apply to my case. I live within ten miles of Hyde Park-corner, in the midst of a populous district which includes an important military station. We have four postal deliveries daily, the first being at 8 a.m. But I never (except on Bank Holidays) receive my copy of *The Times* until the second delivery at about 10 15 a.m. As the first train from London arrives here shortly after 6 a.m., bringing local mails for inclusion in the first delivery, there would seem to be no adequate reason why the morning papers should not be included also. Yet all our appeals for this very small concession have so far been made in vain.

Yours, G.P.

Hounslow, Jan. 2.

THE POST OFFICE.

6.1.02

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The Marquis of Londonderry would have made a more effective "defence" had his lordship thrown (as he justly might have done) the blame of the postal delays you enumerate wholly on the public. I doubt if a scrap of responsibility attaches to the Post Office. The Department has been required for many years to do an impossible thing. It is not its fault if it fails, and so long as the public follow the insensate and wholly needless course of over-weighting the Post Office on three or four selected days in December, with a hundred-fold the normal amount of correspondence and parcels, so long will the postal topsyturvydom continue. *The Times* of one day outstrips its forerunner, my weekly letter comes three days late, and thousands upon thousands of cubic yards of parcel baskets lie unopened for long after post time all over the country. So with letters. If the mails cannot be opened and sorted in time for an outgoing despatch they are liable to be overwhelmed by later arrivals, to become, in fact, "a submerged fifth," so that early postages are thus sorted last.

Postal officials work like slaves without extra reward, save overtime, but no provision of extra men, extra buildings, and extra trains can do in 24 hours the postal work of a week.

The cure is simple and obvious. All that is needed is that the public should make it a duty to begin to post their inland Christmas parcels as soon as November is over, labelling each "For Christmas Day" or "For New Year's Day," as the case may be. Such labels, ready gummed, would be supplied gratis by most shopkeepers; in any case 1d. per score would be a remunerative charge even at any post-office.

Christmas cards might be posted between the 11th and 18th of December, and they, too, might be put into Christmas covers, though, as a matter of fact, the shabby plan of prepaying them ½d. and tucking a flap into the envelope sufficiently distinguishes this class of correspondence.

The great bulk of postings would therefore be spread over some weeks, and would be ended by the 18th, so leaving a clear week as a margin for the unexpected.

What a relief to all and sundry! How perplexed shopkeepers, worried parents, overdone postmen, and the like, throughout the length and breadth of the land, would up and bless *The Times* for its action in the matter!

What could be done all the year round for newspapers by a separation of parcels and newspapers from the letter service and by delivery from railway stations instead of from post-offices is another story, which some Napoleon or Redyard Kipling at St. Martin's-le-Grand will hereafter take up and unfold. Yours truly,

January 2. AN OLD SERVANT.

THE POST OFFICE.

10.1.02

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—For the credit of the British Post Office I hope that Lord Londonderry will either disprove the statement of Mr. Tiedeman that he is being charged 24 per cent. on his deposit for account of telegrams, or, if he cannot do so, that he will at once put a stop to this or any charge.

I have similar deposits with the Post Offices of nearly every country in Europe, and while in no single instance has any such charge ever been made, the German Post Office pay interest at 3½ per cent. on that deposit.

You have contrasted the methods of British workmen with those of other countries, but how can we expect the British workman to show intelligence if his rulers are capable of folly like this? To make a few shillings per annum we not only obstruct in their business people who are only anxious to put money in our pockets, but irritate by every conceivable petty exaction the very men who are sent here to inform their countrymen on English matters.

Can we wonder that we are represented throughout the Continental Press as stupid and bad mannered? Yours,

MANAGER.

I assume that Mr. Tiedeman is mistaken when he speaks of 24 per cent., but that any charge at all should be paid is preposterous.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—A sojourner in an English colony in a large Continental city cannot fail to be somewhat amused at the indignation of the home-dwelling Britisher because, at a season such as this, his newspaper is a day or two—or even only an hour or two—late. It would really do some of your correspondents good to spend a winter here, in order to make them appreciate the advantages of a postal system that at least tries to do its work and of a Post Office Minister who is courteous and amiable enough to take public notice of complaints which seem, under the circumstances, distinctly unreasonable.

Let me give a few instances that have occurred here this season to my own knowledge in the local, not the general, postal service. In at least two cases two greetings sent by the same post, two days at least before Christmas, to the same address, arrived at intervals of three days and ten days between them respectively. Another greeting sent out two days before Christmas was delivered on January 4. A letter written on the 28th to accept an invitation for New Year's Eve was delivered at its destination also on January 4, and so forth. I might give many more, and these are all instances taking place in a city of under 200,000 inhabitants. I am told, moreover, that there are still in the post-office stores of undelivered letters, which the authorities seem in no hurry to clear off. What, then, must be the strain in London alone? The Postmaster-General deserves the support and consideration of all right-minded folk at such a time, when every effort must be at full strain to cope with the yearly increasing Christmas postal demands.

Postal delay is, no doubt, annoying and irritating, and we who live in Italy feel it probably more keenly than even "A Warwickshire Vicar"; but at such a season complaint is hardly fair, especially as to an organization so severely taxed as the English General Post Office.

I am, Sir, yours very faithfully,

ROBERT H. HOBART CUST.

Florence, Jan. 6.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have just written to the Post Office to complain that *The Times* was not delivered yesterday (Saturday) until a quarter to 2 o'clock. Yesterday was not Christmas Day, or Boxing Day, or New Year's Day, or anything but just an ordinary working day like 300 others in the year. I do not live in Warwickshire, or on the fringe of distribution, but in Kensington, precisely where the newsagents may be expected to find the masses of easy work which Lord Londonderry says they appropriate, leaving only the difficult cases for the Post Office to deal with. Yet people were reading *The Times* at Carlisle about the time that my copy was delivered well inside the four-mile radius.

My Christmas Day paper arrived on the morning of Boxing Day, and my Boxing Day paper came in just before noon.

The only thing that seems to be treated with respect seems to me to be the mass of worthless circulars and bogus company prospectuses which gorge one's waste-paper basket. I am yours, &c., J.C.R.

London, Jan. 5. 6.1.02.

THE POST OFFICE.—Mr. H. Tiedeman, who is the London editor of a Continental journal, writes from Hampstead on Post Office methods. After a brief introduction, his letter proceeds :—For a considerable time past sinister rumours had been current in Press and postal spheres that a new departure in the General Post Office was imminent, its main object being defined by more than one "authority" as a burning desire, suddenly kindled in some official bosoms, to "screw and scrape every available or likely halfpenny together," no matter how, and "for immediate revenue purposes." These ugly rumours were fully corroborated by circulars sent out from St. Martin's-le-Grand just before Christmas to all and sundry postmasters. In them the latter were instructed to collect all outstanding telegram accounts forthwith, to allow no more "overdrafts" of deposits lodged as "cover" for the transmission of unprepaid messages, and to charge a "commission" for their despatch for every period of account, be the latter weekly, fortnightly, or monthly. It is here necessary to explain that for my telegrams to the Continent cash deposits have had to be lodged at the various post-offices whence I habitually send my messages. At the end of each calendar month my accounts are made up, presented, and settled, the "cover" then becoming again available until the beginning of the next month, and so on. Hitherto, however, the rule has been to charge me a commission of 2 per cent., payable quarterly, for "keeping accounts." Seeing that a 2 per cent. quarterly commission amounts to an 8 per cent. rate per annum, most business men nowadays would regard it as an eminently satisfactory rate of interest, the more so as no risk whatever is involved. But St. Martin's-le-Grand, in its present mood of "screw and scrape," obviously thinks otherwise ; it has the declared intention of abolishing quarterly commissions and substituting monthly ones, making them, therefore, at the rate of 24 per cent. per annum, which is beyond the lawful *maximum* allowed to pawnbrokers and even "inscribed" moneylenders ! All this may be very droll, perhaps. But where St. Martin's-le-Grand ceases to be funny is in giving instructions to postmasters, coolly ignoring customers and arrangements made with these years ago when first they had to lodge their deposits for the transmission of unprepaid messages. Does Lord Londonderry countenance or sanction such a breach of trust, or does he disapprove of this *trop de zèle* on the part of some of his subordinates ? As regards the whole commission system, I leave it to others to decide whether there is any fairness or equity in it. The British Post Office holds a large sum of my money, upon which it pays me no interest whatever, and now it wants to charge me 24 per cent. commission per annum for "keeping accounts" ! This "new humour" of St. Martin's-le-Grand really goes too far, I think. It ceases to be humorous ; it reaches the full dimensions of a *mauvaise plaisanterie*. 9.1.02.

THE POST OFFICE.

11.1.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Allow me to say, in answer to "Manager's" letter in *The Times* of to-day, that I do not think any one could have misunderstood me when, in a previous communication to you, I referred to the commission exacted by the General Post Office for "keeping accounts." Among other London offices, I have a deposit account for telegrams at West Strand Telegraph-office. Let us assume that my unprepaid messages, sent thence during the current month, will amount to, say, £30. On January 31 next West Strand will furnish me with an account showing that total, and will charge me with a 2 per cent. commission on it for one calendar month. This, I contend, is at the rate of 24 per cent. per annum.

I should be gratified, indeed, if Lord Londonderry could demonstrate that I am mistaken ; and more gratified still if his lordship could show me adequate reasons why quarterly commissions should be abolished and monthly ones enforced, without the consent of the customers of his great Department. If such arbitrary proceedings were allowed to pass without protest St. Martin's-le-Grand could, with as much right, instruct its postmasters and superintendents to charge weekly—nay, even daily—commissions.

I should like to know what our friend, Mr. Hemniker Heaton, M.P., has to say about all this. Let me thank "Manager" for his friendly sentiments, but let me assure him at the same time that the postal policy of this country, be it ever so short-sighted and wrong-headed, could not affect the general views of a conscientious foreign journalist, resident in London for upwards of 20 years, one way or another.

It would, indeed, be an unfortunate day if we foreign editors living in England allowed ourselves to be influenced by considerations such as "Manager" urges, cogently enough to be sure, on questions which bear no relation to the special points of postal (mal) administration that, now, as before, I have considered it my duty to lay before you.

I am, Sir, your faithful servant,

January 10. H. TIEDEMAN.

10.1.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your recent effort to arouse the Post Office to some sense of its shortcomings has been watched with sympathetic interest by a distressed community. This is a county town, wherein much public business is necessarily transacted. It is also a military centre, and a place of some importance in the educational world. Four lines of railway give us access to other parts, but to this day the Post Office persist in trying to deliver our letters by mail-cart from a point 40 miles distant. Granted perfect climatic conditions, and granted further that the miserable horses which drag the lumbering van do not entirely collapse upon the way, we may hope to receive our letters by 10 o'clock. We have actually reached this high standard once in the past three days. It was 3 p.m., however, not many weeks ago, before this "early morning" mail was delivered, the police having humanely interfered and impounded the horses as in unfit condition to be worked. Our "night mail" closes at 5 20, after which hour we are relieved from further opportunity of communicating with the outside world. County council, town council, other public bodies have protested in vain. I suppose Lord Londonderry would urge us to seek consolation for our personal inconvenience and commercial loss by contemplating the prospective surplus which his department will be able to show. And yet the selfish thought will intrude itself, that those who assist in producing for him this surplus have some claim to consideration in return.

I remain, Sir,

10.1.02. HASTE, POST HASTE.

Brecon, Jan. 8.

NEW POSTAGE STAMPS.

15.1.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—All must agree that the head of the King which appears upon the new postage stamps, and which is understood to be the work of the well-known artist Mr. Fuchs, is full of dignity and a most pleasing likeness of his Majesty ; but I venture to think that most people will be disappointed with the colour that has been adopted for the most universally-used stamp of the series—the penny—which gives it a tawdry and foreign appearance.

I presume that, in order to meet the requirements of the Postal Union in the matter of colour, it was deemed desirable that this particular stamp, hitherto printed in purple, should be red. But it is difficult to understand why the Post Office should have considered it necessary to go out of the way to introduce such an aggressive colour, when they might have turned to the simple expedient of adopting for the new penny stamp the red paper and printing colour used for the sixpenny of the old series—a much admired stamp. The new sixpenny is, I observe, printed in the purple heretofore employed for the old penny.

The objection to the colour of the new penny stamp is, however, but a small one when compared with what would appear to be a grave blunder, involving, as it does, considerable risk to the Post Office revenue if the use of the stamp, as now printed, be persisted in. It is well known that the penny stamp is very largely used for fiscal purposes (receipts, &c.). The sixpenny stamp is also to a more limited extent used for like purposes (agreements, &c.). Needless to say that it is most important that neither stamp should be cleanable.

Now, it will scarcely be believed that, if a test be applied, it will be found that, although the old purple penny, the old red sixpenny, and the new purple sixpenny stamps are all secure on this head, any tiro in chemistry can, without much difficulty, remove from the new penny stamp the writing ink obliteration by which it will be usually cancelled when employed for receipt purposes.

Within the past few days you have opened your columns to loud complaints as to certain vagaries in Post Office management which the Postmaster-General has endeavoured to explain away. It would be interesting to learn from Lord Londonderry whether the Post Office is responsible for the serious blunder to which I venture to direct attention, or whether the printers have changed the quality of the stamp without the cognisance of his lordship.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

January 13. NEMO.

THE POST OFFICE.

9.1.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I wonder whether those gentlemen who complain of delay in the delivery of their papers have considered the great increase in the weight of the mail bags due to a liberal concession that was made by the Post Office a few years ago at the instance of a limited but influential section of the public. I allude to the great cheapening of letter-postage, and the raising of the allowed weight of penny letters from 1oz. up to 4oz. I venture to think such a concession is more than we have a right to demand. It is of scarcely any benefit to the mass of the people, and I hardly see why the great commercial firms should be privileged to occupy our mail bags and our postmen in disseminating their goods or their advertisements at such very low rates as now obtain. This privilege is not only obtained at the expense of the taxpayer, but it tends to disorganize the prompt delivery of penny letters and post-cards, which is, after all, the primary business for which the Post Office exists.

I hope we shall restrain our demand for so many postal luxuries—cheapened telegrams, telephones, express messengers, ocean penny postage, &c.—or, if we must have them, let us pay a fair price for them. Anything less than a fair price is so much taken from the national revenue. I remain, Sir, yours respectfully,

H. COURTENAY FOX.

20, Gordon-square, W.C., Jan. 6.

STAMPS AND STAMP COLLECTING.

Guardian

THE KING EDWARD ISSUES.

8.1.02

(NO. 6. BY "PHILATELIST.")

The issue of the new "King" stamps seems to have aroused a variety of feelings. There is the surprise of those who have seen the new stamps, which were supposed not to have been issued before January 1st, postmarked December 31st, or even the 30th, and there is the indignation of those who could not secure early copies. Some of the indignant collectors have gone so far as to suggest an inquiry by the postal authorities as to the manner in which rural postmasters parted with early copies! They can't do these things in London, apparently.

The "Reversed Head" Issue.

If some of the writers in the daily Press had their way, the present issue of the English stamps would go down to posterity as the "reversed head issue," and if the wishes of those dealers who have accumulated large "stocks" were consulted, very probably the whole issue would be "called in" at no distant date; but neither eventuality seems to be realised.

The New "Penny Red."

Philatelists, in common with the general public, would welcome (remarks the "Stamp Collector's Fortnightly") any revision of the present issue that brought us a more artistic series of stamps, and it is quite possible that some change in the penny stamp is contemplated, in view of the discovery that this value is practically worthless as a receipt stamp; but should any general change take place it will certainly not be for the reason that the King's head is "turned the wrong way round." It is the heads of irresponsible writers in the Press that have been turned.

Bournemouth Buys Largely.

Hearing of this rumour of the calling in of the "penny red," quite a large number of collectors made purchases at the Bournemouth head and branches one day last week, until, in fact, the stocks were exhausted. "Have you had any official notice of withdrawal?" I asked a responsible officer in the head office. "No, the only intimation of anything unusual that we have had has been a very brisk demand on the part of the public until we have sold out. We have only this one sheet of 2½d stamps of the new issue left," he added, showing me part of a sheet, from which of course I secured some.

A Philatelic Society Suggested.

Bournemouth has many societies and institutions, but as yet the philatelist has had no means of indulging his hobby to the extent of fraternising with those similarly interested in stamps. When such centres as Birmingham, Sheffield, Cardiff, Plymouth, Oxford, and Brighton have their philatelic societies surely Bournemouth could support some such organization! I am putting myself into correspondence with some of the centres I have mentioned, and in a future article will hope to deal with this question again. In the meantime I shall be glad to hear from any local philatelists (collectors) who think that some such society might be established here. A very interesting evening could be occasionally spent, I am sure, if we could get a lecture and display of a special or general collection.

How Exhibitions are Held.

At Birmingham recently I see they have had a four days' exhibition of stamps, by far the most brilliant display ever held in the Midlands. Many of the city aldermen, councillors and officials, I note, took great interest in the exhibition, and some of them for the first time were found to possess collections dating back 20 and 30 years. I know of a good number of philatelists in Bournemouth. Surely they might afford others the pleasure of inspecting what they themselves take so much interest in. I throw out the suggestion for what it is worth.

A Philatelic Menu.

At the annual dinner of the Sheffield Philatelic Society recently, the menu card was a curiosity, philatelic terms being used in connection with the courses, while unused Newfoundland stamps bearing the portraits of the King, Queen, Prince and Princess of Wales, and the baby Prince Eddy of York were arranged round the card, the whole being surrounded by an Imperial Crown.

Obituary.

The death is announced of one of the earliest known lady collectors of stamps in this country, Mrs. Tebay, one of the founders of the London Philatelic Society. She had a wonderfully retentive memory and a keen intuition where stamps were concerned, two very necessary instincts.

New Registration Envelope.

The new registration envelope is to be embossed with a 3d stamp in brown, in substitution for the present 2d medallion, necessitating an extra 1d.

A Local Publication.

A local firm, Messrs. Chas. Endle and Co., of Boscombe, send me a copy of their "Philatelic Almanac for 1902" (price 4d). It is a handy little volume, more interesting than the mere title of "almanac" would imply, for it contains not only an illustrated article on "Ladies in Philately," but much information about philatelic societies and exchange clubs (with their programmes of meetings, etc.), lists of mail arrivals and despatches, lists of new stamps issued during the past year, etc.

What "V.R.I." Means.

They were two little tots, and were earnestly engaged in extracting wisdom, amusement and instruction from a stamp catalogue. Said one: "What's the meaning of 'V.R.I.' printed on a stamp?" Said the other: "Why, don't you know? When any country has that on its stamps after a war with England, it means 'Victoria Rules It.'" And the questioner was quite satisfied. I suppose if this precocious child had been asked now to explain why the "V" had been changed to "E" the reply would have been "England Rules it."

8.2.02. PHILATELIST.

SUGGESTED BOURNEMOUTH PHILATELIC SOCIETY.

1.3.02

Bournemouth Observer.

In my previous contributions to the "Observer," I have dealt generally with various items of interest to stamp collectors, with here and there a touch of local colour as occasion arose; but in my last article I ventured to make a suggestion that there might be a sufficient number of collectors in this district to justify the formation of a Philatelic Society for Bournemouth and neighbourhood.

I have received several letters with reference to my suggestion, and shall be still further pleased if other philatelists will communicate to me their views, either privately or for publication, as to the possibility of such a society becoming an accomplished fact, or the likelihood of its proving of use to those who, like myself, take an interest in the hobby of stamp collecting.

What Judge Philbrick Thinks.

Residents in Bournemouth and neighbourhood are familiar with the name of his Honour, Judge Philbrick, K.C., as the respected judge of the county court, but to the philatelic world he is even more widely known as an ardent stamp collector, and one whose opinion is worth listening to on the subject. His recent trenchant criticism on the matter of the alleged discovery of a "2d black" Victorian stamp was justified by the subsequently admitted "bogus" character of the specimen.

Judge Philbrick very kindly replied to a letter of inquiry which I addressed to him on the subject of a philatelic society for Bournemouth, and as his remarks entirely coincide with the opinion I had previously formed, I have much pleasure in reproducing them for the benefit of those interested.

Speaking as to the necessary foundation of such a society, his Honour says:—"In such a place as Bournemouth there would probably not be much difficulty in starting a society. This is not the difficulty usually met with. It is after the first novelty has worn off to see there are enough steady collectors interested and firm enough to continue to show their interest by supporting the society by giving time and attention to its working."

Then as to the "tone" of such a society, Judge Philbrick truly remarks that much depends on this matter. "Is the tone social and hearty, or merely divided into sets or cliques? The latter tendency is fatal, for such societies as you contemplate essentially depend on the common bond of the common pursuit, and members must be able to meet in a feeling of equality ad hoc. while in the meetings."

As to whether such a society would be likely to take root and be successful in Bournemouth, he says he is not able, from want of the requisite knowledge, to afford an opinion as to whether such a society as I suggest would be likely to prosper. "I am utterly ignorant of any philatelists in Bournemouth, and so cannot say if there is such a nucleus as would yield a prospect of success for such a society." That is of course where the difficulties come in. Personally, I believe there is such a nucleus as his Honour speaks of, and that such a society would be a success if it could be started on the basis mentioned.

Objects of Philatelic Societies.

I have received other letters besides that from Judge Philbrick, and some of them give me interesting particulars as to various philatelic societies.

Philately at Brighton.

Baron A. de Worms, the hon. secretary and treasurer of the Brighton Philatelic Society, in forwarding a copy of the rules, says:—"Our society was founded ten years ago, and was certainly very beneficial to the collectors in Brighton, but lattely only few meetings have been held owing to a large number of the members having left the town."

At Brighton they have a library of over 400 volumes. The object of the society is "to encourage and promote the study of philately," by means of meetings, discussions, and exhibitions of stamps. Members are elected by ballot, and the annual subscription is 5s. There is a useful "exchange circuit" in existence, by means of which packets of stamps are circulated among the members monthly, the stamps being marked with the nett cash price and paid for monthly.

Bristol and Clifton.

I have also heard some particulars with reference to the Bristol and Clifton Society. Mr. Henry Alsop, the hon. sec. and treasurer, forwards me a copy of the rules revised up to January, 1902. The objects are fourfold: (1) the study of matters appertaining to philately, (2) the drawing together of collectors, (3) the detection and prevention of forgeries and fraud, and (4) the preparation and subsequent publication of lists and articles on philatelic subjects. The subscription is 2s 6d per annum. Meetings are held on the first Thursday in each month (from October to May) at the private residences of members, and there is a very useful exchange club connected with the society.

I shall be glad to hear from any philatelists in Bournemouth who may be interested in the formation of a society such as I have suggested.

PHILATELIST.

THE POST OFFICE.—Mr. Henry Gourlay writes from Kempshott-park, Basingstoke:—"I shall be glad if you will permit me to mention a grievance which the residents in this part of Hampshire suffer at the hands of the Post Office. We are within 50 miles of London, and from two to five miles from Basingstoke, a great railway centre, and yet we do not get *The Times* until the day after publication. If we resided in Edinburgh, or even in Paris, we should have our newspapers on the day of publication. The wages of the postman who delivers our letters and newspapers must be paid many times over from the price of the stamps used. The inhabitants have made several complaints and sent petitions, but without any practical result. Lord Londonderry, in a letter which he sent to you lately, said that the Post Office deserved credit for much good work. It would, indeed, be strange if such were not the case, when the possibilities of what might be done with such a valuable monopoly are considered. If the postal service was worked by two or three powerful companies under such an arrangement that some competition could be brought into action, I believe that the public would be in some respects great gainers. For instance, the six million inhabitants of Greater London would certainly have their letters delivered for ½d. instead of 1d. The Post Office is often referred to by Socialists as an instance of very successful management by a Government department. If the monopoly is taken into account, I suspect the true verdict regarding postal management would be, expensive and inefficient."

31. 1. 02.

1. 2. 02 THE NEW POSTAGE STAMPS.

In reply to Dr. FARQUHARSON (Aberdeenshire, W.).

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said,—It is not intended to make any change in the postage stamps now in circulation. The Postmaster-General thinks that the original drawing would not be useful for purposes of comparison, if placed on view, as some slight modifications were made in it in the process of arranging for its reproduction.

REGISTERED LETTER ENVELOPES.—We are officially informed that it has been decided to substitute for the present blue medallion (value 2d.) on registered letter envelopes a brown medallion (value 3d.) denoting a registration fee of 2d. and postage 1d. The prices of the new envelopes of all sizes will consequently be 1d. per envelope more than the prices of the old ones, and will be as follows:—

Size.	Price.	
	Per Single Envelope.	Per Packet of Twelve.
Inches.		s. d.
F 5¼ × 3½	3½d.	3 3
G 6 × 3½	3½d.	3 4
H 6 × 5	3½d.	3 9
H2 9 × 4	3½d.	3 9
K 11½ × 6	4d.	4 0

When the new envelopes are used no adhesive stamps will as a rule be necessary; but in cases where a registration or insurance fee of more than 2d. is paid or the postage is more than 1d. adhesive stamps to the value required should be placed on the envelope immediately to the left of the medallion. The new envelopes will be on sale at all post-offices in the course of the next few weeks. 22. 1. 02.

A meeting of the Society of Designers was, last night, held in the Hall of Clifford's-inn, to discuss the design of the new postage stamps. Mr. Geo. C. Haité occupied the chair.—Mr. B. Andrew Lillie said postage stamps, and particularly penny ones, were very important factors in the national life, and he did not see why the designs on them should not be of educational value. The details of the design did not form a dignified setting for the portrait of King Edward. It was a pity that his Majesty's advisers had not a little faith in the designers of their own country. In his opinion it would be a good thing if the designs for postage stamps, the coinage, and like things, could be made the subject of public competition. Matters might thereby be improved, and in any case they could not be made worse.—A long discussion followed, the speakers, with only two exceptions, condemning the design of the new stamp.—In conclusion Mr. Lillie proposed the following Resolution:—"That this meeting of practical designers and of ladies and gentlemen interested in designing, protests against the designs of the new postage stamps, as being undignified, and unworthy of the best possible and available Art expression of the present day."—This was seconded and carried unanimously. 19. 2. 02

THE POST OFFICE.—A correspondent signing his letter "Wendover" writes:—"I venture to think that the following will 'beat the record' of Post Office ineptitude. Wendover is a town 33½ miles from London by rail, with a railway-station and a service of 12 trains a day, taking from one hour and a quarter to an hour and a half. A letter posted in London after midnight on, say, Monday does not arrive till Wednesday. The following is, I am assured, the method of transmission employed by a State business administration in the 20th century. From London the mails for Wendover are carried by train to Tring, distant about five miles north-east of Wendover. From there they are carried by cart about four miles due west to Aston Clinton. From Aston Clinton they are again carried by cart about three miles further west to Weston Turville; and from this place they are again carried by cart about two miles due south to World's End, at which appropriately-named village they are still two miles from their destination, and here they wait until the Wendover postman comes to fetch them. Is it consistent, even with what the Postmaster-General calls a fairly good service, that I should be able to post a letter in London and that, starting 30 hours later from the place where I posted it, I should be able to reach the destination before that letter is delivered?"

3. 2. 02.

THE POST OFFICE MAGAZINE.—A dinner was given last night at the Criterion Restaurant in connexion with *St. Martin's-le-Grand*, the Post Office magazine, Sir R. Hunter presiding. Among others present were Sir George Murray, Sir W. Preece, Sir Spencer Walpole, Mr. Shaw Lefevre, Major Bowles, the Rev. J. M. Bacon, Mr. Ogilvie, Mr. Bennett, and Miss Mona Wilson. After the loyal toasts had been honoured Mr. Shaw Lefevre proposed "The Post Office." He said that in the 17 years that had elapsed since he had been Postmaster-General there had been seven different occupants of that office. In spite of such frequent changes of men, the Post Office was a department that followed a consistent policy. He had been concerned in obtaining sixpenny telegrams and since then the number of messages had quadrupled. He looked forward to the time when the telephone would be brought under their control, and he was sure that in 1911 when the Post Office bought out the company a satisfactory system would be procured. Sir George Murray replied. Sir R. Hunter in proposing "The Magazine" said that its object was to quicken good-fellowship amongst the staffs of the local branches. The circulation of the magazine now was about 3,000 a quarter. Mr. Bennett, the editor, replied, and said that when the magazine was started 12 years ago its policy was to provide a medium through which all might take an interest in the work and history of the service. It had never varied from that policy and had succeeded in creating *esprit de corps*. Sir William Preece proposed "Literature and Science," and referred to some of the literary men who had belonged to the Post Office from the time of Anthony Trollope and Edmund Yates to the present day. Mr. Buxton Forman, C.B., and the Rev. J. M. Bacon responded, and other toasts followed. 6. 3. 02

The Obliteration of Stamps

Sir,—Your contributor of "Obiter Scripta" thi[illegible] when speaking of the obliteration of stamps, errs in some re[illegible] mentioning that Sir Henry Bessemer invented a machine for the obliteration of stamps, as I shall presently show.

As a grand-nephew of Sir Henry, and one who has more than once heard the old gentleman tell the story, I may, perhaps, as it is interesting, be permitted to give the facts. No doubt many of your readers are aware that the impressed stamps usually put upon legal and other documents retain the impression permanently when impressed upon paper but not upon parchment, and that in these circumstances the stamping authorities affix a small square of paper to the parchment by means of a metal clip which has an adhesive label gummed on the other side, the stamp being then pressed upon the whole. This method left the door open for unscrupulous persons to remove the square of paper with the stamp upon it from valueless deeds and affix it to a deed requiring stamping. Sir Henry Bessemer, then a young and struggling man, conceived the idea of perforating the parchment with the amount of duty enshrined in some suitable device, in much the same way that some people perforate the value of their cheques nowadays. He submitted his idea to the Director of Stamps (Lord Althorpe, I think it was), and not only was it accepted, but because of the special machinery that the new system entailed he was appointed to superintend operations at a substantial salary. In high glee he carried the news to the young lady to whom he was engaged to be married. "Why!" said she, "if only the stamps were dated and a law passed that all documents had to be stamped within a certain time after the date of their signing, the Government would not have to get the new machinery."

Sir Henry worked out the mechanical details upon the dies and submitted the new idea to the stamping authorities. "What a brilliant idea!" said they. "Of course we shouldn't want new machinery, and—er—er—of course we—er—shan't want you, Mr. Bessemer."

This is the true story of Sir Henry Bessemer's "gift" of a fortune. I leave it to others to judge of the morality of the State's action; for my part I think the universe has been a gainer, although I doubt whether at the time Lord Althorpe had this in contemplation.

The foregoing shows where your contributor is in error. First, in ascribing the obliterating machines to adhesive whereas it had relation to impressed stamps; secondly, in saying that Sir Henry Bessemer gave away a fortune; and last (and this error is quite excusable) in attributing the invention to Sir Henry Bessemer instead of to the lady who afterwards became his wife.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. Ernest Garle.

Lancy Cottage, Furze Hill, Purley, February 14, 1902.

A QUARTERLY JOKE.

Once, when the oldest of us was still young, somebody or another thought of inventing a penny postage. Ever since then the Post Office has been making regulations. And the result of all this is the "Post Office Guide." It is probable that many people do not read the "Post Office Guide." They may sometimes be foolish enough to look into it for information; but that is only because they do not know anything about it. By the aid of a giant intelligence and all the time there is, it is possible that information may be obtained from the "Post Office Guide." But mere information may be obtained with luck from a Post Office official; and to use the guide for such a purpose is to miss the whole point of its existence. Do not let us undervalue, though we may hitherto have ignored, the true literary position of this exquisite quarterly joke. For it is, without doubt, as an important contribution to humorous literature that the "Post Office Guide" ought to be studied.

The satric note is predominant throughout. Very early in its pages the bitter lesson is forced upon us that in this life nothing is so difficult to do as the things we are allowed to do. Take, for instance, the curious prohibition on page 21:—"Nothing inflammable, corrosive or explosive, may be sent, nor anything having an odour so strong as to affect the contents of other packets in the mails;" and compare it with the nice feeling displayed in the following regulation: "Live bees are allowed to pass by letter or parcel post within the United Kingdom, on condition," &c., &c. Now, there is no accounting for tastes, and a live bee may be the sort of thing some people might like to receive unexpectedly by post; but from the point of view of the sender, who is not necessarily a person who is accustomed to catching a live bee and making it into a parcel, we can only conclude that it amuses the Post Office to allow us to do something impossible, while it forbids us to post a box of peppermint-drops or a celluloid hair brush. A similar strain of sly humour pervades the foreign regulations. No deleterious liquid or substance, we are told, "may under any circumstances be sent by post to or from any place outside the United Kingdom." But, we are carefully reminded, uncut diamonds may be sent to Canada. Naturally, we should be much more likely to wish to send uncut diamonds to Canada than acetic acid, or anything inexpensive like that.

Nowhere, however, in this charming publication are we so conscious of the official humour as in the pages relating to the Express Delivery Service. There are eight of these pages altogether, all as full as they can be of words—sometimes big words and sometimes small words, but nearly always big words. Judging by the actual look of the words, we believe the English language is employed throughout in these eight pages; but after toiling through them two or three times in search of some clue to their meaning, we begin to have our doubts even on this point. We almost wonder that the Post Office does not explain its express delivery service in Irish; for we should still understand as much of it as we do now, and there is just a chance that a member, here and there, of the Gaelic League might be able to enjoy it. But the "Post Office Guide" is nothing if not artistic, and it leads up to this stupendous joke by a comparatively plain statement of the first two express services. We learn that letters and parcels can be specially delivered by special messenger all the way, or "2. By special messenger after transmission by post. In this service a letter may be posted in any letter-box, from which it will be collected by a postman, and be expressed on reaching the proper office." That sounds simple enough. But it is after this that the fun begins. Of course we all know from experience how to use the first of these two systems; and we can only conclude that that is how the officials themselves know, for they could never have found it out from the official explanation. The only clear sentence we have extracted from this maze of rules and regulations will be an illuminating one to most people. It runs thus:—"A person may also be conducted by Express messenger to any address, on payment of the mileage fee." If this sentence means what it says, we can only observe that the Post Office makes it easier to despatch a person than a parcel. But it probably means something else, or it would not be in the Post Office Guide.

The second method of express delivery ought to be useful to a great many people, and that, no doubt, is why it is entirely shrouded in mystery and regulations. For the Guide is never so funny as when it tells us in three lines that we may do something nice, and then says "No, you don't!" for another ten pages. But there is a third express system beside which the other two are as open books. We do not believe it is remotely possible for anybody to know what this one is about; indeed, we have strong suspicions that it does not mean anything at all, but was merely put in to show what could be done with the English tongue. We may as well give the title of it, however, as that is quite simple in its way, and some people might like to try their luck in the vortex of words that follows. Here it is:—"Special delivery of letters, &c., in advance of the ordinary deliveries, at the request of addressee."

Now and then, as we have already remarked, the Guide relapses into a sentence that everybody can understand. One of these welcome phrases occurs in relation to registered telegraphic addresses. Everybody knows by this time, of course, that he can register a telegraphic address for a guinea a year; so it is no use trying to conceal this from the public any longer. The Post Office has far too much sense of humour to carry a joke too far; besides, when the public begins to profit by a postal regulation framed for its benefit, the thing ceases to be a joke and must be put a stop to. So the Post Office has accordingly put a stop to it—by making another joke. "The registration of abbreviated addresses is not recommended," it says. "It would be much better if in all cases full addresses were used." The Post Office has added no comment to this official gem. Nor do we.

We will give only one more example of the occasional but significant simplicity of the Post Office Guide, and that is contained in the paragraph pointing out that a telegram dropped into any letter-box will be taken to the nearest telegraph office and despatched by the postman who comes to collect the letters. It is a bold little paragraph, and is only allowed to stand, in its present simplicity, we feel sure, because not one person in ten knows of its existence. But it will be time enough, when people have discovered that paragraph and are beginning to act upon it, for the Post Office to expand it into ten pages.

We have a very vivid picture in our minds of the Postmaster-General when we close the pages of the Post Office Guide. The Postmaster-General "will not hold himself responsible, &c., &c." "In no case will the Postmaster-General give compensation, &c., &c." "The Postmaster-General may (not in consequence of any legal liability, but voluntarily, and as an act of grace) give compensation up to £5"—if certain conditions, wrapped in obscurity, be complied with—and so on, and so on, and so on. He is presented to us as a kind of departmental clown, with his tongue in his cheek, always having the laugh of us, always wriggling out of our hands just when we think we have caught him, always getting the best of it. But we do not grudge the Post Office its little joke. It gives us the Post Office Guide four times a year—and he laughs best who laughs longest.

EVELYN SHARP.

THE WAYS OF THE POST OFFICE.—The Rev. T. L. Papillon writes from Writtle-vicarage, Chelmsford :—" I had occasion the other day to send a telegram to a town ten miles off in this county. The messenger returned to say that I must add 'Essex' because there is another office of the same name. On turning to the Postal Guide—a publication full of information skilfully concealed—I found this other office among the sub-offices of Hull, in Yorkshire, to which I should have thought the most benighted or most mischievous Essex clerk would not have thought of sending my telegram. I suppose, however, that our local postmaster was technically correct; and I have heard of a letter posted in a north country town to a high official in the Royal service, addressed 'Windsor Castle,' which was delivered at various publichouses of that name in two neighbouring towns, till some acute postal official wrote upon it 'Try Windsor.' This anecdote perhaps shows that it is not safe to assume that the obvious destination of a letter or telegram is that which will occur to the postal mind. My next point is a more serious one, affecting the privacy of telegrams. Here, and no doubt in other country places, the telephone is now employed to take messages to the neighbouring town, and a box with a glass door has been put in a corner of the village shop which is our post-office. One day last year, while waiting in the shop to be served, I heard every word of a message that the postmaster in his box was sending. This seemed to me so irregular that I wrote to the General Post Office and received a most polite reply, thanking me for calling attention to the fact and assuring me that steps should at once be taken to improve the box and make it sound proof. Steps were soon taken, and I imagined myself a public benefactor. But a short time ago I was again in the shop, and again heard a message that was being sent, with the name of the sender. Like Mrs. Cluppins in Bardell v. Pickwick, 'I'd scorn the haction' of listening. But if 'the voice is loud and forces itself upon the ear' of bystanders in the shop when messages are being sent by this telephone arrangement, the only alternative with private matters will be to send them from the neighbouring town, thus forgoing the convenience of a telegraph office at one's door. Living in a village we are sufficiently the prey of gossip without the additional risk of our private concerns being tapped, so to speak, before they even reach the wires." 28.2.02.

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE CITY.—The Rev. J. Arbuthnot Nairn, Headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School, writes under date March 7 :—" I wish to draw attention, with your permission, to the very unsatisfactory postal arrangements for residents in Charterhouse-square, E.C. Though within five minutes' walk of the General Post Office my own letters, for example, are hardly ever delivered by the first morning delivery till 8 45 a.m. This morning they did not come till 9 10. I have complained several times, as, I believe, have others. We have had many promises but no improvement." 8.3.02

NEWSPAPER POSTAGE IN FRANCE.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

PARIS, MARCH 13.

Among the measures discussed and adopted by the present Chamber there is one of especial interest, even to the foreignor. This is the Bill recently passed for reducing the postage on newspapers and periodicals. These at present, if not exceeding 50 grammes in weight, pay 1c. if addressed within the department in which they are published or the adjacent departments, and 2c. for the rest of France. It is true that certain newspapers, such as the *Figaro*, sell in Paris at three sous and in the provinces at four sous, although the postage costs more than that of others. But, as most newspapers have reduced their price to a sou, even in the provinces, it is fair to note that the postage forms a very heavy burden, for a halfpenny paper gives 1½c. to the vendor and 2c. to the Post Office. Consequently, for paper—generally six pages—printing, editing, and management, it retains for itself only 1½c., or three-tenths of a halfpenny. This would be difficult to believe if French newspapers had not the resource of so-called "publicity," which has to meet nearly all their expenditure. It should, however, be remembered that in Paris a halfpenny paper gives 1½c. to the vendor and nothing to the Post Office, thus retaining 3½c. for itself. In the department of the Seine outside Paris and in the neighbouring departments, such as Seine-et-Oise, Seine-et-Marne, Oise, Eure, and Eure-et-Loire, it gives 1½c. to the vendor and 1c. to the Post Office, retaining 2½c. It is only for copies sold beyond these departments that the share retained for itself is so low as 1½c. It may be supposed that a well-established paper sells one-third of its copies in Paris, one-fourth in the bordering departments, and the remainder in the rest of France, so that on the average it makes 2½c. per copy, with which it has to meet the cost of paper, printing, editing, and management. Thus, a halfpenny paper with a circulation of 200,000 has £200 a day gross to pay for paper, printing, and so forth.

This would appear an insoluble problem but for "publicity," which for English journals is confined to advertisements, whereas French papers openly practise what is called the *réclame*. Thus, to take a recent incident, the christening of the German Emperor's yacht Meteor by Miss Roosevelt. It was at first announced that she used a bottle of sparkling Moselle, but telegrams from America immediately protested that she did not use Rhenish wine but French champagne of a particular brand. Some days later the most prominent French papers published on their front page numerous long documents in proof of the use of French champagne. Now, in an English newspaper this rectification would have appeared only as an advertisement and have been paid for as such; but here it appeared in *réclame* articles written in a literary style, and must have been paid for far more dearly. It must not be supposed, moreover, that this is done covertly. The reader knows that it is a *réclame*, yet he attaches to it much greater importance than to an advertisement. Few persons, indeed, read the advertisements, whereas there is nobody who does not read the *réclame*.

This explains how a French newspaper, which for six large pages receives on an average only a farthing, can manage to exist through the immense resources offered by "publicity," if its circulation recommends it for such a purpose. Yet the Paris Press Syndicate, consisting of the editors of the principal newspapers, appeals to the Chamber of Deputies for a reduction of postage, which now on the average absorbs 30 per cent. of its selling price in the Seine and neighbouring departments, and 56 to 58 per cent. in the rest of France, the selling price, moreover, being not 5c. but 3½c., since the vendor is allowed 1½c. The syndicate asked for a reduction of 50 per cent.—namely, ½c. in the department of publication or the bordering departments and 1c. elsewhere. To understand the importance of this reduction let me take a newspaper with a circulation of 150,000. It sells 50,000 in Paris, 36,000 in the neighbouring departments, and 64,000 elsewhere. The reduction would give it a saving of 320,000f. a year, and, as there are newspapers which print 300,000 copies, the reduction in their case would mean a saving of £25,000 or £26,000 a year. The energy shown by the syndicate is, therefore, quite comprehensible.

Nobody will be surprised to learn that on the eve of the elections the terror-stricken Chamber agreed to this reduction, which will involve an additional burden on the taxpayers, who are already so heavily taxed. In spite of the resistance of M. Caillaux, Minister of Finance, neither the Budget Committee nor the Chamber ventured to refuse this concession to the Press, which until after the elections has the absolute control of the future destinies of the Deputies. The Bill passed by an immense majority. M. Caillaux, with a heroism reminding us of old Japan, did not hesitate to perform a sort of happy despatch, but the terrorized Chamber was insensible to his sacrifice. It is urged that compensation for the reduced postage will be found in the increased number of copies, but already some people are alarmed at the prospect of a tripling or quadrupling of the circulation of newspapers. M. Caillaux has opposed the Bill before the Senate, but according to my information he is not likely to obtain an entire success. The Senate, it is true, is much more independent of the Press than the Chamber of Deputies. Neither the date of its elections nor the composition of its constituencies is the same, yet it is thought that it will not reject the entire Bill, but will cut down the reduction to 25 per cent. Even this would produce a swarm of publications, reminding us of the invasions of locusts in Algeria, indefinitely disturbing the tranquillity of those who happen to be on their path. 15.3.02.

Mr. JOHN AVERY died suddenly at his residence, King Edward-road, South Hackney, on Monday, from heart failure, at the age of 65. For 40 years he was connected with the circulation department of the General Post Office, from which he retired two years ago. In 1869, in conjunction with the late William Powley, he founded the Post Office Orphan Home, accepting the position of honorary secretary and continuing his connexion till his death. 24.4.02.

POSTAL ANOMALIES.—"Globetrotter" writes from Madeira:—"In my wanderings I have come to an anchor in this island for a couple of months, and during the course of my stay the rates of postage from Madeira to different parts of the world have come under my notice. They denote a rather curious state of things, and, as the question may interest some persons who follow postal matters, I append a few notes. Portugal is a member of the Postal Union, and in general the rates of postage between all countries similarly situated is 2½d. per ½oz. This corresponds here to 50 reis gold currency, but as the country is now under paper currency the paper equivalent is 65 reis, the gold value being augmented by 30 per cent. The postage hence, which appears to require looking into by our Government, is as follows:—To the Canary Islands direct by British steamers, 65 reis per ½oz.; to the British West Coast of Africa by British mail steamers, 130 reis per ½oz.; to British South Africa by direct British mail steamer, 130 reis per ½oz.; to British India and China by British mail steamers, *via* London, 130 reis per ½oz. The high rates above, it must be noted, are almost exclusively borne by the British travelling and mercantile community. A comparison of these rates with those charged to the Portuguese writing public shows the rates to be:—To the Canary Islands by mail steamer to Lisbon, overland to Cadiz, and thence by Spanish mail steamer, 25 reis per ½oz.; to the Portuguese ports of S. E. Africa (Delagoa Bay, Beira, Mozambique, &c.) by British mail steamer, 25 reis per ½oz.; to Portuguese India and China by British mail steamers, *via* London, 25 reis per ½oz. On inquiry I learn that at the last Berne conference of the Postal Union the faculty was given to Portugal to thus mulct the foreigner! According to the Postal Union, each country retains for its own revenue the prepaid postage it collects, out of which it pays the carrying countries a rate agreed upon, and the receiving country delivers the letters, &c., gratis. What could be the object of favouring Portugal in the way indicated? Here we have Portugal sending its own correspondence, by British subsidized mail steamers, to its own possessions for 25 reis (1d. to 1½d.), whereas the British public, whose correspondence travels by the very same steamers, is mulcted in 130 reis. Letters for the Canaries posted *via* Lisbon and Cadiz and taking eight to ten days in the journey are carried for 25 reis, but when sent direct in 24 hours by British mail steamer the rate is 65 reis. As 65 reis (2½d.) is the Postal Union rate between foreign countries, a complaint does not perhaps hold good in this case; but where Portugal cannot have a leg to stand on is when the same British steamer carries, say, two letters, one for Bombay or Hong-kong precharged at 130 reis, and one for Goa or Macao precharged at 25 reis, or to Cape Town or Natal at 130 reis, and to Beira and Delagoa Bay at 25 reis. The rate to England from South Africa and *vice versa* is 1d. per ½oz., but between Madeira and England or between Madeira and British South Africa it is 2½d., according to the Postal Union rates, and this gives rise to much surcharging of letters, as people who do not inquire the rates only prepay 1d. as for the longer distance. This is a misunderstanding which the public must put up with, as it ought to know that the 1d. rate is only between England and its colonies."

18·3,02

STAMPS AND STAMP COLLECTING.

22·3·02

BOURNEMOUTH PHILATELIC SOCIETY.

Although I use the words "A Bournemouth Philatelic Society" at the beginning of my present communication it is rather because the wish is father to the thought, than because the idea of a local philatelic society has become an accomplished fact. There is not very much progress to report in the direction of establishing such a society as I had hoped and referred to in my previous articles, but I do not despair of yet seeing the idea consummated. I wish to thank several correspondents for kind suggestions and encouraging letters—one from Bournemouth, one from Boscombe and one from Christchurch.

A Lady's Suggestion.

A lady correspondent, from whom I was very much pleased to hear, writes as follows:—I was much interested in reading your letter in the "Observer" respecting a suggested Philatelic Society, and hope it will become a fact. I am a collector and since I came to live here, have been making inquiries for such a society to belong to. For exchanging duplicates it is absolutely necessary, and so invaluable as a means of keeping up the interest and improving one's knowledge. One important fact, I think, is that one person must be competent and responsible for the genuineness of stamps exchanged. I belonged to a club abroad, and the secretary reviewed all sheets and nothing but what was genuine was allowed to circulate. I hope you will find support enough to start the society."

It is certainly most encouraging to receive a letter like that and could I but hear from half a dozen equally enthusiastic collectors think I would be tempted to set the ball rolling.

A Dealer's Views.

A local dealer and publisher writes that he also has been interested in my articles and would be glad to assist in any way in the formation of a philatelic society, but rather doubts the success of the project "on account of the continual coming and going which seems to characterise Bournemouth residents more than those of other places." He informs me that he has been interested in stamp dealing and publishing altogether for about eleven years, and in 1897 started a club which secured some local members, who, he had hoped, might form the nucleus of a society; but they "left Bournemouth excepting one, who now talks of giving up stamps on account of ill-health." The club started in 1897 (my correspondent informs me) is still in existence and has a fairly good connection in all parts of the country. At the time of starting the features of "cash settlements" and "nett prices" were thought rather extraordinary, but they have "worked out very well indeed."

"Coming and Going" Difficulty.

Baron de Worms informed me in a letter that this difficulty of "coming and going" was experienced at Brighton, and I have no doubt it applies to most other places. In Bournemouth, it ought not to be an insuperable difficulty, however, provided we could get an enthusiastic collector to undertake the duties of hon. secretary. My idea as a beginning would be to hold a meeting at the residence of a local collector, and if, in this way, three or four genuinely interested collectors could meet to talk over the matter a society such as I have outlined could be easily started. Who will take the initiative? I hope I may be able to chronicle a beginning later on.

Stamp Collecting as a Hobby.

In a paper read before the members of the Liverpool Philatelic Society recently, Mr. George Burrow touched chiefly upon the delights and fascinations of the hobby, pointing out the many opportunities which a philatelist has at his disposal for the acquisition of knowledge, and a shorthand, so to speak, of modern history. The changes in stamps during the past 60 years are as so many milestones in the history of national life, and one learns much from stamps not otherwise easily acquired as to the relative values of the world's coinage: of the centesimo of Europe, the cent. of the new world, of the real, the rouble and the piastre, the peso and the peseto, and the mighty dollar of the States. Truly, as the Liverpool lecturer said—a man must have a hobby of some sort, for without it he becomes a very poor specimen of humanity.

A Few Hints.

There is a Freemasonry among stamp collectors which always welcome a fellow collector.

A collector of stamps should have a good memory, to know what to collect; and a keen observation in his search of varieties and errors.

A collector should have a method in arranging a collection, and should exercise scrupulous care in handling stamps.

Damaged specimens should be discarded unless they are "very rare" ones. If you cannot get something worth looking at in the way of stamps you are better without them.

"Specialising" seems to be a favourite form of stamp collecting and it is a very sound system to advocate. Some stamps in every country will become rare, and if you have a complete set you are sure to possess those of special value.

The Prince of Wales and Philately.

In the course of a pleasant lecture on stamp-collecting, given in Exeter Hall, Mr. Melville, president of the Junior London Philatelic Society, made reference to the splendid collection which had been made by the Prince of Wales. It was, said the lecturer, to some extent a specialised one of the stamps of the British Colonies, and was not only large, but of great value. His Royal Highness had collected ever since his midshipman days on the Thrush, when he travelled much, and had special opportunities. Probably he first learned the pleasures of the hobby from examining the fine collection formed by his uncle, the late Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Several important additions were made during the recent Colonial tour, the most notable being that of Baron Testaferrati's superb set of Maltese stamps.

PHILATELIST.

PENNY POSTAGE TO CHINESE PORTS.

30·4·02

The Postmaster-General has issued the following notice:—On and after May 1 next the postage to be prepaid on letters from this country for all places in China where British post-offices are maintained will be reduced to 1d. per half-ounce, the rate already in force for letters addressed to Hong-kong. British post offices are at present established in China at the undermentioned ports:—Amoy, Canton, Foochow, Hankow, Hoihow, Liu Kung Tau (Wei-hai-wei), Ningpo, Shanghai, Swatow.

THE POST OFFICE LONDON TELEPHONE SYSTEM.

J.L.02.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

To many persons who think about the matter at all it must seem a rather remarkable thing how any one subscriber on a large telephone system can speak to any other, amongst so many thousands as comprise the customers of a vast area such as the metropolis, to say nothing of the possibility of connecting up with distant towns in the United Kingdom, and even abroad. No doubt, the average unthinking person takes it all as a matter of course, as he does everything else with which he is familiar. That, perhaps, is the reason why so much annoyance is expressed, sometimes in very forcible language, if all does not go smoothly and delays occasionally happen in getting connexion. As a matter of fact the working out of the problem involves mechanical and organizing ability of the highest order, and some of the best intellects in the world of science have been, for years past, engaged in working out this most intricate problem.

The Post Office telephone system of the metropolis is a very striking instance, and the difficulty has been increased in some respects because it has had to be created all at once. There are, however, natural advantages also arising from this fact. Most telephone systems have grown gradually over a period of some years, being increased as demands arose and subscribers multiplied. The Post Office has not had this advantage. Its system was practically created by a Treasury minute issued in May, 1899, and this led to the Act which authorized the raising of the money for the establishment of the Government system, which is now complete as far as it goes. The area which has to be covered is no less than 640 square miles, whilst the population is estimated at six millions. On the north the district includes Chipping Barnet and Enfield; on the south the wires will extend to Bromley, Croydon, and Redhill; Romford, Erith, and Crayford are the boundaries to the east; whilst Harrow, Hanwell, and Hounslow mark the western confines of the district.

Before proceeding to work, the authorities very wisely decided to get some information as to the probable magnitude of the undertaking. For this purpose every street in the city and its neighbourhood was carefully examined by competent persons in order to form an estimate as to the amount of telephonic facilities that would be needed. All large buildings containing suites of offices or chambers were examined, and opinions were formed as to the probability of the inhabitants' asking for telephones to be put in their houses. This having been done for the central district, the same inquiry was carried out in regard to the immediately surrounding neighbourhoods, until the area of investigation was, or will be, ultimately pushed out to the extreme limits. In order to avoid the frequent opening up of streets for laying down telephone lines, a very ample margin of accommodation for telephone lines was allowed, in most cases amounting to 50 per cent. This is satisfactory, in view of the great inconvenience that has recently been caused by the opening up of the streets.

The chief feature in the new system is the large Central Telephonic Exchange, which has been created under the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral. This I recently had an opportunity of visiting through the kindness of Mr. J. Gavey, engineer-in-chief to the Post Office. In describing the system, however, it will, perhaps, be better to begin at the out-stations and give some particulars of the way in which the cables are laid, so working up to the Central Exchange. As is well known, telephone wires are laid in conduits, which run beneath the surface of the streets. The conduits are divided up into what are known as ducts, for convenience in handling. Near the margin of the area comprised in the system conduits consist of one or two ducts; but, as wires are increased by the addition of subscribers, the ducts also increase. The number which concentrate at the central station in Carter-lane is 210. In districts beyond the range of the Central Exchange branch exchanges are established, and these provide for the number of subscribers that will be within the radius of one and a half to two miles. At the present time the exchanges already established are the Central Exchange in Carter-lane and branch exchanges at Westminster, Kensington, Chiswick, Putney, Richmond, Twickenham, Kingston, Wimbledon, and Croydon.

It will be seen, therefore, that in this arrangement the conduits are like the river system of a watershed. They begin with the little streams of a one or two duct conduit, and broaden as the supply of subscribers swell the volume of communication, until the whole is concentrated at Carter-lane. The branch exchanges may be likened to lakes in the watershed receiving their contributions from the surrounding streams and serving as means of local communication, but ultimately also discharging into the great central office.

At first the ducts consisted of cast-iron pipes, and where the number of wires is limited it is considered that there is no better arrangement. When the wires rise to a considerable number, earthenware ducts are used. The latter take the form of pipes of about 3¼in. internal diameter. They are supported, when erected in position, to form a conduit, by the aid of iron bars, so as to prevent subsidence, and are then bedded in cement. A conduit thus represents a monolithic mass of cement, pierced with holes lined by the earthenware pipes through which the wires have to be drawn, and which, as Mr. Gavey has said, may last for all time, to prove ultimately an interesting study for Macaulay's New Zealander. At intervals, for convenience of handling, are placed the now familiar manholes, giving access to the lines of ducts, and by means of these the cables can be drawn through. Under some of the more modern streets subways have been constructed, and where that is the case cables are placed on suitable racks and are therefore easily accessible. This, of course, is by far the most convenient method, and, had London to be built anew, no doubt every street would be provided with its subways for gas, water, and hydraulic pipes, as well as electrical cables. There are many who consider that these subways should now be constructed under our principal streets, holding that it would be better to undergo even the enormous outlay that they would involve once for all, and so obviate for the future the unspeakable inconvenience and great expense of constantly pulling up the streets.

The difficulties that have been met with in constructing the conduits for the Post Office have been immense; as also has been the inconvenience put upon the public. That, however, was unavoidable under their present system of burying all ground work. Mr. Gavey, upon whom the carrying out of the whole system has devolved, has likened the work to the navigation of an unknown sea filled with shallows and rocks. As the navigator has to thread his way slowly and cautiously by careful soundings, so the telephone engineer has also had to make his investigation beneath the surface. Pilot holes have been dug at regular intervals in front of the work. Measurements were taken, and charts plotted showing the respective positions of all pipes and other obstacles encountered. From the *data* thus obtained a plan was constructed, and the trench for the reception of the ducts was directed so as to keep clear of the obstacles likely to be encountered. Naturally, a good deal that was speculative had to be incorporated in this plan; for the vagaries of pipe layers are never to be foretold. Sometimes the conduits had to be panned out flat and shallow, in other places they were made deep and narrow. On other occasions the cables had to go to a considerable depth to get a clear route. The result, however, has been that all obstacles have been overcome, and London is provided with a Post Office telephonic system—to work in conjunction with the existing company—without any overhead wires at all. Those who remember some of the American cities—such, for instance, as New York—in the worst days of overhead wires will appreciate this great boon to Londoners. It is an advantage, however, which has not been secured without great thought and labour on the part of those on whom has rested the responsibility of carrying out the work.

It will be convenient, perhaps, here to give some brief description of the wires or cables that are used for telephone purposes. As an electrical current has to be passed through the telephone wire, it has naturally to be insulated. In the overhead telephone system naked wires are used, the atmosphere supplying the insulator; although when the air is damp there is often considerable leakage. This, however, is not a very serious matter, compared to the disadvantage that arises through disturbance. In underground work it would naturally be impossible to carry on telephonic communication unless the wires were covered with insulating material. They might, conceivably, be stretched in roomy ducts, being carried on insulators; but this would be practically impossible, the expense alone rendering such a system prohibitive. The wires themselves must therefore be wrapped round with an insulating material, and it is a recent discovery that has rendered modern telephony practicable on a large scale—namely, the invention of the dry-core paper cable. Up to recent times the method of insulating wires was by gutta-percha. This vegetable product is becoming scarcer and dearer every year, whilst its quality is said to be deteriorating. Whether this is the result of inferiority in the natural gum or of more artificial causes is a matter upon which "the trade" is best instructed. The application of paper solved the telephone engineer's chief difficulty; but great care has to be taken that no moisture gets to the covering. In the manufacture of cable the small wires are wrapped round with paper, and are then twisted in pairs, after which they are made up into cables and dried in ovens until every appreciable particle of moisture is evaporated. A large number of strands are thus formed, each one a separate telephonic wire appropriated to some subscriber. These are twisted together and are then covered with a leaden sheath, thus forming the cable of which every one has seen vast reels in the streets, ready to be drawn through the ducts. Paper insulation, has, however, another advantage over gutta-percha, having a lower electrostatic capacity. Owing to this fact, speech can be carried on through four times the length of paper cable that would be possible through gutta-percha covered wires. The covering of paper also is far thinner than that of gutta-percha, so that, whereas a 3in. pipe would accommodate only 80 gutta-percha insulated wires, it will take no fewer than 434 dried core cable wires. As a practical result it may be stated that the 10 ducts concentrated at the Savings Bank Exchange will accommodate about 85,000 wires. If the old gutta-percha covering had been used, the number of wires would have been 16,500 only.

There is another detail, but one of great importance, which is connected with the use of paper covered cables. It is, of course, well known that telephonic speech depends upon an electrical circuit, and it is also, no doubt, within the knowledge of every one that an electrical circuit must be in truth a circuit—that is to say, there must be a return of the current to the point whence it originated. If a wire carrying the electrical current is "earthed"—that is to say, carried into damp earth or attached to water pipes or mains or anything of that nature—the return current will be through the earth. The Post Office system is, however, to supply metallic circuit throughout—that is to say, the current is carried back to the point whence it emanated by means of a wire. The advantage of this metallic circuit as compared with a single wire circuit is very great. When the circuit is completed by means of the earth, other currents from various sources are mixed with the proper current. This leads to those remarkable noises that one sometimes hears when speaking through the telephone, and to the overhearing of other people's conversations, of which scraps occasionally come through the wires. The phenomenon of what are called induced currents is a somewhat complicated one, and until the complete metallic circuit is universal there will always be trouble to the telephone engineer. It may be remarked, by the way, that there is, however, a use even for induced currents, as by their aid speech has been carried across considerable stretches of water by means of two wires running parallel to each other, the current in one being induced in the second. With the complete metallic circuit, however, and with wires well insulated, there is no trouble from induced currents, the cables being shut off from all other currents. The paper cable has therefore not only enabled all wires to be carried underground, but has rendered possible the elimination of the most annoying and disturbing element in telephone communication, as well as allowing a fourfold increase in the range of speech. No doubt within a very short period the single wire telephone exchange circuit practically will cease to exist. This, however, does not apply, so far as it can at present be seen, to trunk lines connecting distant places, for which the use of open wires of relatively high static capacity will have to be used, for reasons which need not be set forth at present.

We have brought our cables to the Central Exchange, by means of which different speakers are put into communication with each other. The station in Carter-lane has been designed for 14,400 subscribers, so that when completed it will be one of the largest in the world. It is not quite so large, however, as the Central Exchange belonging to the French Government in Paris, which in 1889 was fitted for 15,000 subscribers. To connect these within the interior of the building 118 miles of 40-wire cable have been required, giving an aggregate of 4,720 miles of wire in the switch room. These cables are cut and jointed to what are known as jacks, at intervals of about 12 inches, and this work has involved the making of no fewer than 2½ millions of soldered joints. In the Central London Exchange 50 ducts enter the basement of the building through Dean's-court. These serve Aldersgate-street, Newgate-street, and the district. Fifty-four ducts come in through Godliman-street and take the Cannon-street and Moorgate-street district. One hundred and ten ducts come through Queen-Victoria-street, and they serve the eastern parts, as well as the western district of the Strand, Fleet-street, &c. There are 75 cables at present in position which are known as the subscribers' cables, and they consist of 217 pairs of wires. The gauge of the conductors is 20lb. per mile, while each junction cable has 108 conductors of 40lb. per mile. For distribution within the building silk and cotton insulation is used in place of paper, as the wires have frequently to be bent for purposes of leading them in different ways as fresh combinations are required. Silk and cotton insulation is naturally the more flexible.

The arrangement of a telephone exchange is extremely complex, and to describe it in detail would be about equivalent to making clear the intricacies of a Chinese puzzle without diagrams. It is therefore only possible to give here the broad general features. The cables are at first taken to what is known as the main distributing board. To this are brought the wires to form a circuit for connecting up to the premises of any person desirous of being supplied with the telephone. Through the main distributing board the wires that are connected up are carried to what is known as the intermediate distributing board. This is provided in order that the wires may be so directed that the work done is fairly well distributed between the different operators who put subscribers into communication with each other. Without this provision one operator might be overburdened with a large number of busy subscribers, whilst the one next to her might have comparatively little to do.

From the intermediate distributing board the wires are taken to what is now generally known as the switch, of which the old telegraph switch board was the prototype. There are different forms of switch, but it will suffice for our present purpose to describe the system in use at the Post Office Central Exchange. It will be recognized by those using telephones that the practice differs in some important respects from other methods still in use. When the subscriber wishes to communicate with the exchange, in order to be put in communication with another subscriber, the removal of the telephone from its suspending hook actuates the indicator. The necessary electric current is supplied by batteries situated in the central station, and there is no need to turn the rotating handle, as in the case of the apparatus more widely known. The signal that a subscriber wishes to speak is conveyed to the operator in the exchange by means of a small electric glow lamp. This is known as the indicator. The pair of wires of each subscriber terminates finally at the switch in a jack or switch spring. The jack is so formed that a plug can be inserted into it. The operator sits in front of the switch, with a telephone fixed

on her head. When a subscriber takes his instrument off the hook the lamp corresponding to his number is lit up. The operator at once places a plug into the jack of the subscriber, and attached to this plug is a flexible insulated wire, at the other end of which is another plug. In this way the operator and the subscriber are put into communication and are able to converse. The subscriber gives the number of the other subscriber with whom he wishes to communicate, and the operator puts the second plug, at the other end of the flexible cord, into the other subscriber's jack. She then for a second reverses a key, and this rings the bell of the telephone apparatus of the subscriber called; after which the two subscribers are in communication and able to converse. The flexible wire, with its two plugs, thus forms the connecting link between the jacks which form the ends of the subscribers' wires at the switch.

By means of the lamps the operator can tell when the subscribers have finished their conversation, the hanging up of the subscriber's telephone causing his lamp—which had been extinguished when the subscribers were put into communication—to glow. When both lamps are thus lit the operator knows that both telephones have been replaced on the hooks, and she takes the plugs from the jacks and extinguishes the lamps.

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Even with the multiple switch-board, however, the range of subscribers is not unlimited, and this constitutes the difficulty of giving telephonic communication to every one in a large and populous area. In dealing with a large number of subscribers, therefore, several exchanges have to be established, and this leads to unavoidable difficulties. To take the most elementary case, if only A and B are subscribers, there can be no trouble, but directly C comes on the scene complication arises, because both A and B may wish to speak to C at the same time. Let us now imagine that the whole of the 14,500 subscribers that are to be provided for by the switch at the new central station urgently wish to speak to A at once, and it will easily be imagined what an unpleasant time the operators would have at the exchange. The instance is, of course, absurd, but it may serve to illustrate the increasing ratio with which difficulties arise even when subscribers do not exceed in number those that can be dealt with on one switch.

8.4.02

PHILATELY IN BOURNEMOUTH.

Bournemouth Observer 14.4.02.

BY A COLLECTOR.

Special to the "Observer.")

I am not quite so despondent as when I last wrote of seeing a philatelic society formed in Bournemouth, as I have had several encouraging suggestions in response to my articles in the "Observer." Just two or three more communications and the offer of a room in which a preliminary meeting could be held I think would tempt me to make a start at any rate with the idea.

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The Editor of one of the most go-ahead philatelic papers, the "Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly," is pleased to thus refer in Saturday's issue to my previous communications with special allusion to the suggested Bournemouth society:—"A Bournemouth philatelist, who by the way contributes an interesting column on stamp-collecting to the local 'Observer,' is attempting to form a Bournemouth Philatelic Society. As at all other seaside resorts, however, he finds that the philatelic population is largely made up of people who 'come and go.' Still, the 'Fortnightly's' address book is evidence that there is a sufficiency of philatelists resident in Bournemouth to make a respectable philatelic society. If there are any 'S.C.F.' readers in that delightful town who have not yet been approached on the subject, we shall be happy to put them in communication with the would-be promoter of the society. Meantime, we wish the movement all success."

Booklets for Current Stamps.

A writer in the "St. Martin's-le-Grand" asks why stamps cannot be sold in "neat little booklets that will rest comfortably in the waistcoat pocket." The American Postmaster-General has issued a booklet at a charge slightly in excess of the face value of the stamps, and more than 80,000,000 stamps have been issued in that way with a profit to the department. New Zealand has adopted the idea, issuing booklets of which each leaf contains six stamps, and is separated from the next leaf by a piece of waxed paper. The outside contains information as to rates of postage, and an extra halfpenny for the binding brings a profit to the Government.

Exaggerated Ideas of Value.

Every collector occasionally asks himself, as he sees his stock of stamps accumulating, as to what would be the amount realised by his collection if submitted to the market. In this way an exaggerated idea is often formed of the actual value of the stamps. Occasional auction sales at which high prices are realised by rare specimens are announced in the newspapers, and books are overhauled, and choice specimens are "discovered" corresponding apparently with those which have realised enormous prices. Alas! that minor question such as perforations and watermarks, and the existence of even "bogus" specimens should stand in the way of the realisation of such hopes! The other day a lady friend showed me her collection in which one specimen was priced "£84," another "£12," and so on. It was my painful duty to inform her that the former was worth but "1½d," and the latter was a forgery! We've scarcely been on speaking terms since. The best advice that can be given to any collector who wants to "realise" is to submit what are believed to be "rare specimens" to some respectable "expert," who will for a small fee distinguish the "genuine" and "bogus" specimens very speedily.

How to Value Stamps.

The ordinary run of stamps can be appraised at their fairly marketable value thus:—Stamps catalogued at 1d or less disregard altogether. Stamps priced in the book at 1½d to 6d each value at one third of the catalogue prices. Stamps catalogued at 7d up to 5s value at one-half of the catalogue figures; and all stamps catalogued at more than 5s may be taken at about two-thirds of the dealers' quotations. Unused British Colonial stamps are an exception to the foregoing rules, for these may always be regarded as worth, at least, their face value. The total arrived at in this way will pretty fairly represent the market value of the album. Allowance, however, must be made for all stamps in a bad state of preservation, or with exceptionally heavy and disfiguring postmarks; and torn or otherwise damaged stamps must, as a general thing, be ignored altogether.

The Damaged Stamp.

A correspondent of the "New York Philatelist," writing on the subject of "The Damaged Specimen," says:—"We demand perfect copies, or as near perfect as they are made. A tear puts a specimen under the ban at once, and its presence will not be tolerated. For the fin de siecle collector half a stamp is not better than no stamp at all, unless it is a split provisional. That old theory of putting a piece of stamp in an album to fill a space until a good copy is secured has long ago gone to the happy hunting grounds of defunct philatelic ideas. If we cannot get something worth having, we will do without."

Small Boys and Men.

"Beware of the small boy who writes you with a request for a few stamps" is the advice which is suggested by a correspondent who knows what he is writing about in the stamp world. And then he adds this reason:—"Likely enough he is a grown man gifted with the bump of acquisitiveness, and a schoolboy style of letter writing." I myself have known of dealers in a small way of business who have parted with whole sheets of stamps to this class of schoolboy, never to see them again, or possibly not until threatened with the police. Most boys want plenty for their money, and the class of grown-up boy to whom I refer generally want something for nothing.

PHILATELIST.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

25.4.02.

At an early hour yesterday Mr. Henniker Heaton received the following cable message from Sir J. G. Ward, the Postmaster-General and Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand :—

Wellington, April 24, 11 30 a.m.

To Henniker Heaton, House of Commons, London.

Commonwealth of Australia now agrees to admit letters prepaid at a penny rate from all parts of the Empire.

WARD.

The reason why Australia has not before this joined in Imperial penny postage is that the Australian inland rate of postage is 2d. Mr. Henniker Heaton states that under a clause in the Postal Union Convention any two countries can arrange a restrictive union, and pending Australia coming into line the penny postage will only be from this country to Australia. He has, however, reason to believe from his conversation with the Hon. J. G. Drake, Postmaster-General of Australia, in January last, that on the date of the King's Coronation Australia will adopt penny postage everywhere.

On the other hand, we are requested by the Postmaster-General to state :—

That no arrangements have been made for reducing to 1d. the postage payable on letters to Australia, and that all such letters should be prepaid at the rate of 2½d. the half-ounce as heretofore. Any letters bearing postage at the rate of 1d. the half-ounce only will be liable to a charge of 5d. the half-ounce on delivery.

This is, no doubt, accounted for by the fact that, although penny postage to the extent indicated has been adopted by Australia in principle, the change cannot be carried into effect without further steps—probably not without legislation.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE TO CHINA AND AUSTRALIA.

3.5.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—It is a very singular circumstance that there has been in operation penny postage from Shanghai, Wei-hai-wei, and other places in China to Great Britain and Ireland since February 15 last, and it was refused from this country to China until to-day. Reciprocity was applied for and not granted by us until two months and a half had elapsed.

No doubt the British Post Office referred the matter to the Treasury, as in the case of Australia, which is now engaging the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I know that the Postmaster-General of Australia is devoting all his energies to bringing about harmony in the postal arrangements of the six colonies under his control. The colony of Victoria now enjoys penny postage; Sydney and all the towns of New South Wales now have a penny postal system; yet it is difficult for Australia to say "we shall make penny postage general at once." But Australia does say to England :—"You complete your plan of Imperial penny postage, and we shall reciprocate in a few months. Any letters you send us at the penny rate we will not surcharge, nor collect the fines you feel it your duty to impose. It will not injure you, for we keep all fines."

Man for man, the people in this country are less able to pay 2½d. per letter outward than their cousins in Australia are to pay 2½d. homeward. On the other hand, the Australian post-office is carried on at a loss, while the British Post Office makes a profit of four millions sterling annually. Pending Australia coming in—which can only be a matter of a few months—I hope that the Treasury of this country will not insist on immediate reciprocity, but will be content with the assurance referred to. I have already quoted the agreement of Canada and the United States, where the latter sent letters to Canada for two cents (her local or domestic rate) while Canada charged three cents (her domestic rate of postage) to the United States; and this agreement worked smoothly for twenty years—until Canada was able to reciprocate.

England should demand reciprocity in all postal matters if it is insisted on in this case. For instance, a post-card from here to Australia is conveyed for 1d.; but a post-card from Australia to England is charged 1½d. Again, a two-ounce circular from here to Australia is charged a halfpenny, but from one street to another in Australia the charge is 1d.

From every point of view I hope the Chancellor of the E[illegible], who has not yet given his judgment on the matter, will announce that, so far as England is concerned, the mantle of unity has been thrown over the Empire, and the one gap in the Imperial circle has been filled.

I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

House of Commons Library, May 1.

24.4.02. IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

As there appears to be considerable misunderstanding on the question of Imperial penny postage, Mr. Henniker Heaton has tabulated the following facts: Under the Postal Union, each country keeps its own postage receipts, and also collects and retains the fines levied by other countries. It is possible, under the Postal Union, to make an agreement, whereby the domestic rate of postage prevailing in one country shall frank a letter to another country a party to the agreement. In this case the penny would be 1d. from the United Kingdom to Australia, and 1d., 2d., or 2½d. from Australia to this country. For twenty years this agreement was in existence between Canada and the United States, the latter charging 1d. and the former 1½d. postage to the respective friendly countries. The total number of letters sent from the United Kingdom to Australia amounts to 3,401,000, so the total loss would be £19,162. Australia sent to this country last year 3,727,000 letters. Australia's loss would therefore only amount to £18,900. But penny postage to this country would necessitate inland penny postage, an additional loss of £150,000 to Australia. The Postmaster-General of Australia has, however, promised to establish inland penny postage either at the Coronation or within a year. We have penny postage to New Zealand now, and those New Zealand letters are sent from London, via Australia, landed there, and transhipped to New Zealand.

The Postmaster-General has caused the following letter to be sent to a correspondent :—"I am directed to acquaint you that it is not intended to issue either Coronation stamps for use in this country or special British postage stamps for common use in the United Kingdom and in those British colonies which have adhered to the penny postage scheme. The Postmaster-General does not propose to arrange for the sale of colonial postage stamps at British post-offices, there being no evidence of any effective demand for such an arrangement." 3.5.02.

PRINCE HENRY'S IRISH VISIT.

3.5.02.

AMUSING BARGAINING WITH A POSTMISTRESS.

The German fleet, under the command of Prince Henry of Prussia, left Lough Swilly yesterday morning and proceeded on its cruise to Bantry Bay.

An interesting incident is recorded of Prince Henry's short visit to Donegal. His Royal Highness called at the Fahan Post Office, a short distance from Buncrana, and bought a specimen stamp of each value obtainable. He also purchased a post-card.

He strongly expressed the opinion that it should be sold to him at its face value. The postmistress hesitatingly explained that there was a value attached to the paper, which must be obtained before any sale could be regarded as complete, and that the Postmaster-General's orders on this point were imperative. 3.5.02.

POST OFFICE METHODS.—Messrs. Penton and Sons, 1 and 3, Mortimer-street, write under Monday's date enclosing the following letter as throwing light on Post Office methods, especially when the Chancellor of the Exchequer appears to think that there exists no better and no cheaper channel for remitting accounts than through the Post Office. "The parcel in question was damaged by wet and brought by a special messenger with the remark that "of course the damage would be paid for." "General Post Office, London, May 9, 1902. With reference to your further letter of the 29th ult., I am directed by the Postmaster-General to inform you that the inquiry respecting the damage to the contents of some uninsured parcel sent to you from Germany in November last has not yet been completed. I am to assure you that a definitive communication shall be sent to you as early as possible." 17.5.02

POST OFFICE IRREGULARITIES.—Writing from Nordrach, Baden, Germany, "Exiled" says :—"I frequently see letters in *The Times* from your readers attacking the unfortunate Postmaster-General for many sins of omission or commission, but I look in vain for any expressions of gratitude from hundreds who are residing at present on the Continent and are, or should be, in daily receipt of your excellent paper. It is true that its delivery is somewhat irregular, but then the poor man is doubtless very much overworked; and he makes his regret known so delicately that I really cannot be angry with him. After each delay he refuses to make any charge for the carriage of my paper for a day or two, allowing the stamps to reach me unobliterated, so that I have over 100 nice clean portraits of our King which I can use when I return to England." 24.5.02

on her head. When a subscriber takes his instrument off the hook the lamp corresponding to his number is lit up. The operator at once places a plug into the jack of the subscriber, and attached to this plug is a flexible insulated wire, at the other end of which is another plug. In this way the operator and the subscriber are put into communication and are able to converse. The subscriber gives the number of the other subscriber with whom he wishes to communicate, and the operator puts the second plug, at the other end of the flexible cord, into the other subscriber's jack. She then for a second reverses a key, and this rings the bell of the telephone apparatus of the subscriber called; after which the two subscribers are in communication and able to converse. The flexible wire, with its two plugs, thus forms the connecting link between the jacks which form the ends of the subscribers' wires at the switch.

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8.40.d 2

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Bournemouth Observer. 19.4.02.

BY A COLLECTOR.

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A writer in the "St. Martin's-le-Grand" asks why stamps cannot be sold in "neat little booklets that will rest comfortably in the waistcoat pocket." The American Postmaster-General has issued a booklet at a charge slightly in excess of the face value of the stamps, and more than 80,000,000 stamps have been issued in that way with a profit to the department. New Zealand has adopted the idea, issuing booklets of which each leaf contains six stamps, and is separated from the next leaf by a piece of waxed paper. The outside contains information as to rates of postage, and an extra halfpenny for the binding brings a profit to the Government.

Exaggerated Ideas of Value.

Every collector occasionally asks himself, as he sees his stock of stamps accumulating, as to what would be the amount realised by his collection if submitted to the market. In this way an exaggerated idea is often formed of the actual value of the stamps. Occasional auction sales at which high prices are realised by rare specimens are announced in the newspapers, and books are overhauled, and choice specimens are "discovered" corresponding apparently with those which have realised enormous prices. Alas! that minor question, such as perforations and watermarks, and the existence of even "bogus" specimens should stand in the way of the realisation of such hopes! The other day a lady friend showed me her collection in which one specimen was priced "£84," another "£12," and so on. It was my painful duty to inform her that the former was worth but "1½d," and the latter was a forgery! We've scarcely been on speaking terms since. The best advice that can be given to any collector who wants to "realise" is to submit what are believed to be "rare specimens" to some respectable "expert," who will for a small fee distinguish the "genuine" and "bogus" specimens very speedily.

How to Value Stamps.

The ordinary run of stamps can be appraised at their fairly marketable value thus:—Stamps catalogued at 1d or less disregard altogether. Stamps priced in the book at 1½d to 6d each value at one third of the catalogue prices. Stamps catalogued at 7d up to 5s value at one-half of the catalogue figures; and all stamps catalogued at more than 5s may be taken at about two-thirds of the dealers' quotations. Unused British Colonial stamps are an exception to the foregoing rules, for these may always be regarded as worth, at least, their face value. The total arrived at in this way will pretty fairly represent the market value of the album. Allowance, however, must be made for all stamps in a bad state of preservation, or with exceptionally heavy and disfiguring postmarks; and torn or otherwise damaged stamps must, as a general thing, be ignored altogether.

The Damaged Stamp.

A correspondent of the "New York Philatelist," writing on the subject of "The Damaged Specimen," says:—"We demand perfect copies, or as near perfect as they are made. A tear puts a specimen under the ban at once, and its presence will not be tolerated. For the fin de siecle collector half a stamp is not better than no stamp at all, unless it is a split provisional. That old theory of putting a piece of stamp in an album to fill a space until a good copy is secured has long ago gone to the happy hunting grounds of defunct philatelic ideas. If we cannot get something worth having, we will do without."

Small Boys and Men.

"Beware of the small boy who writes you with a request for a few stamps" is the advice which is suggested by a correspondent who knows what he is writing about in the stamp world. And then he adds this reason:—"Likely enough he is a grown man gifted with the bump of acquisitiveness, and a schoolboy style of letter writing." I myself have known of dealers in a small way of business who have parted with whole sheets of stamps to this class of schoolboy, never to see them again, or possibly not until threatened with the police. Most boys want plenty for their money, and the class of grown-up boy to whom I refer generally want something for nothing.

PHILATELIST.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

25.4.02.

At an early hour yesterday Mr. Henniker Heaton received the following cable message from Sir J. G. Ward, the Postmaster-General and Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand :—

Wellington, April 24, 11 30 a.m.

To Henniker Heaton, House of Commons, London.

Commonwealth of Australia now agrees to admit letters prepaid at a penny rate from all parts of the Empire.

WARD.

The reason why Australia has not before this joined in Imperial penny postage is that the Australian inland rate of postage is 2d. Mr. Henniker Heaton states that under a clause in the Postal Union Convention any two countries can arrange a restrictive union, and pending Australia coming into line the penny postage will only be from this country to Australia. He has, however, reason to believe from his conversation with the Hon. J. G. Drake, Postmaster-General of Australia, in January last, that on the date of the King's Coronation Australia will adopt penny postage everywhere.

On the other hand, we are requested by the Postmaster-General to state :—

That no arrangements have been made for reducing to 1d. the postage payable on letters to Australia, and that all such letters should be prepaid at the rate of 2½d. the half-ounce as heretofore. Any letters bearing postage at the rate of 1d. the half-ounce only will be liable to a charge of 5d. the half-ounce on delivery.

This is, no doubt, accounted for by the fact that, although penny postage to the extent indicated has been adopted by Australia in principle, the change cannot be carried into effect without further steps—probably not without legislation.

IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE TO CHINA AND AUSTRALIA.

3.5.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—It is a very singular circumstance that there has been in operation penny postage from Shanghai, Wei-hai-wei, and other places in China to Great Britain and Ireland since February 15 last, and it was refused from this country to China until to-day. Reciprocity was applied for and not granted by us until two months and a half had elapsed.

No doubt the British Post Office referred the matter to the Treasury, as in the case of Australia, which is now engaging the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I know that the Postmaster-General of Australia is devoting all his energies to bringing about harmony in the postal arrangements of the six colonies under his control. The colony of Victoria now enjoys penny postage ; Sydney and all the towns of New South Wales now have a penny postal system ; yet it is difficult for Australia to say "we shall make penny postage general at once." But Australia does say to England :—"You complete your plan of Imperial penny postage, and we shall reciprocate in a few months. Any letters you send us at the penny rate we will not surcharge, nor collect the fines you feel it your duty to impose. It will not injure you, for we keep all fines."

Man for man, the people in this country are less able to pay 2½d. per letter outward than their cousins in Australia are to pay 2½d. homeward. On the other hand, the Australian post-office is carried on at a loss, while the British Post Office makes a profit of four millions sterling annually. Pending Australia coming in—which can only be a matter of a few months—I hope that the Treasury of this country will not insist on immediate reciprocity, but will be content with the assurance referred to. I have already quoted the agreement of Canada and the United States, where the latter sent letters to Canada for two cents (her local or domestic rate) while Canada charged three cents (her domestic rate of postage) to the United States ; and this agreement worked smoothly for twenty years—until Canada was able to reciprocate.

England should demand reciprocity in all postal matters if it is insisted on in this case. For instance, a post-card from here to Australia is conveyed for 1d. ; but a post-card from Australia to England is charged 1½d. Again, a two-ounce circular from here to Australia is charged a halfpenny, but from one street to another in Australia the charge is 1d.

From every point of view I hope the Chancellor of the E[illegible], who has not yet given his judgment on the matter, will announce that, so far as England is concerned, the mantle of unity has been thrown over the Empire, and the one gap in the Imperial circle has been filled.

I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

House of Commons Library, May 1.

29.4.02. IMPERIAL PENNY POSTAGE.

As there appears to be considerable misunderstanding on the question of Imperial penny postage, Mr. Henniker Heaton has tabulated the following facts: Under the Postal Union, each country keeps the own postage receipts, and also collects and retains the fines levied by other countries. It is possible, under the Postal Union, to make an agreement whereby the domestic rate of postage prevailing in one country shall frank a letter to another country a party to the agreement. In this case the postage would be 1d. from the United Kingdom to Australia, and 1d., 2d., or 2½d. from Australia to this country. For twenty years this agreement was in existence between Canada and the United States, the latter charging 1d. and the former 1½d. postage to the respective friendly countries. The total number of letters sent from the United Kingdom to Australia amounts to 3,401,000, so the total loss would be £19,162. Australia sent to this country last year 3,727,000 letters. Australia's loss would therefore only amount to £16,900. But penny postage to this country would necessitate inland penny postage, or an additional loss of £150,000 to Australia. The Postmaster-General of Australia has, however, promised to establish inland penny postage either at the Coronation or within a year. We have penny postage to New Zealand now, and these New Zealand letters are sent from London, via Australia, landed there, and transhipped to New Zealand.

The Postmaster-General has caused the following letter to be sent to a correspondent :—"I am directed to acquaint you that it is not intended to issue either Coronation stamps for use in this country or special British postage stamps for common use in the United Kingdom and in those British colonies which have adhered to the penny postage scheme. The Postmaster-General does not propose to arrange for the sale of colonial postage stamps at British post-offices, there being no evidence of any effective demand for such an arrangement." 3.5.02.

PRINCE HENRY'S IRISH VISIT.

3.5.02.

AMUSING BARGAINING WITH A POSTMISTRESS.

The German fleet, under the command of Prince Henry of Prussia, left Lough Swilly yesterday morning and proceeded on its cruise to Bantry Bay.

An interesting incident is recorded of Prince Henry's short visit to Donegal. His Royal Highness called at the Fahan Post Office, a short distance from Buncrana, and bought a specimen stamp of each value obtainable. He also purchased a post-card.

He strongly expressed the opinion that it should be sold to him at its face value. The postmistress hesitatingly explained that there was a value attached to the paper, which must be obtained before any sale could be regarded as complete, and that the Postmaster-General's orders on this point were imperative. 3.5.02.

POST OFFICE METHODS.—Messrs. Penton and Sons, 1 and 3, Mortimer-street, write under Monday's date enclosing the following letter as throwing light on Post Office methods, especially when the Chancellor of the Exchequer appears to think that there exists no better and no cheaper channel for remitting accounts than through the Post Office. The parcel in question was damaged by wet and brought by a special messenger with the remark that "of course the damage would be paid for." "General Post Office, London, May 9, 1902. With reference to your further letter of the 29th ult., I am directed by the Postmaster-General to inform you that the inquiry respecting the damage to the contents of some uninsured parcel sent to you from Germany in November last has not yet been completed. I am to assure you that a definitive communication shall be sent to you as early as possible." 17.5.02

POST OFFICE IRREGULARITIES.—Writing from Nordrach, Baden, Germany, "Exiled" says :—"I frequently see letters in *The Times* from your readers attacking the unfortunate Postmaster-General for many sins of omission or commission, but I look in vain for any expressions of gratitude from hundreds who are residing at present on the Continent and are, or should be, in daily receipt of your excellent paper. It is true that its delivery is somewhat irregular, but then the poor man is doubtless very much overworked ; and he makes his regret known so delicately that I really cannot be angry with him. After each delay he refuses to make any charge for the carriage of my paper for a day or two, allowing the stamps to reach me unobliterated, so that I have over 100 nice clean portraits of our King which I can use when I return to England." 24.5.02

DATES ON WATER-MARKS.

12.5.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I should be glad to say a few words upon a subject of some importance to archivists and men of letters who may hereafter have to deal with the dates of documents, more especially private correspondence. I refer to the almost universal omission by papermakers of the date of the manufacture of their paper, which used to be recorded by the water-mark.

Every one who has had occasion to determine the date of a letter left undated by the writer, and where the post-mark was absent or illegible, must have felt under deep obligation to the papermaker, by the aid of whose water-mark it could in most cases be approximately ascertained. It is to be feared that the inquirers of the future will frequently find themselves in difficulty; especially as in former days the postmark was impressed upon the letter itself, while it is now stamped upon an envelope which may easily be lost or thrown away.

Nothing could be easier than to revert to the old practice, and such a step would earn for the manufacturers the gratitude of all concerned in historical or literary research.

The great importance which a dated water-mark may possess in legal proceedings is strikingly illustrated by a passage in the interesting letters of César de Saussure on England in the time of the first Georges, recently published by Mr. Murray. A dishonest steward endeavoured, by means of forged documents, to make his mistress, the Duchess of Buckingham, responsible for the repayment of large sums which had in fact never been advanced to her:—

"A lengthy lawsuit followed, which came before the Court of King's Bench, and the Duchess, who had already been condemned to lose the lawsuit by the Judges of the Court below, was going to be condemned by those of the higher Court, when one of them had a sudden inspiration. Seizing a contested bill, the Judge held it up to the light, and, having examined it carefully, he discovered to a certainty that the bill was forged, the date and water-mark on the paper being several years posterior to the date of the writing."

I remain, Sir, very truly yours,
RICHARD GARNETT.

Hampstead, May 14.

A SUGGESTION FOR OUR G.P.O.

2.5.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

Sir,—Hitherto on all postcards issued in countries within the Postal Union the front has been exclusively reserved for the address. The French postal authorities have now altered this, and on the top left-hand corner of the card state that the name and address of the sender may be placed there, lines being printed for this purpose. The concession secures the whole of the back of the card for the message.

I enclose one of these French postcards for your inspection.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
J. LANDFEAR LUCAS.

Junior Constitutional Club, Piccadilly, May 31.

POST OFFICE RED TAPE.—Mr. Arnold Wright writes from the office of the *London Argus*, 8, Newbridge-street, E.C.:—"I am glad to see that you have opened your columns to a protest against the absurd red tape system of the Post Office. This journal was also a sufferer by the arbitrary action of the St. Martin's-le-Grand authorities in regard to Coronation numbers. When the intimation of the King's illness was made our papers were through the press awaiting delivery at the Post Office. In order to explain the situation to our readers, we had a tiny slip printed and affixed to the paper in a prominent position. Judge of our amazement when the next day we were informed that the greater part of the issue had been impounded, and that the pape would not be despatched unless extra postage was pai Of course, the demand was met, but not until inevitab and, in the circumstances, most irritating delay h occurred. The remarkable thing is that, while t postal authorities were busily engaged in looking f microscopic infractions of the regulations directly d to the great national calamity, the arrangements in t telegraph department were hopelessly breaking down f lack of an adequate staff. I have been told by a frie of a case in which a telegram on the fateful Tuesd occupied five hours in transmission from one suburb London to another. No doubt your readers could paral the experience. Might it not be suggested to the Po master-General that the gentlemen who are mischievously employed in the letter department shoul on another occasion of national stress, be sent temporary duty fellows on the telegraph side?" 7.7.02

POST OFFICE RED-TAPE.—Mr. F. W. Dimbleby writes from Richmond, Surrey:—"Your correspondents have often complained of the petty annoyances to which the public are subjected by the arbitrary and vexatious ways in which letters and other postal packets are dealt with in the Post Office; but there is a business side of the matter which goes far beyond mere annoyance, for it paralyses enterprise and inflicts actual loss upon the commercial interests of the country. Last Saturday, in common with many other newspaper publishers, I issued an illustrated double number, which had originally been intended to bear its humble part in marking the Coronation. An eight-page supplement, dealing with the Royal associations of my district, was already printed when the news came of the King's illness and the postponement of the Coronation. Should I destroy the sheets, or issue them to the public? I decided upon the latter course, and printed a slip of paper, 3½in. by 1½in., which was pasted on each copy, conveying the following intimation:—'This supplement was printed before the news of the illness of the King was known. No charge is made for it, and it is believed that it contains matter of sufficient interest to justify us in issuing it to our readers instead of destroying the copies.' In consequence of this the Secretary of the Post Office has instructed the local postmaster to stop every copy of my paper going through the post—whether posted by me or by the public—and to demand of me an additional payment of 1½d. upon each. His contention is that the affixing of this notice from the editor to his readers deprives the publication of its character as a newspaper, although it is duly registered as such, and disentitles it to be carried at newspaper rates. Surely those of us who are in business have suffered enough by the lamentable illness of the King, without having cast upon us unnecessary fines such as this. We all know his Majesty's deep and touching consideration for those who have been inconvenienced by the unavoidable postponement of the Coronation, and my conviction is that it would be an additional source of pain to him were he aware of the unnecessary, unreasonable, and—as I believe—illegal demand which is being made in his name as a direct consequence of the postponement. Of course the delay in publication is most serious, quite apart from the demand for extra payment. As I am not anxious to make this letter the means of a cheap advertisement I withhold the name of the paper, but I append my own name and address in order that my statements may be inquired into." 3.7.02

THE HERTS PHILATELIC EXHIBITION.—Philatelists have been busy in London this season, no fewer than three exhibitions having been held. Twelve years ago the late Duke of Saxe Coburg-Gotha opened the first London philatelic exhibition, and seven years later the Prince of Wales opened the second. On Saturday a competitive exhibition for members of the Herts Philatelic Society was held in the rooms of the Philatelic Society at Effingham-house, Strand. Forty-five exhibitors combined to display 7,000 specimens with an aggregate value of £20,000. Philatelists are always patriots, and the colonial section of the exhibition was the largest and finest. Mr. L. L. Hausburg was awarded a gold medal for his superb set of the issues of Victoria, while Mr. T. W. Hall's Fiji specimens and the Ceylon stamps of the Baron de Worms were also deemed worthy of gold medals. In all five gold, seven silver, and eight bronze medals were awarded, two of the silver ones being reserved for lady competitors. 9.6.02.

THE NEW POSTAGE STAMPS.—Mr. W. H. D. Rouse writes from the Perse School, Cambridge:—"May I call your attention to the fact that the new ½d. and 2½d. stamps are easily confused by artificial light? I wrote to the General Post Office pointing out this, and have just received a reply to the effect that the resemblance is 'not considered to be sufficiently close to cause confusion.' I had pointed out that it did cause confusion. The secretary adds that the value is printed upon each, and that the public have not complained. It hardly needs an elaborate argument to prove that there is less chance of confusion when stamps are distinguished by colour and shape as well as by a small figure at the foot. It is instructive to see, however, that the Post Office has little of the desire to make things pleasant for its customers which ordinary business firms show. Evidently their aim is to rub along with as little trouble as possible and wait for 'the public to complain.'" 10.7.02

A Benefactor to the Busy.

18.7.02.

THE death in Vienna a day or two ago of the of the post-card removes the figure who deserv remembered for his services to humanity in a whom the slip of paste-board represents not of modern daily conveniences. Compared to the postage post-card is still young as an institution. The idea of it was by this Dr. Hermann in 1869, and it was almost immediately by Austria-Hungary with very restricted facilities to the user, words being at first allowed on every post-card. A few years adopted by our own Post Office, and many of us will still rem lilac-stamped specimen of that date, with its uncommonly scan tions. In these later years the purchaser of post-cards gets m money, but would-be reformers of the Post Office are still fond out that our own is almost the only country in which a premi charged on the face value of the card itself, and look to the in Great Britain as elsewhere a "halfpenny post-card" will penny and no more. Till that day arrives, we must be con grateful to Dr. Hermann as the man who has enabled us to sav two-fifths of a penny on the ordinary letter rate.

CORONATION DAY IN THE POST OFFICE.

2.8.02

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I must apologise for again attempting to occupy the valuable space of *The Times*. While my board are doing their utmost to induce every shopkeeper to loyally observe Coronation Day, the Postmaster-General is unconsciously encouraging some to do the opposite. It is announced that sub-post-offices will be open as usual on August 9. Many shops, therefore, will be open, too. A considerable proportion of sub-offices are located in grocery and other shops. Seeing such premises open, both competitors and the public will conclude that bacon, sugar, or stamps will be supplied with equal zest. Hence many assistants will be deprived of their promised holiday. Sub-offices close on ordinary Bank Holidays; surely Coronation Day is not less important.

Your obedient servant,

J. A. STACEY, Secretary.

Early Closing Association, 21, New Bridge-street, E.C., July 31.

THE POST OFFICE.

6.8.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I sympathise with your correspondent "A Country Hostess," but she is only at the beginning of knowledge of the ways of the Post Office.

Some time ago a parcel was sent from my house to a house in the south of Scotland. It bore the fee demanded—4d.—and the full address as used by my friends, an address which has carried scores of letters and parcels from my house alone during the last dozen years.

The day after the parcel was posted I had a letter from the Post Office in Clerkenwell stating that the parcel could not be delivered owing to the address being insufficient, and that it would neither be redirected, returned, nor even given up on my personal application unless I paid an additional sum of 4d. In the event of my sending that sum by post I was ordered to put a penny stamp on the envelope.

Thus the Post Office robbed me of 4d. paid for a service which it never made the smallest attempt to render. It robbed me of my parcel, the contents of which—seedling plants—were ruined by its action. Finally, it had the amazing impudence to demand 5d. as the price of its approach to common honesty.

Not long ago I was surcharged 2d. upon a letter bearing the mystic initials "O.H.M.S." sent to me by another department of the Government without a stamp.

Of course, the calculation is obvious. It is that people are too busy to resist these pettifogging exactions, or alternatively that, if they do resist, they will be made to spend more money in stamps than they can recover. If there is a shabbier person or institution extant than the British Post Office I have yet to make his or its acquaintance.

I am, Sir, yours,

London, Aug. 5. J. C. R.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As an instance of the incapacity of the Post Office to conduct their business on ordinary business principles I think I give an even more amusing case than that reported in your issue of to-day by "A Country Hostess." My wife sent out some manifold typewritten notices in connexion with a local charity, in open half-penny envelopes, and all were charged an extra penny. One of her correspondents called her attention to this and my wife wrote to the Post Office, which was profuse in its apologies for the mistake of its underlings (why is it these mistakes are always one way?), and after a time a showy official came out from our nearest town, a distance of over two and a half miles, and solemnly handed her 1d. and demanded a receipt for the same! Can you imagine, Sir, a great business firm, say, for instance, Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son, carrying on their business on these lines? I am, &c.,

August 5. W. N.

POST OFFICE INSURANCE.—"Colonial" sends us the following complaint against the Post Office:—"Two parcels of jewelry were sent, registered and insured for £40, by post. One reached safely. The other was smashed up. I wrote to the Postmaster-General, and an officer called and took the stiff cardboard box away. Weeks passed. Afterwards he took the brooch whose glass and gold mount were broken, but in a quite new box for safety. Now, they admitted the damage on June 11, but on June 19 another official mistakes the new box for the damaged one, still in the Postmaster-General's possession, and writes that, as there is no injury to the box—*ergo*, metal (gold) was not injured in transit. (The Delhi ivory painting under the broken glass has since been removed and put back against my express instructions and the officer's promise, and is now floating about loose under the broken glass.) I remonstrated at such a foolish blunder. Finally he writes that the package was fragile, hence he declines to pay for repairs, £1, and finishes thus:—'The Postmaster-General is under no legal liability to pay compensation in respect of any parcel.' The Post Office took my money for the insurance premium, and now the goods are damaged he says he has no liability, and will not pay. Call a spade a spade." 12. 8. 02.

TRADERS AND POSTAL REFORMS.

13.8.02

At a meeting of the Executive Council and Parliamentary Committee of the National Chamber of Trade, held in Manchester on November 20 last, one of the subjects dealt with was a report on Postal Reform by Mr. Thornton-Varley. The reforms upon which the Parliamentary Sub-Committee lay stress are the following:—

1. Registration of Letters, fee 2d.—The minimum fee should be 1d., even if in consequence of such reduction the amount of compensation payable in the case of loss is reduced.

2. Charge for Samples, 1d.—The charge should not exceed ½d. for 2oz.

3. Parcels.—We advocate a reduction in the parcel rates to the Colonies, and more uniform rates generally according to the distance parcels are conveyed.

4. Postal Orders.—We advocate the issuing of postal orders of the value of 6d., rising 6d. up to 10s. 6d., at a charge of ½d. each, and one each of 20s. and 21s. at a charge of 1d. The public should be supplied with postal orders, bearing counterfoils, each counterfoil being marked with the number, amount, and office stamp of the attached order, so as to facilitate detection in case of theft. We advocate some system of redeeming overdate postal orders at a fixed poundage, without regard to time during which the same should have been presented for payment. England should have a telegraph money order arrangement with all parts of the British Empire, including Egypt, Australia, India, and Canada.

5. An International Postage Stamp.—An Imperial and, if possible, also an international postage stamp should be brought into use.

6. Foreign Postage.—Arrangements should be made at the next Postal Union Congress for the letter rate not to exceed 2½d. for the first ½oz., and ½d. for each additional ½oz.

7. Imperial Penny Postage.—Letter postage to Egypt, 2½d., should be reduced to 1d.

8. Express Letters.—Special express envelopes and stamps should be sold at all post offices.

9. "Of nature of a letter."—We advocate a better definition of the term of nature of a letter. The Parliamentary Committee adds the comment:—This phrase is so difficult to interpret that many business men, secretaries of clubs and societies, and clergymen, complain that their communications are heavily fined for breaches of the postal law. A man may send out a thousand receipts, or bills, or orders for goods, at the ½d. rate, but woe betide him if he be polite to his customers and add the words "with thanks" or "to-morrow" telling him how or where to send the goods. Some attempt should be made to make this clearer, and say what is a "mechanical" process, when typewritten circulars are subjected and treated as letters, unless posted in batches of 20.

10. Postmarks.—Some postmarking machine should be introduced into the British postal service, so as to ensure legible postmarks.

11. Letter boxes should be attached to all tram-cars.

12. Pillar Boxes.—Some effective design should be adopted to prevent thefts, and damage to contents by mud, refuse, &c., being placed therein.

13. Mail Subsidies.—Post Office should be charged only actual freight rates for mails, as the subsidised rates are an embargo on the trading community for the relief of the Treasury.

13. Foreign Lotteries.—The lottery advertisements of foreign syndicates should not be conveyed by British post. All who deprecate the encouragement of indiscriminate and excessive gambling trust that the British Post Office will speedily free itself from the present degrading obligation to circulate among all classes, in every part of the United Kingdom, the lottery advertisements of foreign syndicates, whereby British capital is wasted and our laws brought into contempt.

15. Local Postal Rates—Letters.—The rate for a letter posted within any prescribed postal district, and addressed for delivery within such same prescribed postal district, should be charged ½d. per 4oz. (postal districts wherever possible should be inclusive of municipal, borough, or city boundaries. The comment is added:—If the Post Office would carry a letter closed from inspection from one street to another in the same town for ½d., very many who now send out accounts, circulars, and other business announcements, by their own messengers, would avail themselves of this postage, and it would be the means of an enormous increase of local postage business, with a consequent gain to the revenue. It must be borne in mind that the Post Office should in this incur no expense by train, boat, coach, or other freightage.

The following is the reply of the Postmaster-General:—

"General Post Office, London, Aug. 1.

Sir,—I am directed to inform you that the views of the National Chamber of Trade on the various postal questions mentioned have been duly noted. As regards the point to which you call special attention, I am to explain that any scheme for allowing local letters to pass at a lower postage, besides giving rise to many anomalies, would be opposed to the principle, established by Parliament more than 50 years ago, and underlying the whole policy of the Post Office, that uniform rates are chargeable for the conveyance of postal packets from any one place to any other place in the United Kingdom, irrespective of distance. The Postmaster-General is not prepared to recommend a departure from this principle in the direction suggested by the Chamber.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant, G. H. MURRAY."

The report also deals with the desirableness of reduced railway fares for traders' merchandise, it also being recommended that 500 or 1,000 miles first and third-class tickets be issued available over all railways regardless of ownership, and that the same fares and conditions be available by delegates to trade conferences as are now given to religious conferences. 13. 8. 02.

15. 8. 02.

BERLIN, AUG. 12.

Almost the only comment made by German journals upon the recent Ministerial changes in England is the welcome extended to Mr. Austen Chamberlain by the *Cologne Gazette*, which notes with pleasure that the new Postmaster-General is no stranger to Berlin. The Rhenish organ, after expressing a hope that Mr. Austen Chamberlain will take his office more seriously than his predecessors, says :—

"Our wish is not only for him that he may be an active and enlightened Postmaster-General, and for his country that the opportunities of communication may at last be made commensurate with the demands of the present day, but also for all those who on the Continent have to suffer from the miserable condition of the English postal system, that they may soon be able to remark the influence of an energetic personality."

POSTAL REFORMS.

14. 8. 02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I do not complain of the fact that 14 out of the 15 postal reforms asked for by the National Chamber of Trade were taken, word for word, from *The Times'* publication of my letter to Lord Londonderry [August 15, 1900], because I am sure the omission was unintentional.

But in regard to the fifteenth reform, "local halfpenny postage on letters," I desire to say that I have always refused to join in this agitation, on the ground that it would mean the abolition of our front doors.

We have already halfpenny post-cards.

I am your obedient servant,

J. HENNIKER HEATON.

Junior Carlton Club, Pall-mall, S.W.

THE WORK OF THE POST OFFICE.

16. 8. 02

TELEPHONES AND SAVINGS BANKS.

The forty-eighth annual Report of the Postmaster General, issued yesterday, bears the signature of Lord Londonderry, who has just been succeeded in that office by Mr. Austen Chamberlain. It deals with the business of the Post Office for the year ended March 31 last. From this it appears that the total number of postal packets delivered in the United Kingdom during the year was 3,919,000,000, an increase of 5.2 per cent. over the previous year, the average number to each person being 94.2. This huge number was made up as follows:—Letters, 2,451,500,000; postcards, 444,900,000; book packets and circulars, 766,200,000; newspapers, 169,800,000; parcels, 86,600,000. The Report says :—

"The letters have increased at a higher rate than for many years past, excluding the two years after the Jubilee reduction of postage. The increase in the rural districts was as much as 6.78 per cent. The increase in the number of postcards, which was 4.7 per cent. during the two previous years, rose last year to 8.8 per cent. Pictorial postcards are no doubt responsible for a large share of this rise. About 65 per cent. of the whole number of postcards passing through the post are private cards. The increase in the number of book packets and circulars was nearly confined to those delivered in England, outside London, and in Ireland. In Scotland there was an actual falling off by 2.3 per cent. On the other hand, the increase in the newspapers is in respect of those delivered in towns. The growth of Parcel Post business has again been very large. The number of letters registered in the United Kingdom was 18,800,313, an increase of 6 per cent. over the number in the previous year. The number of parcels registered was 1,079,541, the increase over the number in 1900-01 being 14.8 per cent.

"The total number of express services was 941,906—an increase of 17.09 per cent. and services performed by 'special messenger throughout' has shown a rapid growth, the increase in London being 18.6 per cent. The letters undelivered numbered 10,183,886, which total is larger by 3,500,000 than the figures for five years ago. Out of 10,000,000 letters undelivered, nearly 9,000,000 were re-issued to corrected addresses, or returned to the senders. The number of undelivered letters from abroad (not including 27,250 from the South African Field Force) returned unopened was 417,900, and the undelivered letters returned from abroad numbered 596,300. The property found in undelivered letters included £18,251 in cash and bank notes, and £850,298 in bills, cheques, money and postal orders, and stamps. The articles found loose in the post numbered 85,640, and included coin [illegible] which had evidently been used to seal a parcel was found to be still adhering to the wax on the arrival of the parcel in London. Fresh experiments have been made in the employment of motor-cars, but so far no motor vehicle has been found which can be relied on to carry heavy loads of mails with the same regularity as vans drawn by horses.

"The total number of parcels sent to and received from places abroad during the year was 3,417,817. These figures show an increase of about 9 per cent. on those of the previous year. As in the two past years, the outward parcels have increased in a larger ratio than the inward parcels, though the difference is less marked. There is again a great increase in the number of parcels forwarded to the Cape Colony, while those sent to Natal have materially decreased. Other large increases occurred in the numbers sent to Germany, India, Italy, Malta, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the West African Colonies. On the other hand, there was a falling-off in the number of parcels received from Costa Rica and in direct mails from Norway and Sweden. The weekly mail for the South African army post office contained on an average 184,000 letters and 143,600 packets of printed matter; and the total number of letters for the year was 10,774,000 in the outward, and 8,372,000 in the homeward mails, showing a decrease as compared with previous returns. During the same period the number of parcels despatched from this country by post to the troops was 528,000."

The Post Office Savings Banks show no sign of diminishing popularity. At the end of 1901 there were 8,787,675 depositors, of whom 7,999,764 were in England and Wales, 388,072 in Scotland, and 399,839 in Ireland. The total amount to the credit of depositors was £140,392,916, and the average amount to the credit of each depositor was £21 2s. in Ireland, £15 16s. 5d. in England and Wales, and £13 17s. 4d. in Scotland. The average amount to the credit of each depositor, which at the end of 1900 was 2s. 2d. less than at the end of 1899, further decreased by 1s. 9d. last year. It further appears that :—

"During the year ended December 31, 1901, 15,018,645 deposits were made, the total sum deposited being £41,452,061; the withdrawals numbered 5,748,624, the total sum withdrawn being £39,930,043. The largest amount ever withdrawn in one day was £235,355, on December 17. The sum of £3,281,263 was credited to depositors as interest; and the total amount due to these at the end of the year was £140,392,916. The amount added in the year to the total credit of depositors again fell from £5,431,040 in 1900 to £4,843,271 in 1901. On the other hand, the amount of Government Stock held by depositors in the Bank increased during 1901 by £2,300,000. The number of withdrawals by telegraph on the day of application was 192,308, the average amount withdrawn being £3 15s. Under the system in which application for the money is made by telegraph, and the warrant is sent by return of post, there were 13,108 withdrawals. The total number of new accounts opened was 1,376,846, and of accounts closed 1,029,154. Of the accounts opened, 378 were for Friendly Societies; 1891 for Charitable, Provident, and Trade Societies; and 277 for penny banks. The number of accounts opened by Registrars of County-courts largely increased, principally owing to the operation of the County-courts (Investment) Act, which was passed in August, 1900, and to the growth in the number of awards under the Workmen's Compensation Acts. The amount of stock sold by depositors was £761,629, as compared with £678,374 in 1900, and Stock to the amount of £107,851 was transferred to depositors' accounts at the Bank of England. At the close of 1901 there were in connection with the Savings Bank 199,509 Stockholders, with £12,786,190 Stock to their credit, an increase in the year of 15,544 Stockholders and £2,317,900 Stock. About one depositor in 80 is now a Stockholder. Immediate annuities to the number of 1764, and amounting to £42,268, were purchased last year, as compared with 2258, amounting to £49,893 in 1900. The falling off is largely due to the closing of funds for the benefit of soldiers' widows and orphans. The deferred annuities purchased in 1901 numbered 142, and amounted to £3068, while 920 life insurances for a total amount of £44,296 were taken out."

In the general working of the Post Office Savings Banks there was a balance of income over expenditure last year of £26,177. It will be remembered that a Select Committee of the House of Commons has, in the past Session, been considering the measures to be adopted in view of the approaching reduction of the rate of interest on Consols. With regard to the telegraphs, the number of telegrams sent over the wires during the year was 90,482,041, an increase of .95 per cent. compared with the preceding year. These included 74,721,194 ordinary inland telegrams—an increase of 1,536,330 in number, and of £63,878 in receipts. Press (inland) telegrams numbered 6,216,116, a decrease of 745,645 in number, and £4820 in receipts. The increase in receipts for telegraphs for the year was £55,201.

"The average weekly number of words contained in Press telegrams was 14,344,883, as com-

pared with a weekly [illegible] of 16,085,602 for the previous year. As instances of the work thrown upon the Department on special occasions, it is mentioned that the number of words transmitted from London on the evening of June 2, in connection with the announcement of the fall of Pretoria, amounted to nearly [illegible]. In the same connection it is also recorded that on March 21 a business firm despatched a telegram to 1720 different addresses. There has been a marked increase in the number of telegrams received and delivered by telephone at the Central Telegraph Office in London. The number of messages received during the year from telephone subscribers for transmission as telegrams amounted to 17,191, an increase over the preceding year of nearly 30 per cent., while 101,647 telegrams were received from the provinces for delivery by telephone, an increase of over 25 per cent.

"Telegraph offices in villages close as a rule at 8.0 p.m., and after that hour there is no certainty that a telegraphic message can be sent from them to the post-office in the neighbouring town. It has been urged that some means ought to be provided for enabling persons residing in such villages to telegraph at night in cases of emergency, such as illness or fire. An arrangement is therefore being tried experimentally, whereby the wires from certain village offices are led to a point at the head office, where a call would not fail to receive attention, with the result that any telegram sent from the outlying offices could be taken down and delivered. The local authorities are called upon to pay a charge of 10s. a year for the apparatus, and the ordinary telegraph charges and late fees are payable on each message.

"During the past Winter the telegraph wires again suffered considerably from snowstorms. A particularly destructive storm occurred in December last, and the cost of making good the damage to the lines maintained by the Post Office amounted to nearly £30,000. The effect of these interruptions has been to give greater prominence to the question of providing underground lines. The line between London and Birmingham proved of great value during the emergency; and the Postmaster General hopes that next year it may be possible to place at his disposal larger funds in order to accelerate the execution of a comprehensive scheme. The London and Birmingham line has already been extended to Stafford, and it will be carried on during the present year to Warrington, where it will join existing underground lines between Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester. The following large centres will then have underground communication with London:—Birmingham, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Stafford, Warrington, Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester. Another exposed portion of the telegraph system which is to be protected by placing the wires underground is that between Preston and Penrith. About 34 miles of pipes have already been laid on this route. It is proposed to carry the underground line eventually as far as Lanark, whence branches will be laid to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The next extension will probably be from Manchester to the principal Yorkshire towns through Bradford and Leeds, and thence to Newcastle-on-Tyne. Although the use of paper-insulated cable has considerably cheapened the cost of underground lines, they still involve a very heavy expenditure, and it will be necessary to proceed with caution. The London-Birmingham line cost £165,000, while the contemplated extension Northwards will, it is estimated, involve a further expenditure of £700,000. In addition to these underground extensions, much is being done to give greater stability to the service by the erection of reserve wires, carried as far as possible by alternative routes. These wires also have proved very useful during the past year."

With regard to the measures taken to establish life-saving communications, the Report says:—

"Little remains to be done to complete the system of coast communications for life-saving purposes which has been established, in accordance with a Resolution of the House of Commons, at a cost of nearly £70,000. Begun in 1892, the system has been gradually extended, and has proved effective for summoning assistance to vessels in distress. Arrangements have been made to secure communication at any hour of the day or night. Altogether 492 coastguard stations—namely, 349 in England and Wales, 36 in Scotland, and 107 in Ireland—and 57 shore lighthouses have been connected with the telegraph system. It was at first intended to reserve these special wires solely for summoning assistance when life was in danger, as the Admiralty naturally felt very reluctant to allow calls to be made on Coastguardmen except in cases of emergency; but it has recently been decided that they may send and receive messages passing between the masters of stranded vessels and their owners. This privilege will be a great advantage to the shipping community, as, under the former arrangement, it was often necessary for the master of a stranded vessel, who wished to communicate with his employers, to send some miles to the nearest public telegraph office, valuable time being thus lost. At some of the Coastguard stations connected with the system ordinary public telegraph business is transacted."

The telephone system is rapidly developing. More than ten million trunk wire conversations were held during the year, equal to a total of 20,161,432 messages. The Central Exchange of the London Telephone System was opened on February 24 last, and about 500 subscribers had been connected on March 31. The Report proceeds:—

"Provision was made in the first instance for the accommodation of 5000 subscribers, but the number of applications received has been so great that arrangements have had to be made for an early extension of the switchboard, so as to accommodate over 10,000 lines, with a corresponding addition to the number of junction wires for connections with other Exchanges. The service at this Exchange has worked very smoothly, and many expressions of satisfaction have been received from the subscribers. The use of the lines by the subscribers is much simplified, and the glow-lamp signals at the Exchange, which mark every stage of a conversation, enable the operators to give more rapid and efficient service to a greater number of subscribers. The speaking on the lines has been found to be very good, and their freedom from the accidents to which an overhead system is necessarily exposed justifies the hope of a more regular and satisfactory service than has hitherto been possible in London. Exchanges have also been opened at Putney and Kingston-on-Thames, and other suburban Exchanges are in process of construction at Wimbledon, Richmond, Chiswick, Twickenham, and Croydon. More important Exchanges are about to be opened in the neighbourhood of Victoria-street, Westminster, and in Cromwell-road, S.W. They will be known as the 'Victoria' and 'Western' Exchanges, and will serve the intervening districts between the areas of the Central Exchange and of the suburban Exchanges mentioned above. Other important Exchanges which are being constructed are one situated on the North side of Oxford-street and one in Finchley-road; they will be opened as soon as possible. These Exchanges will serve large districts to the North of the areas served by the Victoria and Central Exchange areas. Surveys for the construction of other Exchanges and underground systems of wires have been made in outlying parts of the London area, and it is probable that Exchanges will be established at Sutton and Epsom, which will serve the remaining districts to the West of the Croydon area and South of the Kingston and Wimbledon areas. The surveys of certain districts in the North-west of the London area are about to be undertaken.

"The demand for telephonic service is increasing very rapidly, and the Metropolitan system will, in the course of the next few years, have to be developed to an extent which would have seemed impossible a few years ago. Dissatisfaction is necessarily caused by the slow rate at which the demand can be met, as it is hardly possible for individual subscribers to realise the amount of work involved in the general construction of the system. Already over 600 miles of underground pipes have been laid, and about 330 miles of cable, containing from 200 to 432 wires, have been drawn into them. The arrangements for the distribution of these wires into smaller cables for connection with the premises of subscribers involve an enormous amount of minute work requiring great care and skill. The installation of subscribers' instruments can be undertaken only as this work is completed, and is a comparatively simple affair. Out of the capital sum of £2,000,000 authorised by the Telegraph Act of 1899, an expenditure of £972,317 was sanctioned up to March 31 last. The authorised expenditure on the London system at that date was about £795,848."

The magnitude of the work of the Post Office is shown by the following:—

"The number of persons on the establishment of the Post Office, including all Head and Sub Postmasters, is 97,785, of whom 16,282 are women. The number added during the year was 3653. In addition to the above, there are 81,417 persons filling unestablished situations (some of them employed only for an hour or two daily), of whom 20,267 are women. The number added during the year to the unestablished force was 2358. The total number of persons employed in the Post Office is thus 179,202. The number of persons dismissed during the year was 991, while 261 men were deprived of good-conduct stripes. The corresponding figures for 1900-01 were 1216 and 351."

The Postal Department shows a net profit for last year of £3,999,351, or £45,465 more than the preceding year; but there is a considerable deficit on the Telegraphs. The Postal revenue of the year, including the value of services rendered to other Departments, was £14,465,870, an increase of £470,400 on that of the previous year. The expenditure was £10,466,519, an increase of £424,935 on that of the previous year. The telegraph revenue of the year, £3,570,046, shows an increase of £110,693, and the telegraph expenditure, £4,221,852, an increase of £424,858 upon the previous year. The net deficit on telegraphs was thus £651,806, or £314,165 more than the previous year. If allowance be made for interest on the capital—£10,867,644—created for the purchase of the telegraphs, the deficit on the year is raised to £950,666. But it is explained that these figures are, necessarily, partly estimated. 16.8.02

A PHILATELIC CURIOSITY.—The latest St. Helena papers report the presentation of a curious testimonial from Boer prisoners of war to Dr. Nurse Casey—viz., an album, said to be unique as containing envelopes bearing the stamp of every censor in South Africa and St. Helena. These were supplemented with portraits and various views of St. Helena. The accompanying address, dated from Deadwood Camp, described the gift as "a token of regard from officers and burghers of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State for your unfailing kindness and attention to their sick and wounded comrades." 5.10.02.

18. 8. 02.

We published on Saturday an abstract of the annual report of the Post Office for the year ending on the 31st of last March, and it is impossible to refer to this report without saying a word of praise in acknowledgment of the promptitude with which it has been issued. It is only too common for the substance of any report from a Government office to become ancient history before it is given to the public; and within the last few weeks a good deal of information concerning the routine doings of 1900 has been laid before Parliament with as great a formality as if it had related to the present time. Upon such belated publication criticism is thrown away, or is, at least, always open to the obvious rejoinder that everything has been changed since the occurrence of the events described. But in the Post Office report we are absolutely dealing with the proceedings of the earlier months of the present year, and we are told, for example, at what rate of speed the supply of telephones to private houses in the metropolis is being proceeded with. A large proportion of the facts set forth are based upon figures so enormous that they scarcely convey any definite conception to the average mind, to which, as a rule, the statement that two thousand four hundred and fifty-one millions of letters have been carried during the year will mean no more than that there have been a great many. Such numbers are like astronomical distances, and transcend the powers of ordinary imagination. It is perhaps possible to grasp, as a measure of the public carelessness, the statement that about ten millions of these letters were undelivered, and the further statement that nearly nine millions of them were either reissued to corrected addresses or returned to the senders. It is fair to presume that the enormous majority of these were circulars, directed by the thousand for firms or persons who were not particular as to the precise date of the directories which they employed. Every one who has ever changed his residence in London must be well aware how many years will elapse before the old address fades away from the memories of all who write to him, and is, to some extent, able to realize the amount of trouble imposed upon the Post Office by the frequent necessity of redirecting missives, the greater number of which will have the waste-paper basket as their natural and final destination. So long, however, as such a service is conducted at the cost of the sender, and at a profit to the taxpayer, it is perhaps hypercritical to grumble at its nature.

The office of Postmaster-General has lately passed into the hands of a rising politician of great activity of mind, likely to leave a definite mark upon any business committed to his charge, who is also a member of the House of Commons, where the defence of his department will no longer be conducted at second hand, by the deputy of a chief who is seated in the more serene atmosphere of "another place." Mr. Austen Chamberlain has hitherto shown so firm a grasp of public affairs as to encourage a confident belief that he will speedily become master of the ramifications of Post Office work, and that he will be prepared, for his own credit as well as for that of the great establishment over which he presides, to keep a mind open to any practicable suggestions of improvement. In times past, the attitude of the Post Office has usually been one of mild but scornful resistance; and almost every alteration that has been introduced into its procedure has, prior to its adoption, been again and again described, in the words applied by the Chinese navigator to the sextant, as "entirely "barbarian and altogether useless." It cannot be denied, of course, that the Post Office, like every other place in which a very complicated business is conducted, is liable to be criticized foolishly by persons who are unable to perceive the probable or necessary consequences of changes which they desire to witness; but best defence against such criticism will be f generally speaking, in the display of a ma tendency to adopt all practicable improve A Postmaster-General, who was able to every year to reforms which made for convenience of the public, would be listen with respect when he asserted that such such a plausible proposal would be found the end, to defeat the objects of those whom it was advanced. There is all difference in the world between an oppo which appears to be dictated by a des opposing and an opposition which may proposer of the precise difficulties and con of the service.

It is impossible to speak of Post Office ref without thinking of Mr. Henniker Heaton, w has lately justly complained to us that four out of fifteen such "reforms," just asked for the National Chamber of Trade, were literally and without acknowledgment from letter which he addressed to Lord Londonde and which appeared in *The Times* of the 15th August, 1900. The fifteenth proposal, wh Mr. Henniker Heaton did not originate, altogether repudiates on the not unreasona ground that a halfpenny local postage wo mean the abolition of front doors. Of the he clearly approves, and it is manifest ha Mr. Austen Chamberlain wishes to signal his charge of the Department by the introduc of changes which we will not hastily describe "reforms," an abundance of suggestions the purpose are lying ready to his hands. are inclined to think, however, that some of th might be the reverse of advantageous, and this would be especially true of proposals the mere reduction of postal rates and registration fees. There is probably a good d of truth in the criticism of our correspond Mr. Baines, who pointed out on Saturday th with regard to some of the demands of th Chamber or of Mr. Henniker Heaton, the Po master-General would be unable to act with the concurrence of certain Colonial or forei authorities. We should be inclined to add Mr. Baines's own suggestions one for a mo convenient arrangement of the sums for wh postal orders can be procured, so as to obv the now frequent necessity of obtaining orders in order to make a small remittance some definite sum; and we should agree w Mr. Baines in desiring the establishment system by means of which goods might be through the Post Office to be paid for on deliv With regard to the parcel post with Ame which Mr. Baines describes as "belated," which has, he says, trembled in the balance the last fifteen years, it would appear from t report that the home authorities are not blame. We are told that, the efforts made repeated occasions to induce the United St Post Office to enter into an agreement for t establishment of a parcel post with this coun having proved unsuccessful, much considerati has been given to other projects for the establi ment of the service. Ardent reformers w perhaps declare that the time for considera has passed by, and that the time for action h arrived, but, unless the conditions insisted up at St. Martin's-le-Grand have been in some w unreasonable, it is not easy to see what acti can be taken in the absence of American co operation. We may reasonably hope, no that attention has been called to the subject that the precise nature of the difficulty m before long be elucidated by question and ans in the House of Commons. With the dai increasing intercourse between the two countri it is reasonable to believe that the establishm of a well-ordered parcel post would be a mat of much convenience to the residents on bo sides of the Atlantic. 18. 8. 02.

ANGLO-AMERICAN PARCEL POST.

20.8.02

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The correspondence and leader in *The Times* on this subject are most instructive. The administration of Mr. Austen Chamberlain will doubtless do much to remove the reproach that our Post Office is slow to accommodate itself to the wants of the British public. Mr. Haines's letter and *The Times* article to-day, however, show that the postal authorities here are not always to blame, and that in respect to the parcel post between Great Britain and the United States the latter are to blame by their refusal to co-operate or to make satisfactory arrangements with the Post Office for facilitating business and increasing trade between the two countries. The Americans are as friendly as can be except when it comes to business, and then they invariably discriminate in favour of their own citizens; whereas, if we take the lottery postage as an example, our Post Office discriminates in favour of the foreigner. A case which occurred to myself with regard to the parcel post will show how greatly the American methods operate against the British. Some time ago I received by post, delivered free, from Colorado, U.S.A., a 2lb. parcel, 8in. by 6in. My recollection is that the parcel postage was less than 1s. I desired to return its contents, but as our Post Office could not accept it I sent it (paying 5s. 5d.), with full name and address in Cripple Creek, to an old-established Anglo-American delivery agency in the City. Three months after I learned that the parcel was in New York, awaiting "instructions for disposal, as there are weekly increasing charges on it"—charges of 19s.—for "duty, Customs fees, storage, and war tax." So that what the American postal authorities sent to London for about 1s. cost to post back to Colorado 24s. 5d. Yours truly,

THE EDITOR, *ANGLO-COLORADO MINING GUIDE.*

Lounsbrook, 34, Coleman-street, E.C., Aug. 28.

THE TRANSMISSION OF TELEGRAMS.

3.10.02. (FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

A new and very important arrangement for the transmission of telegrams in the metropolitan area, which embraces the whole of Greater London, will shortly come into operation at the Central Telegraph Office. Hitherto it has been impossible for one outlying office within the metropolitan area to communicate direct with any other outlying office, no matter how long or short the distance, for no two offices had sufficient interchange of telegrams to justify the maintenance of an exclusive wire between them. Therefore, the transmission of a telegram from one office to another involved an intricacy of working which it is now hoped will entirely disappear. The problem of abolishing intermediate transmission has been continually under the consideration of the Post Office officials for many years. The system now being gradually introduced owes its inception to Mr. J. C. Lamb, the Second Secretary of the Post Office, who for a long time has been at the head of the telegraph department. It is a combination of an improved telephone switch-board and service signals with the existing Morse telegraphs. A few years ago Mr. Lamb saw something of the kind working in Belgium; in fact, even in England the switching of smaller offices on to main lines was in force when the Government took over the telegraphs in 1870, but as the traffic grew it was found to be too cumbersome and was abolished. Recently Mr. Gavey, Engineer-in-Chief, and Mr. Trenan, now Controller of the Central Telegraph Office, accompanied by Mr. Purvis, of the Engineer-in-Chief's department, made careful inquiries on the spot as to the possibilities of the Belgium system of intercommunication in relation to the metropolitan area, and, although the system as it existed was quite inadequate to the enormously larger traffic in London, it suggested the adaptation now about to be tried, the electrical and mechanical details of which have been worked out by Mr. Purvis.

At present all messages from one part of London to another have to be retransmitted at the Central Telegraph Office. Under the new system this complicated work and consequent delay will be avoided. Each telegraph office in the metropolitan area will have a number. If an office, say, at Islington, has a message for Clapham, the operator at Islington will touch a special indicator key, on the top of which a white star will immediately appear. The touching of the key also lights a small glow lamp under Islington's number on the switch-board at the Central Telegraph Office. The operator at the switch-board inserts a plug so as to connect with Islington, and that actuates the indicator key, and the white star disappears, thus informing the operator at Islington that his call is being answered. Then he replies by telegraphing the number of the Clapham office, and the Central operator, by switching on in the ordinary way connects Islington and Clapham, and the message is thereupon transmitted direct from one office to the other. When the message has been transmitted, both offices depress their indicator key, which lights a clearing lamp at the Central office, when the operator at once disconnects.

It is intended to introduce this system gradually, and for the present only 138 offices, or about one-quarter of the total in the metropolitan area, are being included in the experiment. The whole system, it may be mentioned, will be worked by one set of accumulator batteries at the Central Office.

EMBOSSED ENVELOPES FOR FOREIGN POSTAGE.—The General Post Office, in notifying a reduction in the price of embossed envelopes (thin paper) bearing 2½d. stamps for foreign postage, states that, with the view of accelerating the disposal of the remaining stock of embossed envelopes bearing 2½d. stamps of the old issue, the Postmaster-General has decided to reduce the price at which these envelopes are sold to the public. On and after September 24, until further notice, the following prices will be charged:—L envelopes (5¼in. by 3 7/16in.)—One for 2½d.; two for 5¼d.; three for 8d.; four for 10½d.; five for 1s. 1d.; six for 1s. 3½d.; seven for 1s. 6¼d.; eight for 1s. 9d.; nine for 1s. 11¼d.; and ten for 2s. 2d. The price per parcel of 100 will be £1 1s. 8d. The prices of M envelopes (5¼in. by 4¼in.) will be—One for 2½d.; two for 5¼d.; three for 8d.; four for 10½d.; five for 1s. 1½d.; six for 1s. 4d.; seven for 1s. 6½d.; eight for 1s. 9½d.; nine for 2s.; and ten for 2s. 2½d. The price per parcel of 100 will be £1 2s. 1d. At small sub-post offices at which these envelopes are not kept in stock they can be obtained with little delay if ordered specially.

24.9.02

THE POSTAL CONGRESS.—Mr. Frederic Harrison has written the following letter to Mr. C. Garland, president of the Postal Congress:—"Elm-hill, Hawkhurst, Oct. 3. Dear Sir,—I have been able to read in print your very able and temperate address as president of the P.O. Congress of Sept. 13, and I am in hearty sympathy with your appeal. I am quite clear upon these main points:—(1) The Post Office makes an excessive and unreasonable profit by its public services. (2) This is done almost entirely by 'sweating'—*i.e.*, screwing down the mass of the employed. (3) The principle of giving the minimum wage that competition can effect is morally wrong and socially pernicious. (4) The plea that candidates are found to accept this minimum has been urged to justify every abuse in the past from prize-fighting to women labour in mines, &c. (5) The refusal of employers to treat with organized bodies of the employed and with their authorized representatives—of which we have a glaring example in Wales—is justly regarded as putting the employer in the wrong, and is an abuse of power. I adhere to my published remarks on this subject. Yours faithfully (signed), FREDERIC HARRISON." 7.10.02

BRITISH MAILS TO GUATEMALA.

20.10.02.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As the subject of the enclosed letter to the Postmaster-General is of as much, or more, importance to you and other proprietors or managers of newspapers as it is to English readers abroad, I beg you to do what is in your power to bring about an improvement in the British postal service, at least as far as the transmission of papers is concerned. Your paper loses all interest and all value to your readers if it is not regularly received. The thread of events is lost; questions of the day are only half understood; leading articles become unintelligible; and serial stories are rendered utterly valueless. The result in the end must be that subscribers fall off and turn to countries for news and reading matter from where they can depend upon getting it.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

W. J. DEVLIN.

The Guatemala Central Railroad, Guatemala, Sept. 27.

The Guatemala Central Railroad, Guatemala, C.A., Sept. 27, 1902.

Sir,—I take the liberty of calling your attention to the following, as it appears to indicate that there is something radically wrong with the postal service between the United Kingdom and this country.

I subscribe to one weekly paper in England (*The Times*), one in New York, one in Berlin, and one in Bombay. It is a very rare occurrence for any of the three last-named papers to fail to reach here weekly, while it is not once in two weeks that I receive the London paper. Again, when it does come it is generally not on time; it quite frequently happens that the paper does not come for three weeks running, and then one, or two, or even three weeks' papers are received by the same mail. I can understand why a New York paper should be received in these countries with more regularity than an English one; but why should the British mail give poorer service than the German or the East Indian? Why should a paper from Berlin and a paper from Bombay arrive every week as regularly as the foreign mail itself, while a paper from London or Liverpool lags behind or never arrives at all?

It is not to be supposed that the postal clerks here steal the English papers. They do not know enough English to read them, and, if they did, they would rather take the American papers, which are always of later date, and generally of more interest to Central Americans. Besides, our postal service here is quite up to date, and above all charges of negligence or dishonesty.

Nor is it to be supposed that the fault lies with the sender of the paper. For I am not alone in this grievance. Two clubs in this city and several acquaintances of mine have dropped their subscriptions to English papers for the reasons I have mentioned, and most of these persons were being supplied from different sources.

It is humiliating for Englishmen abroad to have to acknowledge that they receive a satisfactory mail service from every country except their own. If you can have this lamentable state of affairs remedied you will be conferring a benefit, not only on us abroad, but on the English newspapers themselves and the British interests which they represent.

Your obedient servant,

W. J. DEVLIN.

To his Majesty's Postmaster-General, London.

. POST OFFICE GENEROSITY.—A correspondent, who signs himself "The Parson," writes:—"Some months ago a labouring man in a small parish near Reading stopped, at some risk to himself, a runaway two-horse post-van. The horses had gone, without a driver, at a great pace, half a mile or more on a much-frequented high-road. The man was not thanked at the time, but the matter was brought to the notice of the G.P.O.; inquiry was made, and he received—6d. 14.10.02

THE ROWLAND HILL BENEVOLENT FUND.

12.11.02

The annual meeting of the Rowland Hill Memorial and Benevolent Fund, which was established for the relief and assistance of Post Office servants and their widows and children, was held yesterday at the Mansion-house. The LORD MAYOR presided, and among those also present were Mr. Austen Chamberlain, M.P., Postmaster-General, Sheriff Sir T. Brooke-Hitching, Sheriff Sir G. W. Truscott, Sir G. Murray, Sir James Whitehead, Sir R. Hunter, Mr. E. Yeld, Mr. J. C. Badcock, and Mr. R. K. Causton, M.P.

SIR JAMES WHITEHEAD moved the adoption of the report, which stated that during the year grants amounting in the aggregate to £2,233 had been made in 445 cases. He expressed the hope that the Postmaster-General would be able to spare some portion of his time to inquire into, and, if possible, readjust, the scale of payment of the lower classes of those who were serving this country in the Post Office. He knew that he was treading on rather thin ice and did not wish to press the point unduly on that occasion, but as a trustee he might say that the wages paid to a large number of the Post Office servants appeared to the trustees, who from time to time had opportunities of inquiring into the circumstances of applicants, to be sometimes hardly adequate to the duties which they performed. Labour was now much better remunerated than formerly. All he urged was that at least the Post Office, governed he supposed by the Treasury, would take the view that the wages and remuneration of postal servants should at least go *pari passu* with those of other branches of labour.

The motion was seconded by Mr. R. K. CAUSTON and adopted.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved a vote of thanks to the trustees. He pointed out that it needed no appeal from Sir James Whitehead to him, nor would it have needed such an appeal to his predecessors to make them anxious that the terms of employment held out by the Post Office to those whom it engaged should be fair and proper. The department did not wish, in the remuneration which it offered, to lag behind the general rate of wages throughout the country. There could be no pleasanter task for a Postmaster-General than that of distributing with a bountiful hand the money of other people (laughter), at the same time reaping gratitude for himself. They who were concerned with the administration of the Post Office or of public moneys had a duty to discharge not only to the staff over which they presided but also to the taxpayers, whose trustees they were. Whilst it would be their strenuous endeavour to pay fair and proper wages to everybody in their employment, they were bound to have regard to the fact that their revenue was collected in part from the poor, and those who contributed to it were often themselves in as great need as any who received contributions from it in the shape of wages. They were bound, therefore, while doing justice to the staff, to do justice also to the revenue, which they had to regard as the contribution of every individual in the nation, and not as that abstract body the Treasury, in which many people thought that they might dip their hands with impunity without any one being the worse for it. With regard to the fund, it was only in rare cases that a man who was actually serving in the Post Office was helped. Assistance was rendered rather to those who from infirmity had been forced to relinquish their appointments or to dependent relatives of those who were no longer able to earn bread for the family. There was, of course, for the bulk of Post Office servants—at any rate those who were required to give their whole time to the service—a State pension scheme of a not ungenerous kind for the cases to which it applied. Many, however, were left unprovided for. It was just at this point, where the State provision ceased, that sometimes a case of real hardship and distress arose. Perhaps an instance of merely temporary distress occurred requiring only a little to keep a family above water. It was in such cases that the fund was so beneficent. It made no general appeal to the public, but the public who took an interest in that faithful servant who regularly delivered their correspondence would have difficulty in discovering a better object than the fund for their generosity. The Post Office *employés* at the present time were contributing almost the entire annual subscription list. He hoped that Post Office servants in every part of the United Kingdom would give the widest assistance to a fund which was of such enormous benefit to the postal service as a whole. He himself had sent some cases to the trustees, and was gratified to find that they had been able to make the grants.

Mr. YELD seconded the motion, which was adopted; and a vote of thanks, moved by SIR G. MURRAY, was passed to the Lord Mayor.

31.10.02. THE STAMP "BLOATER."

When stamp-collecting was in its infancy the most ardent and painstaking collector was perfectly satisfied if he could obtain a single specimen of a rare stamp. But now, according to an authority in the "Connoisseur," a base and degrading spirit of greed is manifesting itself among the happy guild of philatelists. Rich men have arisen in their midst who go up and down the world seeking for every specimen of a single rare stamp so that they may decorate the pages of their albums with the ostentation of a monopolist. We learn that this wealthy specialist is regarded as an enemy, and is dubbed by his outraged fellows a "bloater." But to the sneers and the abuse of his fellows the wealthy specialist apparently turns a deaf ear, and so the Philatelic Society of London has been approached in order that this public enemy may be brought to a proper sense of his responsibilities. Whether the bulls of the Society, threatening excommunication and the like, will have the power to eradicate one of the strongest human attributes we are inclined to doubt. A stamp is valuable only because of its rarity, and to possess what none of one's fellows possesses is the very life of collecting. Though it may be regarded as a selfish, and even vulgar, spirit we are disposed to regard it as the inevitable development of modern collecting. 31.10.02

COMMERCIAL CENTRES AND THE STAMPING OF DOCUMENTS.

1.12.02.

Correspondence has passed between Mr. Hayes Fisher, M.P., Secretary to the Treasury, and Sir Joseph Lawrence, M.P., on the subject of commercial centres for the stamping of documents. The Newport (Mon.) Chamber of Commerce made an application that Newport should be made a centre for the stamping of documents instead of having to send them up to Somerset House, and Sir Joseph Lawrence personally supported the request.

In the course of the correspondence Mr. Hayes Fisher wrote pointing out reasons for not acceding to the application, the chief reason being that much larger commercial centres than Newport are at present without the facilities referred to. The population of Newport in 1901 was 67,000, which, he says, was considerably below the average population of stamping centres existing then. He quoted the cases of the following towns, which, he said, are "great industrial centres of first-rate importance," and which are not stamping centres:—Halifax, 104,000 population; Huddersfield, 95,000; Middlesbrough, 91,000; Preston, 112,000; Blackburn, 127,000; Oldham, 137,000; Walsall, 88,000; Birkenhead, 110,000; Norwich, 111,000; Croydon, 133,000; Plymouth, 107,000, or, with Devonport, 176,000; Swansea, 94,000; Aberdeen, 102,000; and Dundee, 91,000. He also contended that the number of documents sent up from Newport did not warrant the establishment of a stamping office there.

In reply to those objections, Sir Joseph Lawrence has written a letter, in which, after urging certain local considerations which he contended strengthened Newport's claim, he said:—"I cannot and never will understand, any more than the bulk of the members of the House of Commons do, this chronic inability of the permanent officials in our Government departments to see that it is a good thing to create facilities for trade. The argument that appears to them to be conclusive—namely, that the conceding of the privilege to Newport would lead to demands from other places—has no terrors for me or any man of progressive business ideas. What does it matter if you are asked to open half-a-dozen offices? Concede the demand to all, and if you find at the end of a term that they do not pay, do as other business men do—close those branches which are unremunerative. The population of the country is constantly growing; and on the principle that facilities increase trade, you may, if you grant those facilities, wake up to find yourself agreeably disappointed."

The Newport Chamber of Commerce have warmly endorsed the views expressed in Sir Joseph Lawrence's letter, and they hope that it will lead other commercial centres which are at present without stamping facilities to take steps to obtain them.

NEW STAMPS FOR FRANCE.—As all stamp collectors know, the current issue of French postage stamps has never given complete satisfaction to all parties concerned. Although they have only been issued for a short time, alterations in some of the values have been already made. Among the criticisms offered two of somewhat unusual interest may be noted. In the first place, the Woman's Rights Society of Paris objected to the legend thereon of *Droits de l'Homme*, and gravely suggested that the rights of woman should be equally recognized; they even went so far as to get out a rival design, whilst another objection was that, seen under a microscope, the figure of Liberty in the new 15 centimes stamp had six toes. At any rate, the French postal authorities have, says a correspondent, given orders for a new design to be engraved, if posaible in time for the issue of postage stamps in the first week of the new year. The design chosen is that of the beautiful sower now seen on the half, one, and two franc pieces of money current in France. The graceful design of "La Sémeuse" represents France as a tall, handsome woman scattering seed in a ploughed field on which the sun is rising. This design will now appear in a square shape on the stamps of France, on the top of which will appear the words *Republique Française*, whilst beneath there will be the word *Postes* and the figures denominating the value of the stamp. M. Roty, the artist of the coinage referred to, has given the use of his design to the Postal Department, and, strange to say, the new die will be engraved by M. Mouchon, the engraver and designer of the present stamps. M. Mouchon, so far from being jealous, has, it is stated, said that he will devote his best talents to the work of engraving the new die. This is to be delivered to the postal authorities within six or seven weeks, so it is hoped that the new stamps will be on sale to the public in the first weeks of 1903. The prime movers in thus supplying France with a postage stamp which is assured of success before it is made are M. Trouillot, Minister of Commerce, and M. Bérard, Under Secretary of State for the Service of Posts. 22.11.02.

POSTAGE RATES TO THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.—At a meeting of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce yesterday the following letter was read from the Postmaster-General in reply to a communication from the chamber with reference to the difficulties placed in the way of British trade with Canada by reason of the postal rates:—"In reply to your letter of October 23 calling attention to the low rates of postage for newspapers and for periodicals exchanged between the United States and Canada, as compared with the rates of such articles exchanged between Canada and the United Kingdom, I am directed by the Postmaster-General to point out for the information of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce that the rates between this country and Canada are the lowest which prevail between the United Kingdom and any other portion of his Majesty's dominions. The exceptional rates between the United States and Canada are owing to a special arrangement made between the Canadian and the United States Administrations, over which the Postmaster-General has no control. I am to assure you, however, that the effects of this arrangement upon British interests are receiving the Postmaster-General's attention.—I am, &c., H. BUXTON FORMAN." In reply to a second letter on the same subject to the Postmaster-General Mr. Forman wrote:—"I am to point out that the inference drawn from the conspicuous difference between the postage rates for letters and those for printed papers sent from the United States into Canada is not well founded, inasmuch as that difference is not peculiar to correspondence so sent, but is, in fact, identical with that existing in the case of correspondence intended for circulation within the United States territory. The special arrangement between the Canadian and United States Administrations is that correspondence of all kinds is to be exchanged between the United States and Canada at the domestic rate of the country of origin." It was intimated that the point which the chamber desired to bring before the Postmaster-General was with reference to periodicals in bulk. The secretary was requested to call the attention of the Postmaster-General to the existing difference between the rates. 13.11.02.

EXHIBITION OF AFRICAN POSTAGE STAMPS.—A very interesting exhibition of the stamps of some of the African Colonies was held under the auspices of the Philatelic Society of London at Effingham-house, Arundel-street, Strand, on Saturday. The Prince of Wales sent a remarkable series of registered 2d. envelopes of British South Africa, locally surcharged 4d. British Central Africa, the six varieties being in two sizes each. Mr. Eliot Levy's series of British Central and East Africa was all but complete in each case, and Lord Crawford's series of St. Helena stamps included all the rare and curious errors. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the exhibition was the display of Mauritius stamps from the collections of Lord Kintore, Mr. W. B. Avery, and Mr. H. J. Duncan. The first issues of these stamps, 4d. and 2d., are among the rarest in the world, and the known examples are five unused and 15 unused; of this total no fewer than five were exhibited on Saturday, Mr. Avery sending unused specimens of both values. Mr. Vernon Roberts sent a loan from his collection of Gambia and Gold Coast stamps; the Niger Coast and Uganda issues sent by Mr. C. J. Daun and Mr. E. Beveridge also being exceedingly interesting, both in point of rarity and variety. Lord Crawford's stamps of the Morocco agencies, and those of Sierra Leone of Baron A. de Worms and Mr. C. McNaughton were also noteworthy. Lagos, Madagascar, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sudan and Zanzibar were also represented. 16.12.02.

TROUBLESOME POST OFFICE CLERKS.—The *City News* writes:—"We buy various goods for subscribers abroad, and we have had endless trouble with the parcel post—delays, overcharges, and thefts in transit—for which there is no redress. The trouble given by Post Office clerks is enormous, and one would think they were paid to give as much annoyance as possible to their masters, the public. Having a parcel for Italy, we had first to send to three different post-offices for the forms of declaration, &c., required. We then endeavoured to despatch the parcel at Queen Victoria-street Post-office, but we were kept there exactly three-quarters of an hour answering the trivial and irrelevant objections of four different young women. When we had proved to each of them in turn that every regulation in the Postal Guide had been complied with, they invented fresh regulations of their own. We then despatched the parcel by Pitt and Scott's Agency. The whole business was got through in two minutes, and the charges were 2d. less than those of the Post Office. The incompetence and impertinence of Post Office clerks are beyond belief." 12.12.02.

CHRISTMAS POSTAL DELIVERIES.—Mr. A. W. Mackenzie writes from 2, Gloucester-road, Brownswood-park, N., under date December 17:—"May I ask the favour of a small space in your columns to urge on the postal authorities the desirability of their giving directions to the postmen and the special deliverers employed at Christmas to exercise a little more care and attention in the delivery of the numerous articles entrusted to them at this time? Thousands of cards and small packets are spoilt every year by the string that is tied round them. Surely a fairly strong indiarubber band would answer the purpose and do no damage. Of course, we all admit that the large number of articles sent must cause extra trouble, but we do not forget this when we give, and I venture to think give liberally, in response to the appeal that follows so close on Christmas Day." 19.12.02

THE REDIRECTION OF PARCELS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Could Mr. Austen Chamberlain, weighted as he is with the cares of two great offices, find a moment to look into a small postal reform and relieve some writers of books of a daily worry added to their toiling lives?

When a change of address has been duly notified, the Post Office, with great courtesy and punctuality, redirect and forward letters, postcards, and book packets. But parcels they only forward, after redirecting them, for fresh payment. The amount is not large, but the constant demand at the door for payment of "redirected parcels," sent by total strangers, and from all parts of the world, does become troublesome when it is incessant. In common with all those who have been so misguided as to publish a volume of criticisms, I am favoured almost daily with poems, romances, histories, biographies, the catalogues of jewellers, furniture vendors, vegetarian enthusiasts, controversial works in manuscript, essays for the leading reviews, proofs of a new epic, puffs of soap, medicines, and hair-dyes—all sent through the parcel post from persons I never heard of, and do not desire to know.

It is bad enough to have to look through all this literature and manuscript, and (too often, alas!) out of good nature to acknowledge it, in those fatally friendly words which are apt to get into the booksellers' "laudatory notices." But the last straw is that our servants have to stand at the open door till they can find small change to pay the surtax. Now, Sir, cannot Mr. Chamberlain let these parcels be forwarded free, as he does for letters and book-packets, and save us some of the nuisance? Last midsummer I informed the Post Office that I had ceased to reside in London, and only gave my new address in the country, where I fondly hoped in my declining years to live at peace with all men in literary retirement. I sent out hundreds of printed notices of this change of address to all whom I could reach. All was vain. Fifteen have gone to one publisher, who still sends me books to my late house in town. But how am I to reach the unknown correspondents who honour me with their parcels?

Yours, &c.,

FREDERIC HARRISON.

Elm Hill, Hawkhurst, Dec. 18. 20.12.02

Times 29.12.02.

We publish this morning an important document in which the POSTMASTER-GENERAL has communicated to the subordinate members of his service the attitude which, after mature consideration, he has felt it his duty to assume with regard to the much discussed question of special leave for the purpose of attending to the business of the trade unions or other bodies with which officials of the Post Office may be connected. From the general tenor of the reply, it would appear that some of these officials have been in the habit of asking for and receiving from twenty to thirty days of "special leave" during the year—that is to say, of leave independent of their ordinary leave, of sick leave, and of emergency leave granted on account of illness or death in their families; so that, in round numbers, from one-fifteenth to one-twelfth of the time which they are paid to devote to the service of the public has been consumed in attending to the affairs of private organizations. MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN rightly says that the arrangements in force at the Post Office, alike for ordinary leave and for sick leave, are extremely liberal, and on a scale which, so far as he has been able to judge from inquiries, is quite unknown in private employment. In addition to the privileges thus allowed, ten days of special leave will be granted in each year without demur; and public opinion will, we are sure, entirely support the conclusion that to grant more would be unreasonable, and that to ask for more displays a remarkable deficiency of that estimable quality which is known under the name of modesty. Towards trade unions, as such, MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN declares his attitude to be one of absolute impartiality; and he would probably be prepared to go further than this, and to admit that, whenever managed with reference to the true interests of the members, they are organizations worthy of encouragement and support. But even so, the business of managing them should not be undertaken in time improperly withdrawn from the public service, time which, to anything like the same extent, could never be withdrawn from that contracted to be given to any other employer.

The enormous number of persons engaged in the Post Office, and in some other branches of the public service, and the facilities which some of these persons possess, by means of combined action, to disorganize the departments in which they work, and to occasion serious inconvenience to the public, renders it imperatively necessary that any tendency on their parts to put forward unreasonable demands, or to presume upon their real or supposed opportunities of creating dislocation of business, should be discouraged with a firm hand. There has been too much tendency on the part of politicians of all parties to try and make things pleasant all round; and it is highly satisfactory to observe that the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, with a decision worthy of his father, has known how to set his face against improper concessions and to explain, in clear and unmistakable language, the position which he intends to maintain with reference to the complaints of persons in the service of the Post Office. He agrees with his predecessor not only in having no wish to interfere with the attendance of postmen at the meetings of their federation, but also in the view that men who desire to undertake engagements of this character should make such arrangements as will not be incompatible with the performance of their ordinary duties. From former communications upon the question we gather that special leave has sometimes been asked and granted, in excess of the ten days conceded by LORD LONDONDERRY, in order to enable the men receiving it to travel to distant places in order to attend meetings held at provincial centres; and it seems obvious that such events might be fixed with reference to the free time of those who, as delegates or in any other capacity, had sufficient reasons for wishing to be present at them. For the future, it seems clear, some arrangements of this kind will be necessary; and postmen, like other people, if they wish to devote themselves to matters outside their proper duties, will be called upon to submit to some small sacrifice of their personal convenience for the purpose. If the ten days of special leave now to be allowed them are insufficient, they must supply the deficiency from the ordinary leave to which, on a larger scale than any other workers of their class and quality, they are entitled by the liberal conditions of their employment. MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN has earned the thanks of the public by showing that he will not sacrifice its convenience, or the efficiency of the important work over which he presides, to the unreasonable requirements of any form of labour organization.

29.12.02

A POSTAL EXPERIMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Whatever the nature of the postal experiment, in regard to letters, &c., for Christmas delivery, about to be tried at Rochdale, the trial is bound to fail, unless, indeed, there is at the Rochdale Post-office that surplus of space and force which is to be found nowhere else. Even then, without public co-operation the effort must break down; and with such co-operation it is needless. For who could legally detain a postal packet on surmise, and by whom could it be specially distinguished but by the sender?

If the sender marks or labels a postal packet with the words "For Christmas Day," and posts it a week or ten days in advance, the Post Office would deliver it in the usual course, and it would remain for the recipient to lay it aside until the proper day or open it at pleasure. This is already done on a small scale; it ought to be the rule. The Post Office might co-operate by giving, or selling, gummed labels, or printed covers, at every post-office.

Then, and then alone, would the scandal cease of the staff of the great post-offices being grievously overworked at this season on three days and Christmas made a thing to be dreaded, of the Controller of the London postal service camping amongst his mail bags, and of his deputies flitting throughout the livelong night, pulling railway stations and post-offices out of their difficulties and from burial under mountains of bags and baskets.

Your obedient servant,

December 20. 23.12.02 F. R. RAINES.

POST OFFICE EXPRESS DELIVERY SERVICE.—The Postmaster-General has reason to believe that the improved facilities offered by the express delivery service are still not entirely appreciated by the public. He calls attention to the fact that any person may send a single letter by any railway train and from any station to any other station which is within reach of a telegraph delivery office, and have it delivered by a special Post Office messenger immediately upon arrival of the train. Thus, for example, any person in London wishing to communicate confidentially with or to transmit any important document to his agent or correspondent at Manchester in the shortest possible time, has only to select his train—say, the 12 5 p.m. express—and hand his letter into the nearest Post Office (if a telegraph delivery office) in time for it to be taken by special messenger to Euston Station, where it is given over to the railway company's officials for conveyance in charge of the guard of the train; at the same time he telegraphs to the Postmaster of Manchester requesting that a special messenger may be sent to meet the train on its arrival, and deliver the letter as addressed. The cost of using this service is very moderate, considering the advantages derived. Another important facility is now afforded. Persons who are expecting letters and wish them to be specially delivered may make application at the Post Office in good time before the arrival of the mail by which their letters are sent and have their letters delivered by special messenger. Urgent letters sent from the provinces or from abroad on Saturday nights can now be delivered by special messenger in any part of the London district on Sunday morning. It is also notified that subscribers to telephone exchanges, or callers at telephone call offices, may by calling up any Post Office connected with the telephone system, procure the services of an express messenger, or dictate messages to be written down at the Post Office and delivered by express messenger. 24.12.02

25.12.02.

POSTAL REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In common with Mr. Frederic Harrison and many others, I am prone to consider possible Post Office reforms, and I was therefore much interested in learning from *The Times* that the Post Office authorities were about to try a scheme for "advance posting of letters and Christmas cards for delivery on Christmas morning, and have selected Rochdale for the experiment." "Missives will be received for several days before the 22nd, and they will be retained and sent out on Christmas morning by special delivery."

This news interests me, not only for itself, but because it is the same scheme that I suggested to Mr. Fawcett 19 years ago to-day.

His reply was as follows :—

"Post Office, January 26, 1884.

"Dear Mrs. Barnett,—I have carefully considered the suggestions you kindly sent me in your letter of the 21st ultimo, for making a special arrangement for the collection on several days previous to Christmas of letters containing Christmas cards.

"I find, however, that there are objections to such an arrangement which I fear would preclude its adoption. A serious one is that the Department would be wholly unable to cope with the work of delivering, upon Christmas Day, all the letters accumulated during the several previous days; and if this were attempted the result would only be failure, while, at the same time, faith would be broken with the public who posted their cards or letters early on purpose to secure their delivery on Christmas Day. It is only the distribution of these letters, &c., over several days before Christmas, especially the day before, which renders the Christmas Day delivery, severe as it even now is, a practicable matter; and this relief would be lost if, by such an arrangement as you suggest, the delivery of the greater part of the letters were concentrated on Christmas Day.

"Moreover, it is a fundamental rule of the Post Office that letters committed to the post must not be held over for this or that delivery, at the option of the senders, but must be delivered to the addressees in the due course of post.

"I am sorry that for these and other reasons it is not in my power to adopt the suggestions you have made.

"Yours very truly,

"HENRY FAWCETT."

Oh! if I could only think that 19 years hence my "suggestions" to the present Local Government Board, that each pauper child should be considered individually and reared in a family, would be carried into effect, what a good Christmas I should have!

I am, Sir, yours truly,

HENRIETTA O. BARNETT.

Warden's-lodge, Toynbee-hall, Whitechapel, Dec. 21.

23.12.02

THE POSTAGE OF UNSTAMPED LETTERS.—Mr. H. C. Hamlyn wrote from Wolseley-road, Crouch-end, N., to the Postmaster-General on November 25 pointing out that the public were frequently caused inconvenience by being without postage stamps, and after certain hours and on Sundays there were no means of getting them. He suggested that envelopes unaddressed which were marked with a large X should be opened by the Post Office officials, and, if containing letter or letters, should be stamped by the aforesaid officials. Mr. Hamlyn urged that this would benefit those in country places who lived closer to a pillar-box than a post-office. As the suggested system would entail the use of two instead of one envelope, Mr. Hamlyn did not think that such a system would be abused to the detriment of the Post Office. In his reply, dated November 29, the Postmaster-General expressed his regret that he was unable to entertain the suggestion. The Postmaster-General considered it very undesirable that coin should under any circumstances be dropped into a letter-box, and was opposed to any arrangement which would conduce to such a practice.

GRIEVANCES IN THE POSTAL SERVICE.—A demonstration of workers in the Post Office was held at Liverpool on Saturday, at which were present representatives of the National Joint Committee. During the day a private conference was held, at which various society questions were discussed. The question of special leave was under consideration, and much dissatisfaction was expressed at the decision of the Postmaster-General that the special leave must be confined to ten days in the year. This was regarded as insufficient to carry out the work of the large organizations, and the officials regarded it as a blow directed against trade unionism in the Post Office. At a combined meeting of the workers in the evening Sir John Willox, M.P., presided, and, referring to the question of the deferred pay, said that no private employer would dare to adopt the methods of the postal department in retaining the deferred pay, and then, in the case of premature death, confiscating it to their own personal advantage. Other speeches were made, one speaker stating that the question of temporary labour in the engineering department was becoming a positive acute grievance. In Liverpool they had young men of fair education of 22 to 24 years of age working in the engineering department in receipt of 19s. and 20s. a week. On the question of Parliamentary representation it was asserted that the system on which the Post Office was worked at present was not conducive to efficiency, and therefore they had decided upon direct Parliamentary representation. 26.1.03.

A POST OFFICE EXPERIMENT.

With reference to the scheme of advanced posting and delivery of Christmas missives at Rochdale, a preliminary account of which appeared in *The Times* of December 20, a correspondent writes :—"The principle underlying the scheme was to shift the work so as to avoid waste of skilled labour, and it turned upon—(1) the desire of the public to have their Christmas correspondence delivered on Christmas Day and not before; and (2) the fact that the actual delivery of a letter is a comparatively simple process to that of sorting it, and that while delivery can be practically done by any person of ordinary intelligence who is not a perfect stranger to the locality, the sorting for 'walks' and 'districts' is a process which requires the skill and experience of a trained postman. In these conditions, when an extraordinary mass of letters is poured into any particular office on the afternoon or evening before Christmas Day, the postmen are called upon to do a very excessive amount of sorting, and that under conditions of pressure, before they can start out on their delivery. Not only, therefore, do they start out much later than usual, but they start already greatly fatigued. It was thought that if these letters had been in the office for some days before the 24th, while the ordinary work was at its normal, they could have been sorted by degrees and at times convenient to the work, so that on the morning of the 25th the postmen coming on duty would have nothing to do but to put them into their pouches and take them out for delivery. Or if the correspondence coming in on the evening of the 24th should be heavy enough to require it, the postmen could be employed on sorting this correspondence into walks, &c., while that already sorted could be entrusted for delivery to a temporary force consisting of telegraph messengers and others knowing the locality. During the three days for which the public at Rochdale had been allowed to hand in their 'advanced' letters for delivery on Christmas Day more than 20,000 such letters were received for delivery in Rochdale, and on Christmas Eve these 20,000 letters were lying ready sorted and tied up in convenient bundles to be handed to a temporary auxiliary force for delivery the first thing on Christmas morning. The relief to the sorting and postman force is manifest, and the only question now is whether any unexpected difficulty would arise in the process of actual delivery or in confusion between these 'advanced' letters and the letters which have been posted in the ordinary way. The experiment was confined to local letters and in the Lancashire towns the proportion of local letters for delivery is very large indeed. The complete result of the experiment is not yet known."

26.12.02

A POST OFFICE EXPERIMENT.

Our Manchester Correspondent telegraphs that the Rochdale experiment described in *The Times* of yesterday by a correspondent has turned out very well, probably quite as well as could have been reasonably hoped in a case of so much novelty. The endeavour was to expedite deliveries by inducing the senders of Christmas greetings to post them some days in advance under an official guarantee that Christmas Day should be the date of delivery. A special stamp was used for the purpose, and the result has been that, while between 20,000 and 25,000 letters were posted in Rochdale between the 17th and 22nd inst. under this arrangement, not the least difficulty was experienced on Christmas Day in avoiding any confusion of these letters with the mass of correspondence posted under ordinary conditions. The experiment was confined to letters for local delivery, but it proves to have comprised about one-third of the whole number despatched from Rochdale offices. The advantage to the senders and the recipients of the "advance post" letters was their delivery much earlier in the morning than is practicable at a time of so much pressure, unless the sorting and other preparations within the office can have been completed beforehand; while the advantage to the office itself and to the delivery staff has been a better apportionment of the extra labour on the days preceding Christmas and a great saving of fatigue to postmen before beginning their actual rounds on Christmas morning.

The experiment made this year may, it is hoped, be repeated in future with increased success and be extended to all places where the population and the amount of correspondence is on a similar scale to that of the great towns of Lancashire. At the Manchester office, where a Christmas Eve postage of from eight to nine million letters and from half to three-quarters of a million parcels is looked upon as a matter of course, the relief of the pressure of work by even one-third only, as at Rochdale this year, would be highly appreciated. The Rochdale experiment was carried out under the direction of the Manchester postmaster, Mr. John Philips, who had at the same time initiated several new contrivances to facilitate despatch and delivery in his own town. Notwithstanding these aids, the Manchester first deliveries on Christmas Day would be in some localities four or five hours later than usual; a delay not to be wondered at where a single postman's ordinary load of about 400 missives was increased for the occasion to 7,000, which could only be delivered, however late, by the employment of many assistant carriers. 27.12.02.

MR. HENNIKER HEATON AND THE POST OFFICE.—Referring to the letters of Mr. Frederic Harrison and others on the grievance regarding the redirection of parcels, Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., asks us to publish the following extract from "Hansard's" House of Commons report of July 20, 1896:—Mr. Henniker Heaton.—I beg to ask the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, if he will explain why it is that a parcel on which 10½d. has been paid is redirected from the House of Commons to Eaton-square free of charge, but when directed from the House of Commons to the Grand Hotel, Charing-cross, an additional charge of 10½d. is levied; and whether he will take steps to place parcels on the same footing as other postal packets with respect to redirection, seeing that before the existing regulations were made, on May 31, 1892, a parcel, and in fact all postal packets might be redirected from one point to another within the metropolis free of charge? Mr. Hanbury replied.—Under the present regulations parcels are redirected free of charge only when the original and the new address are in the delivery of the same post-office; and, consequently, a parcel redirected from the House of Commons to Charing-cross, which are in different districts, would be liable to fresh postage, while a parcel redirected from the House of Commons to Eaton-square, which are in the same district, would be sent free of charge. The Postmaster-General cannot see his way clear to extend the privilege of redirection of parcels, or to modify the present regulations so as to admit of parcels being redirected, without charge, from one part of London to another.—The Cannon Iron Foundries (Limited), of Deepfields, near Bilston, Staffordshire, having forwarded to Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., correspondence which they have had with the Post Office with reference to the halfpenny post regulations and the practice of imposing a surcharge on postal communications infringing those regulations, received a reply from Mr. Henniker Heaton, dated from the Carlton Club, December 22, in which he stated that he had long been familiar with the subject of the complaint. A new Postmaster, from whom they expected enlarged and progressive administration, had now assumed office. He was to have the honour of discussing the whole postal law and regulations with the Postmaster-General in a few days, and should take care to place before him 100 letters showing acts of extraordinary meanness on the part of the Post Office.

29. 12. 02.

THE CHRISTMAS WORK OF THE POST OFFICE.—The comptroller at St. Martin's le Grand yesterday issued a statement on the traffic conducted through his Majesty's mails this Christmas, which shows that the Christmas-card traffic and the traffic by parcels post have been heavier than ever this year. In the London Postal district the regular staff was supplemented by an additional force of some 6,500 men, and the comptroller points out that preference was given to Army Reserve men and ex-soldiers who were without other employment. The heavy work of the Christmas season in the letter-sorting offices began on Saturday, December 20, when between noon and 7 p.m. three heavy foreign and colonial mails came to hand from the Cape, from India, China, and Australia, and from the United States and New Zealand, the number of sacks of mails brought by the three mails being nearly 3,300. This was followed by the arrival of a heavy mail from the United States on Sunday, December 21. Another mail of nearly 1,700 sacks arrived on Christmas Eve. The Christmas mails to places abroad were heavier than ever. The mail for Ceylon, India, and China despatched on December 5 consisted of some 600,000 articles, as compared with 580,000 in the corresponding mail of 1901. The Christmas mails to South Africa were not so heavy as last year, the reason, of course, being the withdrawal of troops from South Africa. In the parcel post section the pressure was not so severe this year, and this was accounted for by the falling off in the number of parcels for South Africa. During the period from October 25 to December 20, the number of parcels despatched to places abroad was 420,300, as against 520,000 during the same period last year; but last year's total included 171,000 addressed to members of his Majesty's forces in South Africa, while this year the estimated number included in the total is 31,600. The Christmas parcels mails from abroad were very heavy, and the work of clearing them through the Customs necessitated the employment of Customs officers at the Mount Pleasant parcel office continuously night and day from Monday, December 15, until midnight on Saturday, December 27. The number of parcels collected into Mount Pleasant parcel office during the week ended December 24, from the area over which its collections and deliveries are made (the E.C. and W.C. postal districts) was 477,920, as against 442,000 last year. In addition to this, during the same week some 540,000 parcels were received at the Mount Pleasant office from the provinces and some 500,000 from the other London parcel offices. Including the parcels received from abroad, the total number of parcels dealt with at the Mount Pleasant office during the week was something over a million and a half.

30. 12. 02.

FOREIGN POST-CARD REGULATIONS.—The Postmaster-General desires to call attention to the fact that, while in the inland service it is not forbidden to write a communication on the front of a post-card, so long as the right hand half is entirely reserved for the address, this concession does not apply to post-cards for any place abroad. Any communication written upon the address side of a post-card for or from a place abroad will render it liable, under the regulations of the International Postal Union, to a charge on delivery equal to double the deficient postage at the letter rate.

26. 1. 03.

MR. HENNIKER HEATON AND THE POST OFFICE.—Writing to the chairman of the Cannon Ironfoundries (Limited), who had addressed him on the subject of the surcharge on halfpenny envelope postage, Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P., says:—"I am very familiar with the subject of your complaint. The British public have failed to interpret what is, in Postal Guide language, 'of the nature of a letter,' and from a leading authority I learn that 'only two officials in the Post Office understand the halfpenny post regulations,' and these gentlemen disagree. I receive some hundreds of letters in the course of a year from business men, secretaries of clubs and societies, and clergymen, telling me that they have had their correspondence impounded, or the recipients of their communications heavily fined for breaches of the postal law. A man may send out a thousand receipts, bills, or orders for goods at the halfpenny rate, but woe betide him if he is polite to his customers and adds the words 'with thanks,' or 'immediate,' or 'to-morrow,' or telling when or how to send the goods. I have the official letter from the highest authority in the Post Office, telling a man that all his circulars were treated as having deficient postage (and his customers fined) because he inserted the word 'gentleman' (written) on each circular. I will undertake to say that over one million people are fined every year by ours the meanest and greatest Post Office in the world for these miserable breaches of postal laws, which are unworthy of a great department making a profit of over five millions sterling per annum. A new Postmaster-General, from whom we expect enlarged and progressive administration, has now assumed office. I am to have the honour of discussing the whole postal laws and regulations with him in a few days. I shall take care to place before him a hundred letters, including your own, showing acts of extraordinary meanness on the part of the Post Office. My banker truly says no successful business man would dare to irritate his customers after the manner of the Post Office to the public. By the way, let me mention that private cards bearing the well-known words 'P.P.C.' and 'At home' are subject to fines. A Bishop of one of the Australian colonies left England the other day, and the night before he departed posted 500 of his 'P.P.C.' cards. The next morning 500 people here had to pay 500 pence in fines for his lordship's cards."

7. 1. 03.

DEFECTIVE POST-OFFICE SCALES.

12. 1. 03.

The attention of the officials of the Post-office has from time to time been called by the City Corporation to the fact that scales in use in Post-offices in the City are in many cases defective. As, however, they are not subject to inspection under the Weights and Measures Act, no action has been taken. It may be mentioned that not long since, under the direction of the City Weights and Measures Department, a test parcel was sent to 17 Post-offices within the City, and in twelve cases the scales were found to be defective, 1½d. being demanded instead of 1d. It would appear to be very desirable that some steps should be taken for bringing the scales in use in all Post-offices under proper supervision.

THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION.

23. 1. 03.

The Swiss Federal Council has recently issued the programme of a competition for the erection of a monument at Berne to commemorate the foundation of the Universal Postal Union. The competition is open to all artists in the world; and an international jury, on which Mr. H. H. Armstead, R.A., is the British representative, will pronounce on the merits of the designs submitted.

The artist chosen for the purpose will be entrusted with the execution of the monument at a cost not exceeding 17,000f., all fees and charges included, with the exception of carriage expenses, Customs duties, and the cost of the foundation up to the ground level, which will be borne by the Federal Council. The jury will also have at their disposal a sum of 15,000f. to reward deserving competitors.

Models must be deposited at the Federal Palace, Berne, between September 1 and 15, 1903; and British artists who seriously intend to compete can obtain copies of the programme on application to the secretary of the General Post Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, London, E.C.

EMBOSSED ENVELOPES.—The Post Office announces that envelopes of foolscap size (8in. by 4in.) bearing an impressed 1d. postage stamp will be issued for sale to the public on and after the 9th inst. The new envelopes will be handed in packets of 20, and will be sold at the rate of 1s. 10½d. per packet, quantities up to 20 being charged for in proportion. The envelopes will be on sale at all post offices, with the exception of some small sub offices, at which embossed envelopes are not kept in stock, but they will be obtainable at these offices with little delay if specially ordered.—The Post Office also gives notice that it has been decided to discontinue the issue of the embossed envelopes of the "C" size (5in. by 3in.), and no more of these envelopes will be supplied when the remaining stock is exhausted.

4. 2. 03.

A COMPLIMENT TO THE POST OFFICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—We often hear of shortcomings on the part of our Post Office authorities. Perhaps you may think it worth while to give the following example on the other side a space in *The Standard*.

A correspondent, writing to me from Malta, inadvertently addressed a letter to me to 130, South Kensington, London. This, considering that I am not a householder in London, must be admitted to be a very vague address; yet, as you will see by the enclosed envelope, the letter reached me without delay.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant.

G. W. R.

January 31. 2.2.03.

POSTMEN'S GRIEVANCES.—A meeting convened by the London district council of the Postmen's Federation was held on Saturday night at the Memorial-hall, Farringdon-street, to protest against the Postmaster-General's decision on "special leave" and to call attention to the low rate of pay of certain classes of postmen. In the absence of Mr. J. Keir Hardie, M.P., the chair was taken by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, who pointed out that the object of the federation was to safeguard the interests of its members and that a reasonable amount of "special leave" was required to enable the executive to carry on the work of the organization properly. The heads of departments ran up and down the country to propagate their own views, and, therefore, he thought the humbler postman should have the opportunity of protecting his interests. The decision of the Postmaster-General seemed to the casual reader to be couched in very plausible terms, for he declared that he must have efficiency and that the postmen could do whatever they liked provided that they were on duty at the proper time. The federation were, however, quite ready to find properly qualified substitutes and to pay them. For the sake of general good feeling in the service it was advisable in the public interest that reasonable demands should be conceded. As to wages, the minimum of 18s. per week was far too low, especially in large towns, where rents were already high and still rising. Mr. Bailey moved a resolution expressing dissatisfaction at the curtailment of special leave of absence to the representatives of the federation, and asserting the belief that the restriction was a menace to the established principle of freedom of combination. He regarded the order limiting the special leave of the executive officers to ten days per year as the answer of the authorities to the federation's decision to attempt to get direct Parliamentary representation. Mr. Beckland seconded the motion, which was adopted. A resolution was also passed drawing attention to the inadequate nature of postmen's pay and calling upon Parliament to remedy the grievance by establishing a proper uniform wage for established and auxiliary postmen.

16.2.03.

MIS-DELIVERY OF TELEGRAMS.—Dr. W. F. Clarke, of 2, Baron's-court-road, West Kensington, writes informing us that on four separate occasions during the last 12 months he has been put to serious inconvenience and some loss by the gross misdelivery of telegrams. On each occasion, on making a complaint, he received a similar reply to the one which he encloses, and which is dated from the General Post Office on February 19, and is as follows:—"Sir,—With reference to your letters of the 21st ultimo and 10th instant, I am directed by the Postmaster-General to express regret for the annoyance and inconvenience occasioned by the misdelivery of the telegram in question. The messenger to blame has been suitably dealt with for his carelessness. The special attention of all the messengers concerned has been drawn to the matter, with a view to the prevention of a similar irregularity in future. I am, &c., F. J. BECKLEY, for the Secretary." Dr. Clarke asks if he has no redress.

23.2.03.

The loss on the telegraph service of this country will be the subject of a question in the House of Commons on Monday when Mr. Hennikker Heaton proposes to ask the Postmaster-General whether his attention has been directed to a Parliamentary return just issued showing the gross amount received and expended on the telegraph service during last year, and the balance of expenditure over the receipts, and whether he has noticed, on page 3 of the return, that there was a loss, including interest on telegraph loans, of nearly one million sterling (£958,000) on the telegraph business last year. The member for Canterbury finally asks the Postmaster-General to appoint a committee of business men to inquire into the cause of this heavy loss on the telegraph service of the country. 20.2.03.

POSTAGE ON NEWSPAPERS FOR ABROAD.—The Post Office has issued the following notice:—Attention is directed to the fact that bulky newspapers addressed to British colonies and foreign countries are frequently posted with only a ½d. stamp affixed. The postage which should be prepaid on such newspapers is a ½d. for every 2oz., and not, as in the case of inland (registered) newspapers, a ½d. per copy irrespective of weight. As the treatment of underpaid newspapers sometimes involves delay in transmission and the addressees are charged double the deficient postage, it is to the interest of the public that stamps to the proper amount should always be affixed.

11.3.03

POSTAGE OF PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS.

26.2.03

The following letter has been received by the London Chamber of Commerce from the Secretary to the General Post Office:—

General Post Office, London, Feb. 11, 1903.

SIR,—I am directed by the Postmaster-General to acquaint you, for the information of the London Chamber of Commerce, that he has given careful consideration to the proposals put before him by the deputation which attended at this office on November 6 on the subject of postage rates for newspapers and periodicals, and to the further printed statements of their views, which they have since been good enough to send him.

The original object of the deputation was to urge that a cheaper rate of postage should be conceded to what are roughly described as "periodical publications" than to other printed matter (exclusive of registered newspapers), and this proposal was supported mainly upon the grounds of the services rendered to education and to trade by the articles and advertisements contained in the publications in question.

Mr. Chamberlain is not insensible to the force of these arguments; but, as he pointed out to the deputation at the time, they are at least equally applicable to other publications not included in the limits suggested for the new post. Thus, the educational value of books must be admitted to be as great as that of periodical magazines, whilst the large number of traders accustomed to publish and circulate their own advertisements in the form of private catalogues would have legitimate cause of complaint if the Post Office refused to carry the latter on terms as favourable as those afforded to advertisements appearing, *e.g.*, in trade magazines.

It may be true, as the organizing committee state, in the reply which they have been good enough to send to the Postmaster-General's questions, that books owing to their weight pass mainly by parcels post; but it cannot be said that they are more difficult or more costly to handle in the post, weight for weight, than periodicals; and if an extension of the weight carried for a halfpenny be allowed to the latter, Mr. Chamberlain conceives that it would be impossible to exclude printed matter in the form of books from the advantages of the new rate.

For these reasons the Postmaster-General thinks it unnecessary to examine in detail the definition of periodical literature suggested by the organizing committee. He is convinced that any new facilities granted would have to be common to all printed matter, and that to afford special advantages to a limited class of publications would only give rise to additional criticism of the Post Office such as it already incurs in consequence of its statutory obligations to carry all registered newspapers at a privileged rate. Mr. Chamberlain is confirmed in this view by the remarks made by the spokesmen of the deputation upon the invidious nature of the present statutory distinction, and he thinks it was clear from the attitude of at least a majority of those present that no solution of the question would be satisfactory to them which gave more favoured postal treatment to advertisements contained in magazines than to traders' catalogues.

The question, therefore, resolves itself into one of the cost of the postal services involved in the transmission of packets of this nature through the post. The committee do not ask that the service should be carried on at a loss, recognizing that this would be tantamount to a proposal that the particular interests represented by them should be subsidized at the expense of the nation as a whole; but they express the view that "six ounces is a paying weight in itself" if carried in the post for a halfpenny. The Postmaster-General is satisfied that this is not the case. It is probable that none of the halfpenny matter now passing through the Post Office is dealt with at a profit; and it is certain that any such weight as six ounces could not be carried for a halfpenny except at a serious loss. It is impossible to calculate the total loss involved in such a rate, dependent as that must necessarily be upon the amount of matter passing under it; but the Postmaster-General is convinced that it would be very large, and he feels that the Post Office would not be justified in incurring it by any advantages which could at present be expected to result from the establishment of the new rate.

In arriving at this conclusion he has not lost sight of the argument put forward by Mr. Upcott Gill, that, as advertisements are indirectly a source of revenue to the Post Office, it is justifiable to carry them at a rate which may be unremunerative in itself. But, as explained by him to the deputation, this argument could not be limited to advertisements; and it would obviously be impossible, as a general principle, to fix postage rates according to the consequential revenue which might be expected indirectly to arise from the different classes of mail matter carried, instead of by reference to the cost of the individual services themselves.

I am, therefore, to express the Postmaster-General's regret that he does not feel able to adopt the proposal of the Chamber. If any further concessions are to be made in regard to the postal rates for printed matter he is of opinion that they must be general in their application, and not confined to a particular and limited class of publications, and that they must be sought in an increase of the weight transmitted for a penny rather than in an extension of the unremunerative halfpenny rate.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed) G. H. MURRAY.

The Secretary, the London Chamber of Commerce.

POSTAL TELEGRAPH CLERKS.

7.3.03. ANNUAL CONGRESS.

The 23rd annual congress of the Postal Telegraph Clerks' Association was opened at Leeds on Thursday and continued yesterday. About 100 delegates assembled at the Queen's Hotel on the first day, when the chair was occupied by Mr. J. T. PARKINSON (Leeds).

Mr. G. B. JAMESON (Newcastle-on-Tyne) moved the adoption of the report of the direct Parliamentary representation committee, which stated that a poll of the members had been taken on the questions (1) whether they were in favour of a candidate to be run on exclusively sectional lines; (2) whether they were in favour of a sectional nominee adopted by the joint committee; and (3) whether they were in favour of a payment of a *minimum* of 1s. or a *maximum* of 2s. per annum in addition to the present subscription. The committee decided that, inasmuch as the number of votes in favour of Nos. 1, 2, and 3 did not total 75 per cent. of the cards returned, they were of the opinion that the vote had failed. After some discussion the report was referred back to the committee on a motion to expunge a paragraph which expressed the opinion that the result of the vote could not be taken as an unprejudiced declaration of the opinion of the members of the association owing to a circular which was issued by three members of the association.

The SECRETARY, in his report, dealt at some length with the question of the increasing proportion of females in the service. The claim of women to sell their labour and to maintain themselves by the product of their own efforts, whether in the Post Office or elsewhere, was an indisputable and an inalienable right. The only question was whether the conditions of service of the male staff were made less tolerable by the presence of an undue proportion of females, and, if so, what was the equitable ratio which one staff should bear to another. The report proceeded to suggest that in no office should the proportion of females be greater than 30 per cent. of the total number of telegraphists. With regard to the question of wages, the opinion was expressed that the theory of equal wages where the conditions of service were alike was too impracticable, but in the opinion of the committee there should be no greater difference than 25 per cent. in the *maximum* of the two sections, male and female. Discussion on the subject was postponed. The report showed that the association now had a membership of 5,567, as against 5,290 last year—an increase of 277. The branches numbered 154, as against 136 in the previous year, 28 new branches having been formed and ten branches having lapsed. The financial statement showed an income of £1,069 on the general account and an expenditure of £793, leaving a balance in hand of £276.

Some discussion took place as to the advisability of the association's becoming the owners of the official organ, the *Telegraph Chronicle*, which is at present in private hands. A legal opinion on the subject pointed out the dangers which might arise through the association's owning the organ, and some members urged the difficulties in which decisions on the lines of the Taff Vale decision might land the association. The discussion was adjourned.

It was decided to open the membership of the association to telephone operators.

The congress reassembled at the Queen's Hotel yesterday, when a resolution was passed amending the programme so as to read—"That seven hours constitute an ordinary day's labour for telegraph clerks, and that overtime pay be calculated at the rate of 42 hours per week; that payment for all-night duty be calculated at a rate and a half, and that night duty be reckoned from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m."

The PRESIDENT (Mr. J. T. Parkinson) (Leeds) having delivered his address, a debate took place as to the position of the association with regard to the labour representation committee, in view of the resolution passed by that body at the recent Newcastle conference in relation to Labour candidates at elections. Eventually a resolution to remain in affiliation with the Labour Representation Conference was carried, and it was

POSTAL TELEGRAPH CLERKS' CONFERENCE.—The concluding meeting of the Postal Telegraph Clerks' Conference was held on Saturday in the Queen's Hotel, Leeds. Mr. J. T. Parkinson, Leeds, presided. The conference, on a motion from Belfast, considered a resolution affirming the principle of direct Parliamentary representation, as decided upon by the Dublin conference, and deciding that the expression "direct Parliamentary representation" should henceforth be taken to mean only the representation of the Postal Telegraph Clerks' Association in Parliament by a member of the association. Mr. G. H. Garland (London) moved that the words "representation of the P. T. C. A." be deleted. The amendment was agreed to, and the motion was afterwards carried. Mr. Garland brought forward a resolution to the effect that a sub-committee be appointed to make inquiries as to the means and cost of placing at the disposal of the P.T.C.A. accommodation in sanatoria for the curative treatment of hopeful cases of phthisis which might arise amongst its members, the sub-committee to be empowered if necessary to co-operate with the other associations representing the indoor force. He advocated the establishment of a sanatorium, and estimated that a building for 40 patients would mean an initial outlay of £8,000 and a yearly expenditure of £2,600. If 30,000 persons consented to have a penny per week stopped from their salaries it would provide £125 weekly, or £6,505 per year. If the indoor staff subscribed 1d. per week for 64 weeks they would have £8,000 for erection, and if they would then continue to subscribe ½d. per week it would yield about £3,250 a year for maintenance. Mr. J. Jackson (Leeds) seconded and the motion was agreed to.

9.3.03.

4.4.03. THE DATING OF POSTMARKS.

Replying to Mr. TALBOT, who asked the Postmaster-General whether it had been brought to his notice that the dated postmarks being often used for obliterating purposes were so obscured by the postage stamps that it was difficult to discover the hour or day on which the letter was posted, and whether he could give instructions that the dated postmarks shall be kept distinct from the stamps, as is done already in some post-offices, Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN says:—My attention has been directed to this matter, and I quite recognize the inconvenience caused by using the date stamp as an obliterator. I hope by degrees to largely increase the use of stamping machines with a date stamp separate from the obliterator, such as are already employed to a considerable extent in London.

THE POST OFFICE AND WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY.

11.3.03.

The negotiations between the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company and the Post Office in connexion with the land transmission of the company's messages have advanced a stage, the Post Office having agreed to connect by wire Falmouth with Poldhu, where the company's Cornwall station is situated. This, however, represents but a slight concession to the requirements of Mr. Marconi. The company have for some time past been urging the Department to grant them the same facilities which other cable companies enjoy—viz., that a cable may be handed in at any post-office and transmitted by the Marconi system at an inclusive charge. At the present time a message handed in at a postal telegraph office is required to be sent to the care of the company's agent at the particular coast station, the amount chargeable being the usual half-penny a word. From the Marconi station the message is transmitted to the desired destination, the surcharge for the oversea transmission being collected from the addressee, which, it is pointed out, is a very undesirable procedure. In the case of messages sent from a Marconi station to England from Italy or Canada—in which two countries the Governments are working in amicable agreement with the company—or from a fitted ship, the company's operator collects from the sender the cost under the scale of charges for the oversea transmission, and also the sum which the post-office at Poldhu, Crookhaven, or Holyhead charge for an ordinary inland telegram.

The Post Office have offered the Marconi Company a private wire from Poldhu to London, but this, it is said, is insufficient, as with the development of the system it will be necessary to have telegraph wires communicating between the wireless stations and various important provincial centres. It is also said that the present concession will not prove of such great advantage as would at first appear, inasmuch as the Marconi messages would, at Falmouth, have to take their turn with ordinary messages, which, in the case of commercial communications, might result in serious delay.

Mr. Henniker Heaton has given notice of a series of questions to the Postmaster-General on some interesting points regarding the liability of the Post Office for loss in transit of valuables. In August last a packet of diamonds and sapphires was despatched from Paris (by some merchants of the highest standing there) to Delhi. The packet, valued at 100,000*l.*, or £4,000, was registered and insured for this amount. On arrival at Delhi the packet was opened by the postmaster at that place (for Customs purposes) and found to contain 34 pieces of broken bottle or bottles. The precious stones had been abstracted. The Post Office declines even to pay the £2 loss on a registered letter, because some part of the registered article (the cover) was delivered. Consequently the insurance company declines to pay the insurance money. The salient point is expressed in the first question—

Whether it is a fact that, while the public are permitted to use the Post Office for transmission of valuable property contained in a cover duly registered, the Post Office authorities refuse all compensation when the valuable contents are stolen in transit and the cover only is delivered at the place of destination.

Then follow further questions as to why the public are not warned by the Postmaster-General of this alleged non-liability. 28.4.03.

THE NEW POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK.

11.4.03.

The removal of the headquarters of the Post Office Savings Bank from the well-known premises in Queen Victoria-street to the immense building just completed at West Kensington is without doubt the largest undertaking of the kind that has ever been carried out in connexion with a Government Department, or perhaps even in private enterprise. The magnitude of the work may be judged to some extent by the fact that the removal has been quietly taking place ever since

January 1 last, and will not be completed until Tuesday next, when the whole of the immense staff of the department will be located at West Kensington. The site on which the new building is erected is generally known as the Olympia Annexe, and covers an area of a little over four acres of ground, having been acquired at the somewhat moderate cost of £45,000. The building itself cost somewhere about £270,000, and is a gigantic structure designed as a permanent home for the enormous and ever-growing staff of officials who administer and carry out the work of the Post Office Savings Bank system. The front of the building faces Blythe-road and is built of Portland stone and red bricks in the Renaissance style. The main entrance, in the form of three arches leading into the quadrangle, is in the centre, which is almost wholly of stone. On each side of the arches is a bay surmounted by a dome-topped tower, and between these towers is a clock-tower, which at nights will be illuminated, thus serving as a new landmark to Londoners. The building is in form a hollow square, and the north and south blocks are continued beyond the east and west block with a view to an extension of the edifice, gigantic as it now is, which future requirements may demand. The number of rooms in this palatial edifice is almost legion, and it may well be so, seeing that the building as it stands at present is capable of accommodating 4,000 persons. The prevailing idea appears to be to have large rooms, for the purposes, no doubt, of proper and perhaps economical supervision, and as illustrating the extent to which this idea has been carried out it may be stated that there are three rooms which have no less a length than 350ft. each.

The building of the new Savings Bank premises at West Kensington has occupied close upon four years, the King, as may be remembered, having laid the foundation-stone on behalf of her Majesty the late Queen Victoria on Midsummer Day, 1889, just 100 years, curiously enough, after the establishment of the first savings bank of any kind in this country. The new premises are fitted up throughout in the most up-to-date manner, and with every comfort and convenience for the staff they are to house. There are no fewer than five electric lifts provided, three for passengers and two for goods, while provision has been made for three separate refreshment clubs, one for the male staff and two for the female staff, so that the small colony which is to reside here will be well catered for in the matter of feeding arrangements.

The erection of this enormous structure, which will rank with the largest of the London buildings, and the extensive accommodation and facilities it provides for the headquarters staff of the Post Office Savings Bank, are an eloquent testimony to the marvellous growth and development of the business of that department. In strange contrast, too, are the present results of that development with the early beginnings of the business. Thus little more than 40 years ago, or, to be exact, in 1861, when the Post Office banks were first established, one room in the General Post Office east was found sufficient for the accommodation of the headquarters staff. Here 20 clerks, under the control of Mr. George Chetwynd, the founder of the new system, conducted its operations. But the plan "caught on" with the public at once, and success was immediate and rapid, so that removal to more commodious premises was soon necessitated. Such premises were found in St. Paul's Churchyard and Little Carter-lane, and here the savings bank was domiciled until 1880, when, in August of that year, the department, owing to the huge and ever-increasing growth of its business, was moved to the specially-erected premises in Queen Victoria-street. Even these, large as they were, soon grew insufficient for the continued increase of savings bank work. It was not only that the number of deposits and depositors was increasing, but there was from 1880 onwards a rapid expansion of the facilities for thrift offered by the Savings Bank department. Thus in 1880 provision was made for the savings of the humblest, those who could save only penny by penny, by the introduction of slips to which unused penny postage stamps could be attached, and which, when filled with stamps representing 1s. in value, would be accepted as a deposit of that sum (being the *minimum* limit) at any Post Office Savings Bank. This scheme was of marked advantage to those whom it was intended to benefit, and was so eagerly made use of that in less than three months from the date on which the experiment was first made the plan was extended all over the country. At the present time not far short of £100,000 is saved by this means in the year. Again, facilities were provided in 1880 for the investment of small sums of money in Government Stock through the Post Office savings banks, and in 1884 a plan of life insurance and annuities, devised by Mr. James J. Cardin, C.B., late Comptroller and Accountant-General of the Post Office, was added to the ordinary business of the department, while in subsequent years many extensions and improvements, such as withdrawal by wire, facilities for deposit by schoolchildren, &c., were brought into operation, all which had the natural effect of increasing the work of the Savings Bank. Thus it was not long after the occupation of the Queen Victoria-street premises had taken place that further accommodation had to be sought for, and as a result a large block of buildings was erected at the back in Knightrider-street, Carter-lane, and Addle-hill. These premises, together with those in Queen Victoria-street, have served for upwards of 20 years, but during that period the volume of business has ever been increasing, with the result that the removal, which will be completed by Tuesday next, has had to be made to West Kensington. Here it is anticipated that the Savings Bank Department will find a permanent home, as the commodious premises will accommodate 4,000 persons, being just 1,000 in excess of the present actual staff of the department, besides which, as already stated, there is ample provision for the extension of the premises when the necessity arises.

It is an interesting feature in the progress of the Post Office Savings Bank that, during the 40 years or more that the bank has been in existence, the administrative staff has increased from 20 persons at the commencement to 3,062 persons at the present time. A still more interesting feature, perhaps, is that, of this number, almost one-half are women, there being nearly 900 women clerks, 100 girl clerks, and over 300 sorters, &c. The whole of this large female staff is under the control of a superintendent, Miss M. C. Smith, who, in recognition of her long and faithful service in this position (almost 27 years) was recently decorated with the Imperial Service Order at the hands of the Sovereign. The male staff is comprised of over 800 clerks, &c., 600 boy clerks, and a minor establishment of about 250 persons. That so enormous a staff is necessary naturally implies that the yearly volume of work to be performed must be tremendous. That this is actually so will be gathered from the fact that there are no fewer than 9,000,000 depositors in the Post Office Savings Bank at the present time, and that 15,000,000 deposits and 6,000,000 withdrawals are made in the year through the 14,000 Post Office banks now in existence. These figures afford some idea of the mass of work in correspondence, ledger keeping, warrant issuing, &c., which has to be performed at headquarters. The ledgers alone number 30,000, while the daily correspondence averages 100,000 letters, on some days the number being just double.

This vast business necessitates, as may be imagined, the provision of an enormous quantity of furniture, press and storage accommodation, stationery, forms, &c., together with a whole host of minor requirements incidental to the work, and the removal of all this collection of impedimenta from one end of London to the other is nothing short of a gigantic undertaking. Not only have tons upon tons of documents to be removed, but also all the plant of the printing machines, for the Savings Bank Department prints all its own stationery.

The moving has necessitated the use of 700 pantechnicon vans, and has been going on, under the management of the Office of Works, unostentatiously, as stated, for the past three months. The documents have been moved in instalments, and from time to time small contingents of the clerks have taken up their abode in their new official home, so that there has been no interruption of the work. Advantage has, of course, been taken of the Easter holidays for the final coup, and, as we have said, by Tuesday morning next the whole of the vast establishment of the Post Office Savings Bank, with all its furniture, presses, and other appurtenances will be installed in the West Kensington building. The removal has proceeded without a hitch or the slightest inconvenience to any of the depositors—as a matter of fact it is doubtful whether many are aware of the change that is taking place. That this is so reflects the highest credit on Mr. Charles D. Lang, C.B., the Controller of the Post Office Savings Bank, under whose direction the whole of the arrangements for this unique removal have been made. 11.4.03

1.5.03 POST OFFICE VOTE.

STATEMENT BY THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

On the vote to complete the sum of £10,067,500 for the salaries and expenses of Post Office services,

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said it had not been usual in recent years to preface discussion of this vote with a statement from the Minister in charge, and the reason was that in recent years the Postmaster-General had not been a member of the House. On this occasion there were one or two matters in the nature of changes and small reforms entered upon since he was appointed upon which he had a few words to say before the Committee began the general discussion. These partly related to alleged grievances of the staff, which had in the past made large demands on the time, the attention, and, he might be allowed to add, the patience of Postmasters-General. Many suggestions were made for the benefit of the public without reference to the cost to the taxpayers, and between the public benefit and the public purse a postmaster had to hold the balance evenly. His hon. friend the member for Devizes had drawn attention to the loss and inconvenience to poorer members of the community by reason of the limitations in the denominational values of postal orders issued. For amounts under one pound, two orders having to be taken, the amount for commission exceeded the amount paid for one order for a larger sum. Having given attention to this he had found that to increase postal order denominations to represent every sixpence up to one pound would involve considerable increase of cost in manipulation, and he found that where a double order was required it was nearly always a penny and a halfpenny order. At present the halfpenny order was issued at a loss that almost exactly balanced the gain on the penny order. He, however, was glad to say that he had made arrangements which would so reduce the cost of printing as to wholly compensate for increase in cost of manipulation; and he proposed to introduce, as soon as the orders could be got ready, a complete set of postal orders, from 6d. to 30s., which would be purchaseable at the present rate of ½d. under 2s., and above that amount 1d. (Hear, hear.) This system could not be brought into complete operation until after January 1, but the orders for lower sums would be in use on July 1. These new orders would have a counterfoil for the purchaser to fill up, and he hoped that the public would assist in making fraud difficult and detection easy by filling up every postal order before sending it by post. He believed that the system would be very useful to members of friendly societies in sending subscriptions and receiving payments, and he acknowledged the advice and assistance he had received from the Parliamentary Committee of those societies. Another change which, with the sanction of the Treasury, he was in course of carrying out was less easy to describe in general terms, and consisted in a more generous treatment of country districts in the matter of second postal deliveries and collections, though he could not be expected to accede to all the applications made. Another small change that should properly be mentioned in connexion with the Telegraph Vote was the reduction of the charge for a receipt of money for a telegram from 2d. to 1d., and the charge was only retained as a check on unnecessary demands which might unduly crowd postal counters, and not for revenue purposes. Another small change had been introduced at the request of the hon. member for Canterbury, over action for postal reform. Just as a penny letter might, if unopened, be readdressed and delivered without additional fee, so the envelope of a telegram, if unopened, might be readdressed and sent free by post to the person for whom it was intended. In connexion with the extension of the postal order system, he proposed a restriction in which he hoped for the support of the Committee and the public. Hitherto there had been no postal orders for less than 1s., but now it would be possible to obtain an order for 6d. This would not be a profitable business, but it would be a public convenience, and bringing this into operation he thought he would be justified in placing further restrictions on the repurchase of stamps across the counter, and thus limit temptations to fraud. *Employés* in an office were tempted to pilfer stamps and take them to the Post Office. That led to what was one of the most frequent forms of fraud among Post Office officials, but which was, nevertheless, proportionately to the numbers employed very rare. He proposed that from January 1 next the repurchase of stamps across the counter of the Post Office should only be made on the following conditions:—That any person tendering such stamps for purchase should fill a form stating his name, the value of the stamps, and his address, and that he should not be paid on the spot, but the money should be remitted to him at that address by money order. The commission charged to the public would be increased from 2½ per cent. to 5 per cent. to cover the cost of the postal order, and no smaller amount of stamps would be purchased than £1. He thought if he was supported, as he hoped he would be, that when this 6d. order and the new regulations came into operation the temptations to fraud offered by the present system, both inside the Post Office and outside, would be much diminished. There were other subjects of postal administration and reform affecting large sections of the public and exciting great interest on which he would have been glad to make statements, but he thought that, having regard to the time, he must postpone them to some other occasion. He would proceed at once to another class of questions. He had had before him the demand made by large sections of the Post Office staff on previous occasions and reiterated from year to year that a Select Committee should be appointed to examine into their grievances. He had made it his business since he had been at the Post Office to see that every memorial from the staff dealing with their grievances and addressed to him came before him personally, and that whatever reply was sent should be one which he personally had approved, and for which he was responsible, not merely officially, but personally. (Hear, hear.) He had done so though he had felt that many of the matters thus brought to his notice were very small details of administration, which the heads of a private business of even one-fiftieth the size would have left to subordinates. But he had felt that the position of public servants was rather different from that of a private *employé*, and he had been determined that an official of the Post Office applying to the head of his service should receive as fair and careful consideration for a direct appeal as if he sought Parliamentary influence to urge his claim. (Hear, hear.) He had examined in detail a great number of grievances alleged by the staff and received many deputations. The other day he met some members of that House, accompanied by two members of the telegraph service, to hear a statement by the latter of the grounds on which a Parliamentary inquiry was asked for. When the time came for him to speak, however, the hour was late, and he had accordingly agreed to draw up a written statement on the subject. Three main grounds were alleged for this inquiry—wages, sanitation, and meal reliefs. All these subjects had been fully inquired into by the Tweedmouth Committee. He was aware that members of the staff were disappointed with the composition of that committee. But whatever objection might be urged against one gentleman as being closely connected with postal administration, nothing could be urged against the other three. This committee made a report which proposed many concessions and many improvements in the conditions of the Post Office *employés*. That report was adopted *en bloc* by the Postmaster-General of the time. Within a very short time further concessions were made. The total cost of the two series of changes was something like £600,000 a year. At the time the recommendations were adopted they were, he thought, on their main lines a fair and even a generous settlement of the questions under discussion. But circumstances had further changed since then, and it did not necessarily follow that what was fair and right then was in all respects fair and right now. (Hear, hear.) He had come to the conclusion that, whilst a great number of the claims that were made had no foundation in justice or in reason, and that whilst a great many of those who thought themselves aggrieved would find it difficult to get elsewhere than in the public service such good employment as they were now receiving, there were cases in which the present scales were open to improvement, and in which further inquiry was needed to fix exactly what the proper scale should be. He held as strongly as he had ever done that the House of Commons itself was not the proper body to conduct an inquiry into matters of this kind. (Hear, hear.) No one had a higher respect than he had for the 1.5.03 House of Commons, for its traditions, and for the spirit which led so many gentlemen to give up so much time to the public welfare, and it was, therefore, with no disrespect for the House or its committees that he repeated for himself and for his colleagues that they were unalterably opposed to anything in the nature of a Select Committee of the House of Commons for the decision of this question. (Cheers.) Hon. members knew, and it was no use blinking it, the kind of pressure which was brought to bear, or was attempted to be brought to bear, upon members in all parts of the House by the public servants, servants of the Post Office he was afraid especially, though not entirely, at election time. (Cheers.) He had had members come to him, not from one side of the House alone, to seek from him in his position as Postmaster-General, protection for them in the discharge of their public duties against the pressure sought to be put upon them by the *employés* of the Post Office. (Cheers.) Even if the machinery by which Select Committees were appointed were such as enabled them to secure a Select Committee composed of thoroughly impartial men who had committed themselves by no expression of opinion on one side or the other, he still thought that it would not be fair to pick out 15 members of that House and make them marked men for the purposes of such pressure as was now distributed more or less over the whole Assembly. (Cheers.) But if he was opposed to the appointment of a House of Commons Committee for fixing wages in the Post Office, he was still more opposed to thrusting upon it, or, indeed, on any committee, the duty of regulating in all its details the daily administration and work of the Post Office. (Hear, hear.) The two main points which were brought before the Committee upstairs in support of the demand for an inquiry were sanitation and meal relief. It was contended that certain post-offices, owing to a broken staff, necessitated by broken business, became overcrowded, ill-ventilated, and otherwise insanitary. Of course it must happen from time to time that the staff exceeded the capacity of a building, and that the Department had to look out for a new one, but no one who knew the difficulty the Government had to contend with as a purchaser or renter of property when it was known that the Government was in the market would be surprised if there were sometimes an unavoidable delay extending over a greater period than to members of the staff not cognisant of the difficulties appeared reasonable. But how could a House of Commons Committee or any temporary committee examine into the sanitary condition of every post-office building throughout the country which the staff thought not to be in a good condition? (Hear, hear.) Two specific instances had been given to him of offices which were said to be in an unfit condition—Swansea and Grimsby. At Swansea the new head office was opened in April of last year, and the old office continued to be used merely as a branch sub-office with a greatly reduced staff until new premises could be found. It was only a week or two ago that he had papers before him with proposals for a new site, but they did not appear to him to offer proper accommodation for the staff, and he was obliged to direct that some other scheme should be devised. At Grimsby they were in negotiation for, and he hoped they would soon purchase, a site for a new

telegraph office. The existing one consisted of four houses thrown together, not a very convenient arrangement, but one which he ventured to say was not insanitary. That view was borne out by the report of the local medical man, who was also certifying surgeon under the Factory Acts. But the real test in this matter was the sick leave taken by the staff, sick leave during which the established staff received full pay and the unestablished staff received something less than full pay. The average sick leave for 1901 was—for men on the established staff, 7·8 days per annum; and for men on the unestablished staff, 5·2 days; while for women on the established staff it was 12·1, and for women on the unestablished staff it was 8·4. It would be found that those numbers were below the normal for workmen and workwomen in similar classes throughout the country, and at any rate they would not support any charge that the Post Office buildings were generally in an insanitary condition. (Cheers.) Cases would arise from time to time in which buildings became out of date and overcrowded through the growth of work, but all such cases must be dealt with on their merits, and if the Postmaster-General and his staff, with the assistance of the officers of the Board of Works, and, if necessary, of the factory inspectors, were not competent to look into these matters they were not fitted to hold the positions to which they had been appointed. (Hear, hear.) Lastly, there was the question of meal relief, which was intimately connected with the arrangement of the hours of work. The work of the Post Office servant lasted for eight hours, and if he did eight hours' continuous duty he was allowed half-an-hour out of that time for a meal. But the work of the Post Office was peculiar. The Department had practically no control over the time at which the *employé* should come. It had to be taken whenever the public brought the work to him and when they did bring it they expected it to be dealt with at once. Therefore, it was not possible, in spreading the work evenly over the 24 hours, as was comparatively simple in many manufacturing and distributing businesses, to divide it up into continuous eight hours' duty. Accordingly there were a certain number of duties in which the eight hours' work was divided between two attendances; and it was chiefly in connexion with this that the grievance as to meal relief was alleged. He had had one or two cases brought before him which he thought not satisfactory, and whenever a grievance, in his judgment, had been proved he had tried or was trying to devise a remedy. (Hear, hear.) But he wished to draw the attention of the Committee to what was described to him as a typical grievance by the spokesman of a deputation which waited on him shortly before Christmas. It was the case of certain sorting clerks and telegraphists in the provinces who had to come on duty at 10 a.m. and work till 2 p.m., and who then, after two hours off, worked from 4 p.m. till 8 p.m. The grievance was that they were not allowed 20 minutes for tea. He did not think that was a reasonable claim (cheers) or that the working day he had described was an unreasonable working day, and he held that the country ought not to be expected to pay for tea time taken out of the working hours for people engaged on these duties. He put it to the deputation whether meal relief, which was not counted as part of their working hours, would be accepted; but they replied in the negative. Some duties he had found to be unduly arduous, but those were not questions capable of settlement by general rule. Each case must be judged on its merits, and, in regard to the conditions under which the work was done. No committee could possibly lay down a detailed rule to guide the Postmaster-General in all possible circumstances. All the grounds put before him for a Parliamentary committee of inquiry were unsuitable for consideration by such a body; and some were unsuitable for consideration by any committee at all, and must be left to the responsible Minister. (Cheers.) But in regard to the scale of wages, he had come to the conclusion that they were not in all respects satisfactory. He was not certain that in some cases they did not err on the side of being unduly high, while in others they were in the opposite direction; and he felt that his hands would be strengthened and that he would be able to deal more satisfactorily with the question if he sought advice from men of practical business experience. Accordingly he proposed to take that course. Such an inquiry should be limited to the question of wages—to the adequacy or inadequacy of the wages, having regard to the conditions of the work and the general remuneration of Post Office servants. Such an inquiry should be conducted by men of practical business experience; and, if an impartial and judicial decision were to be obtained, the gentlemen invited to undertake this difficult task should be as free from any political or electoral pressure as from any departmental influence. (Cheers.) For the members of the committee, therefore, he proposed to look outside the House of Commons and outside the departments. (Cheers.) He looked for a small body of men—not more than five—of practical experience who would consent to examine the scales of wages now paid, and who would report as to their adequacy. The reference would be indicated by the following draft, though he did not pledge himself to the exact terms:—"To inquire into the remuneration of the undermentioned classes of Post Office servants and to report, having regard to the rates of wages current in other employments, whether the rates of postmen, sorters (London), telegraphists (London), and sorters and telegraphists (provincial) are adequate." These were the great classes of Post Office servants. If he could obtain the services of gentlemen willing to give the time and labour necessary for this inquiry, he hoped that they would be able to lay down a general opinion on the scales of these main classes, and that, in the light of the standards thus set up, it would be possible to deal with the claims of minor bodies of servants not actually included in the list. If this inquiry were not to be interminable and if business men were to be induced to give their time to it, it was essential to reduce the inquiry to manageable limits. On this account he had specified the subject and limited the scope of the inquiry; as to go into such a wide field as that surveyed by the Tweedmouth Committee would be more than business men could fairly be asked to undertake. (Hear, hear.) At present he had approached no one; and he was not, therefore, able to give any names; but his idea was that the members of the committee should not be members of the Civil Service at the present time, nor members of the House of Commons.

Mr. BAYLEY (Derbyshire, Chesterfield) asked whether members of the House of Lords would be excluded.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that he could not say that in no circumstances would he ask a member of the House of Lords to serve, if he had the necessary business experience.

CAPTAIN NORTON (Newington, W.) asked whether the question of leave would be included in the inquiry.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—No, Sir. (Cheers.) The length to which he was prepared to go he had stated. He was not prepared to place the whole of the duties of the Postmaster-General in the hands of any committee whatever. (Cheers.) He hoped to continue to retain the confidence of the House of Commons; but if he had not that confidence it was not a reason for appointing a committee to do his work, but a reason for transferring the office to some more competent person. (Cheers.)

Mr. BAYLEY said that there were business men in the House of Commons, and he did not like giving up the privilege of the House to consider and redress the grievances of public servants. The hon. member was still speaking when

7.30

The sitting was suspended. 1·5·03

9.0 The sitting was resumed at 9 o'clock.

Mr. BAYLEY, continuing his remarks, said he hoped the House would have a further opportunity of expressing its opinion upon the *personnel* of the committee promised by the Postmaster-General when the right hon. gentleman announced the names of those who were to constitute it. Speaking on behalf of the Post Office officials, he would say that they were quite willing to try the committee which the right hon. gentleman had suggested, though it was not the committee they would most have preferred. He hoped it would be appointed and get to work at once.

SIR A. ROLLIT (Islington, S.) said he was glad there seemed to be before them now some practical solution of this matter. Of the administrative reforms promised by the Postmaster-General the introduction of the sixpenny order would be most useful to friendly societies and to the savings banks, with which he was officially connected. The action of the right hon. gentleman in this respect was a distinct aid to providence and thrift. He thought there was room for further reforms. The Post Office during the last half-century had not been altogether a progressive department. While in Canada recently he found very general complaints about the cost of the postage of newspapers from this country, the effect of which had been to flood Canada with American literature and indirectly to exclude literature from the home country. (Hear, hear.) In this direction he hoped the Post Office surplus might be made available. He held that there was real ground for the dissatisfaction among certain classes of Post Office *employés*. The Tweedmouth Committee was a one-sided tribunal; the officials were represented on it, but the men not at all. The Postmaster-General, in dwelling so much on the objections to a Parliamentary committee—objections which he did not share—overlooked what was the exact attitude of the *employés*. It was quite true that they suggested a Parliamentary committee, but their general demand was for an independent inquiry, and they had offered to accept the result of any such inquiry. He was glad that, as the result of long and persistent endeavour, this demand was at length to be conceded.

9.30 The announcement of the right hon. gentleman was satisfactory so far as it went, though he thought the reference was too limited in that it dealt only with pay. There were also grievances connected with meal hours, special leave, and the conditions of combination, and he trusted those matters would also be considered independently. He sincerely hoped that, not only in the interest of the *employés*, but also in that of the State, a long-existing and somewhat embittered series of differences would be put an end to. (Hear, hear.)

SIR W. FOSTER (Derby, Ilkeston) thought the precedent set by the right hon. gentleman was an excellent one. One thing that had always struck him about the Post Office was its extreme rigidity, and he was glad to see on the part of the right hon. gentleman a greater elasticity of mind with regard to the suggestions made from various quarters. The reforms the right hon. gentleman had made were, he thought, useful. A greater number of deliveries in the rural districts would certainly in the end produce more business and more revenue. With regard to the claims of the *employés*, so far as the question of wages was concerned, the right hon. gentleman had taken a course which, he thought, they must accept as probably meeting the demands of the *employés*. He did not, however, think that the reference was altogether satisfactory. It ought, in his opinion, to be settled in conference with representatives of the Post Office workmen. As to the question of the sanitation of Post Office buildings and telegraph offices, he regretted that a suggestion made a year or two ago, that a Home Office inspector should be called in when complaints on this head were made, was not adopted. Surely it would be better to call in an impartial official unconnected with the Post Office to look into these matters. At present the men had to make their complaints to their superiors, and this caused friction. That would be avoided if an inspector specially appointed for the inspection of workshops were allowed to enter these premises and to ascertain if the sanitation was satisfactory. He thought the complaints of sanitation were borne out by the sick-leave figures, which, considering that the Post Office *employés* were a select class, were too high, being seven-and-a-half days per annum on the average, as compared with nine days among the members of friendly societies, who belonged to all classes, including those engaged in dangerous trades.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that seven-and-a-half days sick-leave was the average among those who received full pay when absent. The average among those whose illness involved sacrifice was 5·2, which was little more than half what the hon. member quoted as the friendly society average.

SIR W. FOSTER said the difference in conditions made the argument from statistics on both sides conjectural, but he believed the Post Office average was higher than it ought to be. He also thought there was reason for the reconsideration of the claim of the staff to have intervals for refreshment, especially when the hours were extended by the necessity for working overtime.

Mr. GOULDING (Wilts, Devizes) expressed satisfaction at having a Postmaster-General once more in the House of Commons, and thanked him for postal-order concessions which were of great importance, especially to members of friendly societies. He approved the appointment of a committee on wages from business men outside the House, and was glad that on other grievances the Postmaster-General intended to take the responsibility of giving his own decisions instead of sheltering himself, as was now too often done by Ministers of the Crown, behind the decisions of Commissions.

10.0 Mr. BURNS (Battersea) said he attached serious importance to the speech of the Postmaster-General in its treatment of the demands of the Post Office staff. It was significant of the social and political changes which had come over certain classes in the Government service, and it indicated a serious moral decadence of the House of Commons. He protested against the action of the Postmaster-General in sub-letting his authority to a committee of outsiders, and sub-contracting the duty of every member of Parliament to keep control of the public purse. If the right hon. gentleman thought that by this course of action he would get rid of agitation among the Post Office officials he was living in a fool's paradise; for the committee of independent outsiders which the right hon. gentleman proposed to appoint would be discredited, and its report, lacking the authority of the House of Commons, would only make the Post Office servants more discontented. He protested against a Minister's delegating to outsiders work which he ought to do himself, or—if he were unable to do it himself—which he ought to entrust to a committee of the House of Commons. If all that the Postmaster-General had said with regard to influence at elections were true, influence which amounted almost to electoral intimidation, the real remedy for that lay, not in an outside committee, which might pacify the staff for a year, but in disfranchisement.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—Will you vote for disfranchisement? (Hear, hear.)

Mr. BURNS said under certain circumstances he would. It was for the right hon. gentleman to prove the case. In his own constituency the official voter had been practically unanimously against him, and he hoped he would so continue. (Laughter.) He had rarely, if ever, advocated the claims of sections of Government servants, and never intended to. If the House of Commons did not do their duty to their own servants, and were influenced improperly, they would show that they were devoid of moral courage and lacked a sense of duty to the taxpayer. The exercise of such an influence would in municipal administration spell confusion. The Postmaster-General did not want to do his duty by dealing with these questions individually, and so was going to appoint this outside committee of inquiry. He supposed one of the members would be Mr. Harrod, of Harrod's Stores, another Mr. W. Whiteley, another Sir T. Lipton, the fourth a railway director, and the fifth, possibly, Mr. Macnamara, the Post Office horse contractor. (Laughter.) They would all be employers of labour, and would be viewed with suspicion by the *employés*. If he were Postmaster-General, he would nominate a peer as chairman, and the two members for Oxford and Cambridge Universities, or, if that did not suit, he would select five men who had majorities of 4,000 in their constituencies (laughter), and a few postal servants to bring pressure to bear on them. He believed that would better satisfy the Post Office *employés*. The reference to the committee was to be on the question of wages only. But that would cause discontent rather than allay it. It would apply to 100,000 out of 180,000 men, the best paid, the men who worked the shortest hours and who had greater chances of promotion, while it would leave outside 80,000 auxiliary postmen, unattached men, assistant postmasters, engineers, linemen, and tube assistants—the very men who had relatively little electoral influence among them. He did not agree that the Home Office should be called in to look after insanitation in the Post Office. The grievance could be dealt with in the same way as other nuisances of the same kind were dealt with, by deciding that the Post Office was like a workshop or factory, and came within the purview of the local authority. As a member of a friendly society, he had investigated the subject of health in the industries of the country; and he found that the health of postal servants and municipal servants compared favourably with that of the general population, while their liability to accident and injury was above the average of any other trade. This independent committee would possibly do the postal servants a great injustice by not satisfactorily meeting their reasonable demands. In that case the Postmaster-General would be badgered next year on the Estimates to rectify their shortcomings. Indeed, it would perpetuate the agitation and increase the pressure on members of Parliament.

10.30 The only way to stop log-rolling and the intimidation of members was for the House of Commons to do its duty and to take the consequences at the polls. He protested against their executive and administrative duties being taken away from them and handed over to a body of men who would stir up greater discontent than there had ever been in the past.

Mr. DUKE (Plymouth) said the great difficulty of members of the House in dealing with the question of proper wages and the proper terms of employment of public servants was the ignorance of most of them in regard to business matters. There was nothing unconstitutional in the course proposed to be taken. The Postmaster-General did not delegate his functions, but merely sought advice, and that House did not delegate its functions. He claimed for his constituents the right to complain to him if they thought they were oppressed by a Department of the State.

Mr. BROADHURST (Leicester) said he hoped, when the committee was appointed, every facility would be given to take the evidence of men who were acquainted with the grievances of Post Office servants. As to sanitation, he hoped that care would be taken to see that the servants of the State were not working under conditions highly injurious to their health.

Mr. BOSCAWEN (Kent, Tunbridge) thought that the champions of Post Office *employés* had every reason to congratulate themselves upon the prospect of a thorough inquiry by an independent and impartial tribunal. The discussion of the grievances of the men was now the less necessary, and he turned to the administration of the Post Office and the additional facilities offered to the public. Among the proposed changes he could not approve of the restrictions to be placed on the repurchase of stamps by the Department. He felt sure these restrictions would prove inconvenient and irksome, and hoped the matter would be reconsidered. The parcel post proved most useful for traders in towns, but was of little utility in rural districts. It might be made a ready means for the distribution of agricultural produce in small quantities, and he suggested that postmen should be authorized to collect parcels and letters and sell stamps in the remoter districts where post-offices were few and widely separated.

1·5·03

11.0 Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR (Liverpool, Scotland) viewed the appointment of the committee which had been announced with considerable apprehension. He thought it would have been better that the Postmaster-General should investigate and decide this question himself. His apprehension was augmented by some of the indications which had been given of the course which was to be pursued. The House of Commons was not to be informed beforehand of the names of the committee, and was not to have any power of expressing an opinion regarding the membership of the committee. No doubt the Postmaster-General would not appoint a committee which he did not think fair and impartial; but in an ordinary wages dispute a tribunal would hardly be considered satisfactory on which there was not something like a fair division of representation between the classes interested, with, perhaps, an impartial person as an arbitrator. With regard to the insanitary condition of some post-offices, it was absurd to suppose that the State should evade all those conditions in the employment of labour which the law imposed on every other employer. If the Post Office would accept the inspection of the local sanitary authorities all these complaints would disappear.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that there were reasons why Crown offices should not be treated in the same way as establishments carried on for private profit or conducted by private enterprise. The hon. member himself was the leader of the band who opposed the extension of State inspection to conventual laundries.

Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR said that the laundry question raised profound religious feelings, and could not fairly be urged against him.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said he did not wish to do anything that was unfair or to press the argument for more than it was worth. But, taking the question on its merits, he should say that safeguarding the sanitary conditions in which the people worked, the importance of preserving the health of the people and the danger that possibly some necessary precaution might be overlooked, was not less in the case of these laundries than in the case of Government establishments. (Hear, hear.) He thought that in some cases where there was good reason to doubt whether a post-office was or was not sanitary the Postmaster-General might well have recourse to the advice and assistance of the Home Office through its factory inspector; and he had recently taken this course in regard to the General Post Office itself. The committee should understand that *ex parte* statements made in regard to the sanitary condition of post-offices must not be accepted as definite and final proof. At the same time it was quite true that in some cases, where they were about to go into a new office, he could not, for the short term remaining of the old office, recommend that a large expenditure should be undertaken for sanitary or other requirements. His complaint was not that these questions should be raised in that House, but that the officials should go to hon. members and make these statements to them in preference to going to the Postmaster-General, whom, he would hope, they might regard in these matters as their natural friend and protector, and from whom they should not go to hon. members until they had failed to obtain redress at his hands. (Hear, hear.) He thought he might say that the action he proposed to take in order to obtain advice as to the scales of wages paid to certain classes of Post Office officials had met with the general approval of the committee, though it was reprobated and disavowed by the hon. member for Battersea. With a good deal of what the hon. member said he was in agreement. But he did not agree with him in what he understood him to lay down as the duty of a Minister in his position. The hon. member said that if he asked gentlemen outside that House to advise him he was sub-letting his authority and derogating from the

dignity of that House. He did not agree with that view, nor did he accept it as one which should guide him in the action he proposed to take. (Hear, hear.)

11.30 The hon. member was good enough to suggest that he would appoint a peer and the two members for Oxford and Cambridge Universities, because they had no postal *employés* among their constituents. But that was not the way in which Select Committees were nominated, and he could not work a revolution in Parliamentary procedure. He had given a great deal of attention to these wages questions. While he thought that, on the whole, the Post Office scales of pay were just, and even rather generous, and that it was quite possible that an inquiry might show that in some cases they were too high, it was also clear that in some cases they might not be justified. The course he proposed to adopt would not lessen his responsibility, but would enable him to come to a decision in the light of fuller information. He intended to give the names of the committee to the House as soon as they were complete, but he thought it inadvisable to submit their names to be voted on by the House. (Hear, hear.) He declined to ask busy men to give their time to the public service in this way with the condition that their names should first be submitted. He thought it would be impossible to get men of the authority and position he hoped to secure unless the scope of the inquiry were kept within reasonable bounds. His hon. friend the member for Tunbridge had raised the question of extending the facilities for the collection of parcels in the rural districts. He understood his hon. friend to suggest that postmen delivering in rural districts should be empowered to sell stamps and to accept letters and parcels; but a postman in a rural district did these things now, although, of course, he could not carry more than a certain weight. It was one thing for a postman to accept parcels and letters offered to him on his round and another thing to say that, whether he had letters to deliver at a house or not, he should call to see whether there was anything to send away. That would be a very large undertaking. It could not be carried out with the present staff, and would utterly disorganize the delivery of letters. If, however, he could see his way to further development, he should not be slow to adopt it. (Hear, hear.) As to the question of special leave of absence, he dealt with that subject fully last year. At the present time working postmen had 14 working days holiday on full pay in the year. In addition to that, subject to the necessities of the moment, they might have ten days special leave with pay, if they applied for it, on their providing a substitute. Was not that reasonable leave as compared with what working men in other employments were allowed? (Hear, hear.) He thought it was very generous, and he did not think it was right to give any further concession in that direction.

Mr. NANNETTI (Dublin, College-green) complained that the inquiry promised had reference only to the question of pay. There were other grievances which ought to be considered, and amongst them the cases of favouritism in promotion which so often occurred. The scope of the inquiry, he maintained, ought to be widened. He moved the reduction of the vote by £100.

Mr. HAY (Shoreditch, Hoxton) regretted the limitations of the proposed inquiry into wages.

Mr. LOUGH (Islington, W.) was speaking in criticism of the proposals of the Postmaster-General, when, as

THE POSTAL ORDER SYSTEM.

2.6.03.

We have received the following from the Post Office:—

The Postmaster General has pleasure in announcing that he has made arrangements for the introduction of considerable improvements in the Postal Order System.

The number of denominations will be increased from 14 to 40—one for each complete sixpence from 6d. to 20s. Not more than one order will, therefore, in future be required to make up any sum not exceeding £1. The poundage will be on the same scale as at present, namely, ½d. under 2s., 1d. from 2s. to 10s. 6d., and 1½d. from 11s. to 20s.

The form of order will be simplified, and a numbered counterfoil will be attached, on which particulars of the order can be entered, and which is intended to be retained by the sender for reference.

Some of the new denominations of order will be on sale at post-offices on July 1 next, and the issue of the whole series is expected to be complete by January 1.

These additional facilities for the transmission of small sums of money will be accompanied by modifications in the practice followed as regards the purchase of postage stamps from the public at post-offices, a practice which has been found to be liable to serious abuses.

On and after January 1 next such purchases will be subject to the following regulations:—(1) Every person tendering stamps for sale will be required to fill up a form stating the value of the stamps, together with his name and address. (2) Payment will be made by means of a money order sent by post to the address of the vendor. (3) The commission charged to the public on purchases of stamps will be raised from 2½ per cent. to 5 per cent., which will cover the cost of postage and commission on the money order. (4) No smaller amount than one pound's worth of stamps will be purchased from any one person.

Registered Letters.

In reply to Mr. Henniker Heaton, Mr. Austen Chamberlain states that so far as the inland service of the United Kingdom is concerned, it is not the fact that compensation is refused when the contents of a registered letter are stolen in transit and the cover only is delivered at the place of destination. In such cases payment is made, not as a matter of legal liability, but as an act of grace within certain limits, and subject to certain conditions which are set forth on the official certificates of posting, and at pages 13 to 17 of the "Post Office Guide." In the international post, which is regulated by the Postal Union Convention, there is no liability to compensate in the case of a registered but uninsured packet unless it is entirely lost, in which case an indemnity of 50f. is payable. Nevertheless, in this country compensation up to that amount would be granted for the loss of contents, if it were clear that such loss had occurred while the packet was in the custody of the British Post Office. The right hon. gentleman regrets that he cannot undertake to supply particulars of all claims and losses of the kind which have arisen during the last five years. It is provided by section 3 of the Post Office Act, 1875, that the registration of a postal packet shall not render the Postmaster-General or the postal revenue liable for the loss of any such packet or the contents thereof. 6.5.03.

The Post Office Telegraphs.—A return has been published by the General Post Office as a Parliamentary paper [31] showing the gross amounts received and expended in respect of the telegraph service since the telegraphs were taken over by the State in 1870 down to 1901-2. The figures are for complete years ended March 31 since 1875; previously they were for calendar years. Since 1883-4 there has been an annual excess of expenditure. The expenses for 1901-2 were the largest yet shown—namely, £4,221,927, a deficiency of £651,880, or nearly double that for 1900-1. The increase is chiefly due to a rise of about £422,000 in "salaries, wages, maintenance, &c." 7.5.03.

4.5.03.

We published on Saturday the official announcement of the changes about to be made in the cost and values of postal orders, which were announced by the Postmaster-General in the House of Commons on Thursday. These orders are now sold of fourteen different values, separated from each other by intervals the reasons for which it does not always seem quite easy to explain, with the general result that it may often be necessary to obtain two orders for the payment of some small sum, while twice or thrice that sum could be paid by means of a single one. Thus, in order to pay five shillings and sixpence, it is necessary to obtain one order for three shillings and another for half-a-crown, at a cost of twopence, while a single order for seven-and-sixpence can be obtained for a penny. To pay eighteen shillings and sixpence requires two orders which cost twopence-halfpenny; while a single order for twenty shillings costs only three-halfpence. After the first of next January, and, with regard to some denominations, after the first of July, the number of orders will be increased from fourteen to forty, rising by regular increments of sixpence from that sum to a pound; so that any amount under a pound may be paid by a single order, and at uniform rates of a halfpenny under two shillings, a penny from two shillings to ten-and-sixpence, and three-halfpence from eleven shillings to twenty. Not only will the charge bear a definite relation to the service rendered and to the amount of the payment to be made, but the increased number of orders will afford greatly increased and much needed facilities to the members of industrial clubs and analogous bodies, as well as for the transmission of small sums in payment for farm or other produce. The existing system of permitting stamps to be affixed to a postal order for the purpose of increasing its value by any amount under sixpence will, we presume, remain as at present, but an important change is to be introduced into the present practice with regard to the purchase of stamps from the public. The Postmaster-General explained to the House that the existing facilities in this direction had been found to afford opportunities for peculation which it was desirable to take away; while the reform of the postal order system will render it unnecessary to employ stamps as a kind of currency for the payment of small accounts or orders. For the future they will only be purchased from the public in quantities of a pound's worth or more, and the seller will be required to leave his name and address, to which a money order will be sent by

post in payment; while the commission charged will be increased from the present two and a half to five per cent. In Thursday's debate the change as to the purchase of stamps was condemned by the member for the Tunbridge Division of Kent as being likely to prove inconvenient and irksome, but he did not explain in what manner or in what direction these evil consequences would be produced. The House in general may be presumed to have considered that the probable diminution of dishonesty would afford a sufficient compensation for any trifling inconvenience which the change may be expected to occasion. A poor man, oppressed by the possession of more stamps than his correspondence was likely to require, would always be able to find some tradesman to take them off his hands.

The debate to which we have referred was, however, concerned with much wider issues than any which can arise from questions of mere detail in Post Office administration. The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, with the courage and directness to be expected from him, has determined to grapple boldly with the practice of bringing electoral pressure to bear upon members of the House of Commons for the purpose of obtaining redress of the real or imaginary grievances of public servants—a practice in which the servants of the Post Office have of late years displayed very considerable aptitude. He has decided to appoint a committee to inquire into the remuneration of postal servants as compared with that of other wage-earners of similar class, and to go, for the members of this committee, not only outside of the House of Commons, but also outside of the Civil Service, and to select them from among men of business who are practically conversant, on a large scale, with the questions which will have to be considered. MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN stated it to be his own opinion that the scale of wages paid by the Post Office was, on the whole, a liberal one, but that there were cases which furnished exceptions to the rule; and on this point, and on this only, he proposes to avail himself of the outside assistance to which he referred, and which will, of course, be assistance by advice only, leaving him with complete responsibility for the adoption of that advice or for its rejection as he may see fit. With regard to many of the alleged grievances he gave what appeared to be entirely satisfactory explanations; and he laid down most emphatically his determination to be, so to speak, master in his own house, and not to suffer any question but the single one of rates of payment to be included within the scope of the inquiry. His speech in general was, indeed, a full justification of the course taken by the postal authorities with regard to many of the matters which have been put forward as the foundations of grievances; and especially on the subject of leave he was able to show that privileges were afforded which it would probably be very difficult to equal in any branch of private industry. With regard to the alleged insanitary state or overcrowding of certain offices, he showed that such conditions, in so far as they existed at all, were the inevitable results of the growth of business and of the time necessary for the procuring and the equipment of new buildings; and he also showed that no serious consequences had ever been produced by these alleged defects, so far, indeed, as they could be assumed to have any real existence. The health of Post Office servants will bear comparison with that of any other section of the industrial community.

It was left for MR. JOHN BURNS to bring into prominence a consideration which every one must feel to be underlying that of the pressure exerted upon members of Parliament by public servants, and to blurt out what might, but for him, have been left unsaid, although assuredly not unthought. MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN had told the House that every member knew the kind of pressure which was brought to bear, or was attempted to be brought to bear, upon members in all parts of the House by public servants, especially, he was afraid, at election time. Members had, he said, come to him, not from one side of the House alone, to seek from him, in his position as Postmaster-General, protection for them in the discharge of their public duties against the pressure sought to be put upon them by the *employés* of the Post Office. MR. BURNS, in referring to this aspect of the matter, said that the remedy for an evil which, on the showing of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, amounted almost to electoral intimidation was not to be sought in an outside committee, which might pacify the men for a year, but in disfranchisement; and, being asked by MR. CHAMBERLAIN whether he would vote for disfranchisement, replied that in certain cases he would, the reserve apparently meaning that he would do so if the complaint as stated were proved to his satisfaction. It is plainly to this result that affairs are tending, and MR. BURNS is sufficiently a man of business to know that the affairs of a great Empire cannot be properly conducted if an army of public servants are engaged in the pursuit of their private interests, or of what they conceive to be their private interests, by means of what is delicately called "pressure," but which MR. BURNS had the courage to describe by its right name as electoral intimidation. More than sufficient harm has been done by the efforts in this direction of a few comparatively small parties of faddists, who at election times have obtained pledges which those who gave them never expected to be called upon to fulfil, but the fulfilment of which, at some time or other, has been rigidly exacted from them. When similar tactics are employed by great bodies of men, such as postal servants or dockyard servants, for the sake of obtaining from the taxpayers rates of payment or other privileges to which no merits of their own have entitled them, it becomes high time to stop such agitation once for all. MR. BURNS is quite right. The disfranchisement of public servants would provide an effectual remedy against their present methods of seeking to obtain undue advantages for themselves, and he is to be congratulated on having had the courage and the wisdom to speak the word.

4.5.03.

In view of the fact that to-day's sitting of the House of Commons is to be devoted to a debate in Committee of Supply upon postal matters, it may be noted that the main objections of the National Joint Committee of Postal and Telegraph Associations to the inquiry which Mr. Austen Chamberlain proposes to institute are—(1) That the body to whom the inquiry is to be entrusted is not a committee of the House of Commons, which has been asked for by the staff for many years; (2) that no representative of the employés is to be a member of the committee; (3) that the terms of reference are too limited, the wages question being but one of many grievances; and (4) that the most poorly paid of all the postal servants—the bulk of the employés—are outside the terms of reference. It is pointed out that, as matters stand, 30,330 counter clerks, telegraphists, and sorters will be included in the inquiry and 36,679 mechanics, porters, postmen, &c., partly included; but that 21,220 sub-postmasters will be excluded, as well as 81,410 persons employed in unestablished positions, such as assistants to postmasters, auxiliaries, boy messengers, copyists, commissionaires, and telegraph construction hands.

11.5.03

SUPPLY COMMITTEE.

12.5.03 POST OFFICE VOTE.

The House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. W. LOWTHER (Cumberland, Penrith) in the chair, and resumed the consideration of the vote to complete the sum of £10,067,500 for the salaries and expenses of the Post Office.

Mr. LOUGH said that as the great convenience which the public had hitherto enjoyed of being able to resell small amounts of stamps to the Post Office was entirely to be taken away, the public would lose rather than gain by the reforms which the Postmaster General had announced. The present regulation was that stamps would be purchased back by the Post Office at a reduction of 2½ per cent., or sixpence in the pound. Surely that was a profitable business to the Post Office as well as being a great public convenience. The official notice issued with respect to the increased facilities for obtaining postal orders, stated that a postal order might now be obtained for any sum under a pound. But orders only for even sixpences were to be issued. For instance, an order for 14s. 9d. could not be obtained. He presumed that odd amounts were to be made up with stamps affixed to the postal orders.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—Yes.

Mr. LOUGH said that as those stamps would be purchased back again surely that was a breach of the right hon. gentleman's new regulation. The right hon. gentleman proposed to appoint a committee of outsiders, rather than a committee of members of the House of Commons, to inquire into the grievances of the postal service.

3.0 He ridiculed the idea that the Post Office voters, distributed as they were, could intimidate even the most easily frightened member of Parliament. Nor would such a step be effective, for members were quite as much plagued by people who had no votes as by those who had. They might put aside the question of pressure, and the right hon. gentleman should apply himself to making a clean settlement of these long-standing grievances. He did not think the proposed committee, constituted as it was, would effect such a settlement, because no representation was given to the staff, and because the terms of reference were not wide enough. He moved a reduction of the vote by £100.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury), while congratulating the Postmaster-General on his postal reforms, regretted, on the other hand, that they were not to be carried further. A postal order for one guinea, for example, would be a great convenience, and, if legislation was necessary to give this effect, he believed such legislation would be carried through without a dissentient voice. He complained of the postal law by which any postal order not presented within three months was subjected to a fine. He held in his hand two postal orders for 3s. 6d. each. A merchant found them a little while ago on his desk, and on sending them to the Post Office, which had had the use of the money for ten years, they asked 10s. 2d. by way of fines before they would pay the 7s. (Laughter.) That was a miserable, mean, and unbusiness-like action, and one that the Postmaster-General would not be guilty of in his private affairs. (Hear, hear.) This unconscionable demand was aggravated by the fact that the Postmaster-General made £12,000 by lost postal orders. Another subject of grievance had reference to the affixing of stamps on postal orders. He quoted a case of a poor man in the Midlands who presented a postal order for 2s. 2½d., the 2½d. being affixed in stamps. The Post Office official paid 2s. 2d., and when the poor man asked for the halfpenny the official replied "Oh, we never pay halfpennies." This was a mean and contemptible action on the part of the department, and he hoped that his right hon. friend would alter the practice. Imperial penny postage was now almost general as far as the British Empire was concerned; but he called attention to the extraordinary anomaly that, while a letter could be sent through France to New Zealand for a penny, letters to France still cost 2½d. He invited the Postmaster-General to convene a meeting with the Postmasters-General of Germany, France, Belgium, and other countries on the Continent with a view to establish penny postage to and from those countries. It would be a great work if his right hon. friend could achieve the great distinction of establishing universal penny postage in all parts of the civilized world. Another reform calling for attention had reference to the charge for money orders. For a money order of the value of 5s. to be sent to France a charge of 6d. was made, while a similar order from France to England cost one penny. Telegraphic and ordinary money orders on the Continent were delivered at the residence of the addressee, thereby saving trouble and annoyance, and he appealed to the right hon. gentleman to introduce the same system here.

3.30 The parcel post rates to the United States were ridiculously high. With regard to post-cards, why could they not be sold at their face value? Stationers who sent their post-cards to the Post Office to be stamped were charged from 10 to 20 per cent. more than the cost of the work, though the Post Office was saved a great deal of trouble by this practice, simply to bolster up the business of Messrs. de la Rue. With regard to insufficiently stamped letters, instead of charging double the deficiency, it would be sufficient if the Post Office charged a halfpenny fine for every inland letter and a penny fine for every foreign letter. Another grievance which would commend itself for redress to his right hon. friend was the absence of letter-boxes in all through trains. In every other country such letter-boxes existed. He had appealed in vain to the right hon. gentleman's predecessors to give some facilities for recalling letters which had been posted by mistake; and he urged the present Postmaster-General to try to follow the example of other countries in this respect. In regard to the issue of stamps he would suggest that the country of origin should be put on each stamp, and he thought it would be a pleasing thing if at least one denomination bore the portrait of our beloved Queen. He was glad that his right hon. friend had recently tried to improve the character of the post-marks on letters.

4.0 He would also be glad if his right hon. friend would give some indication of his intentions with regard to letters containing lottery tickets and immoral literature, which in the United States were stopped from circulation. Another subject of great importance was the large number of defaults on the part of Post Office officials. Last year 1,000 persons were dismissed for irregularities. Some change, he thought, might be made in reference to the repudiation by the Postmaster-General of responsibility for losses incurred by the default of officials. For instance, the other day a man lost £1,500 through the blunder of a telegraph clerk, but his right hon. friend said he could do nothing for him. Another reform which recommended itself to every one in the country was the introduction of private letter-boxes, which in other countries had proved a great boon. He also wished to urge the desirability of the establishment of a penny post to Egypt. The postage was only 1d. to Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, and India, but on entering the Suez Canal one had to pay 2½d. He was certain that if his right hon. friend would take steps he could establish a penny postage with Egypt. As to the magazine post, he contended that magazines should be placed on the same footing as newspapers, seeing that newspapers like the *Field*, of enormous weight, were carried throughout the country for ½d., while great magazines like the *Nineteenth Century*, if they weighed more than 2oz., were charged the full rate. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the book post regulations he understood that no two people in the Post Office understood what they meant. If a lady wrote on her cards the words "at home," those who received her invitations had to pay double postage; if the words were printed they went by halfpenny post. A thousand receipts sent out by a friendly society official were surcharged to the receivers because the sender wrote the words "with thanks." In another case the same penalty followed the use of the polite address "genta." (Laughter.) Objection had been taken to the enclosure of a chess column cut from a newspaper. For about £200 a year the privilege of free postage might be given to soldiers and sailors serving abroad, a privilege enjoyed by foreign services. He complained that pence were not received at the Post Office Savings Bank, and that when a cheque for £1 1s. 10d. had been sent in the 10d. was returned. He complained also of the price paid by the Post Office for stamps, of the unsatisfactory arrangements in the insurance department, and of the bewildering character of the Post Office Guide.

4.30 The Postmaster-General proposed to appoint a committee of five business men to inquire into the grievances of postal servants. He did not complain of that; but he asked, why should not the right hon. gentleman also appoint a committee of five business men to inquire into the postal grievances of the public? (Hear, hear.)

CAPTAIN NORTON (Newington, W.) said that the committee which the Postmaster-General proposed to appoint to inquire into the grievances of the Post Office servants would not be accepted by the employés. What they demanded was that their grievances should be dealt with by the House of Commons. The right hon. gentleman had told a startling story of how members on both sides of the House had appealed to him to protect them from the postal servants. Members of the House represented all sections in their constituencies, and surely postal servants as voters had the right to approach their representatives, and apply the same kind of pressure that other organized bodies applied. If the postal servants were such terrible political tyrants as had been represented he hoped they would take note of the fact that they could never hope for a favourable consideration of their grievances from the present Government. Five employers of labour, probably sweaters, were to be appointed to assist the Government in carrying out the fair wages resolution of the House. He was not astonished that the postal servants had refused to accept such a board of arbitration. The suggestion that the postal servants should be disfranchised was the most extraordinary he had ever heard of. What was wanted was a committee which would deal with the grievances of all the *employés* and not a committee over which the House of Commons had no control. He objected to the committee because it was not what the men asked for, namely, the decision of their employer, and secondly, the most numerous and poorly-paid body were excluded. The case of the women, for example, was not to be considered. How then could a successful result be looked for? This bastard arbitration board would never give satisfaction. As far as the men were concerned it was a packed jury, and he denounced it as a sham and valueless.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, replying to the points raised in the debate, commented in the first place on the tone and temper displayed by the hon. and gallant member who had just sat down. The hon. and gallant member did not know who were going to form the committee, and he did not wait to know before denouncing——

CAPTAIN NORTON.—That they are not members of the House of Commons is quite sufficient.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.—What a liberal-minded view! No one is to be trusted but a member of the House of Commons! (Cheers.) In the proposal he had made he believed, notwithstanding the hon. and gallant member, that he had found the means of arriving at a decision which would satisfy the mass of public opinion as to the justice or otherwise of the complaints so constantly and continuously made, and which would

be a very good guide to the Postmaster-General, who was responsible in the first instance for seeing that fair wages were paid. What the employer asked for was an independent committee and not one constituted wholly or in large part of official members. Such an independent inquiry he proposed to give. It would of course be his earnest object to obtain gentlemen whose names would command the confidence of the House and of the public; and he ventured to condemn the violent language in which the hon. and gallant member denounced the committee before its appointment, and by which he sought to discredit its judgment before it had even begun its labours. (Cheers.) For his own part, he believed he should be supported on both sides in endeavouring to take this question out of the sphere of party conflict. (Hear, hear.)

5.0 With regard to the subjects to be referred to the committee, he could only repeat the reasons which he gave the other night as having influenced him in this matter. It would apply to the major portion of the complaints made by the staff. The question of special leave to attend the trade organization meetings was a simple matter. A fortnight's leave on full pay every year, with ten days' special leave, was not an unreasonable allowance for men in the class of those engaged in the Post Office. He contended that the Post Office leave was not only reasonable, but very generous, and there was no parallel to it in private employment. A stronger case was made in regard to certain excluded classes of servants. It was contended, for instance, that sorters or telegraphists gave up the best working years of their lives to learn a business which had no market outside the Post Office, that, indeed, the department had a monopoly of that kind of labour. But to that consideration had to be added the fact that when they had served some years they were earning the right to a pension; and it might be argued with some force that these servants could hardly freely dispose of their labour, because they would sacrifice too much by leaving the Post Office, even if the department did underpay their servants. Their case, however, should be compared with that of the auxiliary or assistant postman, or with the sub-postmasters. The auxiliary postmen were not giving full time to the work of the Post Office: they were not wholly dependent on the department for remuneration. If in their case the department was paying less than they could obtain by equally agreeable work elsewhere, he could not believe that it would continue to retain their services, because they were free to go into the open market. Then the ordinary sub-postmaster was a shopkeeper, who, in addition to his business, obtained the agency for the Post Office. Having to keep a shop open a certain number of hours, he could, by taking a Post Office agency, add to the profits of his business the commission which the department paid for what he did; and the fact that the post office was in his shop brought customers there to purchase his goods. He did not think that the general scale of remuneration for these sub-postmasters was anything but fair, or that there would be any justification for raising it when there was such a tremendous demand for these appointments whenever they fell vacant. There were not, therefore, the same reasons for an inquiry in regard to these classes as in the established classes, whose wages he proposed to refer to the committee. But there were other smaller classes, like the sorters or the sorter tracers. He felt it to be of the utmost importance, if the committee was to be satisfactorily constituted, that the work should not be intolerably expanded, that the inquiry should not be made too wide, and that undue labour should not be imposed on its members. He had chosen great classes of established servants, and he thought that the report on their wages would in itself be a sufficient indication and guide as to the wages of the other classes referred to. He attached, therefore, enormous importance to the keeping of the inquiry within reasonable bounds. The committee would be equally independent of departmental influence and of political pressure. It need not be a committee sitting to give a judgment, nor one to advocate the interests of one side or the other. The hon. member for Canterbury was anxious for the issue of guinea postal orders; but that would require statutory authority, and if his hon. friend would introduce a Bill for the purpose it would have his warmest sympathy. It was a mistake to suppose that the restriction on the repurchase of stamps by the Post Office would be any inconvenience to the public. The introduction of the 6d. rate and the 6d. rise in postal orders up to £1, with the liberty to affix stamps up to 5d. to the face of an order, would afford the opportunity for sending small remittances and would take the place of remittances by means of stamps. The change he had proposed was generally welcomed as removing a great temptation to dishonesty from young people employed in business. He could hold out no hope of the adoption of the suggestion to remove the three months' time limit from postal orders. To do so would be to put the Post Office in the position of a banker. The system of postal orders was established to afford facilities for sending small remittances; it was never intended that these orders should be a form of currency; and if they were allowed to pass from hand to hand the Post Office would be deprived of the commission on the issue of new orders. The Imperial penny postage to our colonies could not be considered remunerative from the revenue point of view, nor was it so intended. It was established to promote facilities for the cultivation of closer relations with our fellow-subjects beyond seas; it could not be justified by financial results. On the ground of cultivating closer relations with our colonies the penny postage could be justified; but there was no justification for the enormously greater sacrifice that would be involved in making the rate universal for postage with foreign countries. The money order system was now the subject of inquiry by a departmental committee, and until that inquiry was completed he could promise no changes. It was no fault of the British Post Office that a parcel post convention had not been concluded with the United States. More than once the United States Government had been approached on the subject, but that Government had not seen their way to enter into such a convention until quite recently. In the circumstances, the best arrangement possible had been made with one of the great express companies, which gave greater facilities than the public had had before. Since then the United States Government had expressed willingness to enter into negotiations, which were now proceeding. As the hon. member for Canterbury was not present, he would not go over the whole list of what the hon. member described as postal reforms. There appeared to be considerable misconception on the part of the public as to the financial results of the halfpenny post. Suggestions were continually made to him for extension, with estimate of commensurate results in revenue, but practically the halfpenny post was carried on at a loss. It was not a question of weight, but of handling. Postal packets could not be collected and delivered by the Post Office so that there should be any profit obtainable out of the halfpenny. Possibly the expenditure and revenue on post-cards might just about balance, though he was doubtful about this. But the halfpenny was the charge for carriage through the post, and he could not agree that in addition the material should be supplied free. A large trade had developed in private post-cards, and any proposal to issue cards free would meet with considerable opposition; and, as it would mean a loss of revenue, it was a step he was not inclined to take. Speaking generally, the halfpenny post was unremunerative, and when he was asked to extend it to all magazines and *bona fide* periodical publications he could only say that the financial result would be too serious for him to assent to the proposal. He did not understand how it could be justified without a further extension to books and tradesmen's catalogues, which were as much a means of spreading business as the advertisements tradesmen inserted in magazines. A limit, it had been said, should be placed on Post Office revenue, beyond which the growth should be devoted to postal reforms. For his own part he thought that those who made the revenue of the Post Office by the transmission of their correspondence through the post were entitled to a fair proportion of the additional profits in the shape of additional public facilities.

5.30 He held that the Post Office ought to be a revenue department. The committee would be under a great misconception if it supposed that the proportion of the total revenue of the country which was contributed by the Post Office was a growing one, or that the proportion of profit obtained by the Post Office was greater in regard to its turnover than it had been in past times. On the contrary, there had been a steady decrease, both in the proportion of national expenditure met out of the Post Office surplus and in the proportion of every pound of Post Office revenue which went to the Exchequer. He thought that at present the latter was about 4s.; whereas, if he remembered rightly, it was, 20 years ago, 6s. 8d. At any rate, he was confident that there had been a steady decline in that proportion. Whilst he thought it was right that the public who used the Post Office should share in the prosperity of the department and have increased facilities from time to time, as they could be afforded, he did not think it would be right to sacrifice all idea of making the Post Office a revenue-earning department, or to contemplate giving up this great source of relief for the taxpayer. As regarded postal orders and the colonies, the matter was one which he had under consideration, but as to which he was not at present prepared to make an announcement. There were obvious difficulties in any general interchange of postal orders of an infinite number of different series and different forms from colonies all over the world. At the same time he would be very glad if we could extend the use of our postal orders, so as to facilitate remittance by postal order from the colonies to this country.

In reply to some observations by Mr. TENNANT (Berwickshire), 12.5.03

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that the total number of dismissals from the staff last year was ½ per cent. He did not think such a percentage would support any general reflection on the character of the staff. When soldier candidates were first tried characters were given perhaps a little too easily by some military officers anxious to find them occupation. These characters were now given with greater care, and he had no reason for dissatisfaction with the soldier candidates.

Mr. TENNANT, continuing his remarks, drew attention to the new scale of pay for women employed in the postal order clearing-house. Women who were taken into employment in this department were now only offered £55 a year, with an annual increment of £2 10s., instead of £65 a year and an annual increment. He doubted whether these wages would encourage women of education and some standing to seek these responsible positions. He was not alluding to the women who served across the counter, but to those who were employed in the Savings Bank and in work connected with the business in orders. He trusted that matter would be referred to the committee of which the right hon. gentleman had spoken.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said he did not propose to refer this matter to the committee. He had gone very carefully into it.

Mr. TENNANT said that in that case he would be obliged to vote for the reduction of the vote.

Mr. HAY (Shoreditch, Hoxton) held that the scope of the committee which was to be appointed was too narrow, and would lead to further agitation. He did not wish to associate himself with all the strong language which had been used by the hon. members for

Islington and West Newington in regard to the form of inquiry adopted by the Postmaster-General; but he was at a loss to understand why a Parliamentary tribunal should be a bad one, or why his right hon. friend should say that members of Parliament had to seek his protection against their constituents. Though he personally had taken a somewhat active part in connexion with this matter he had had no representation on the subject from any constituent of his who was a postal servant.

Mr. DELANY (Queen's Co., Ossory) regretted that the Postmaster-General should have gone outside the House of Commons for the committee which he was about to appoint. He objected to the selection of so many police and army pensioners for postal appointments in Ireland.

6.0 Mr. SCHWANN said that the right hon. gentleman was rather inclined to treat the Post Office too much as a business institution. It ought not to be the accepted principle that the Post Office was to make as much profit as it could. It should first be a model employer. As to the case of the sub-postmasters, in a great many instances they did not understand what they were undertaking. They could always give up the position, it was true; but that was not easy for a man who spent £10 or more in equipping and adapting the premises. Would these sub-postmasters be called upon for a larger guarantee in consequence of the extended facilities for the issue of postal orders? (Mr. Austen Chamberlain, "That is under consideration.") These sub-postmasters felt that many of the advantages given to the public were given at their expense. He protested against the idea that a committee could not be formed of members of the House of Commons competent to inform the Postmaster-General on the subjects of the proposed inquiry. He had never been exposed to pressure by the Post Office servants in his constituency. Post Office servants had an impression that what was given to them by one committee was taken away from them by another committee directly afterwards. He hoped the right hon. gentleman would do all he could to remove any feeling of discontent which existed.

SIR G. BARTLEY (Islington, N.) said that if the Postmaster-General could re-establish the system of parcels being paid for on delivery, the postman collecting the amount due, it would help the agricultural and other industries.

Mr. EMMOTT (Oldham) thought it would be difficult to get five impartial business men, and certainly five employers of labour would be quite unsuited to settle any other labour dispute. (Hear, hear.) If the right hon. gentleman had any difficulty in the matter he hoped he would not exclude suitable members of the House of Commons. It would be very useful if there was at any rate one representative of the *employés* on the committee, even if he only sat as an assessor without a vote.

Mr. MARSHALL-HALL (Lancashire, Southport) thought the scope of the inquiry should be extended so as to include women. It was important that the committee should have the confidence of the *employés*, and he thought the last suggestion of the hon. member for Oldham a good one. Referring to the fact that years ago on the four corners of all our postage stamps were little letters, variously combined, he reminded the Postmaster-General that it used to be possible by this means at once to ascertain at Somerset House at what date a sheet of stamps was issued. Now that our stamps were used for revenue as well as postage purposes it would be particularly useful if this custom were revived, as by its means forgeries could sometimes be detected. He had been interested recently in a case in the Courts in which fraudulent receipts had been brought into existence some two years after the date they purported to bear, a fraud that little date letters on the stamps would have rendered impossible.

Mr. J. O'CONNOR said postmen could not utilize any part of their 14 days' annual leave for attendance at Federation meetings, as the right hon. gentleman suggested, for they had to take their holiday when it was given them, and could not split it up.

6.20 He hoped the Postmaster-General would reconsider this question of special leave. As to the committee, he was afraid that, on account of the limited scope of the reference, it would still leave much soreness among the Post Office *employés*. The reference would include only about 50,000 *employés* out of a total of 150,000.

12.5.03.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, replying to points not touched upon in his previous speech, said he had not expressed his intention of giving a preference to police pensioners and Army men over local inhabitants in regard to postal appointments in Ireland. All he had said was that he would not exclude any man because he was either a police pensioner or an Army man. (Hear, hear.) As far as he was personally concerned, he was favourably disposed to the introduction of such a cash-on-delivery system as had been suggested by his hon. friend the member for North Islington. He would remind his hon. friend, however, that some time ago, when it was thought the Post Office might carry out this reform, the Postmaster-General was overwhelmed with protests from district councils and other local bodies against the introduction of a system which, they thought, would serve the interests of the big man in the big town at the expense of the little man in the little town. If public opinion desired the introduction of this system, it would not find him unfavourably disposed. He believed it would be a great advantage to the public, and not least to the smaller consumers and producers and dealers. The question raised by his hon. and learned friend the member for Southport as to the date-letters on revenue stamps was rather a matter for the Inland Revenue authorities than for him. He would call their attention to the matter and see if anything in the direction suggested could be done. With regard to the question of special leave, he would remind the hon. member for Wicklow that a service such as the Post Office required to be carried out with something like regularity, and a limit of leave must be fixed. He did not think the limit that had been fixed was an unfair one, and he could not undertake to revise it. He appealed to the Committee to come to a decision on the vote, which had been under discussion for four hours last week and for nearly the same length of time on the present occasion.

SIR W. FOSTER (Derby, Ilkeston) thought the appeal of the right hon. gentleman was justified, and that a decision might be taken in the course of a few minutes. He desired to express his regret that the committee to be appointed by the Postmaster-General was not to be selected from members of that House. He thought the right hon. gentleman could have obtained in this way all the impartiality he hoped to secure elsewhere. He hoped the right hon. gentleman would take care that one of the members of the committee was a representative of trade combinations, accustomed to dealing with trade matters from the point of view of the employed. The right hon. gentleman ought also to consider the position of sub-postmasters. There ought to be some recognition for length of service. The wages paid to women officials were not sufficient to induce the best class of young women to enter the service.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said they were anxious to come into the service.

SIR W. FOSTER said they were discontented afterwards, and that was bad for the service. He should go to a division as a protest against the right hon. gentleman's unyielding attitude in reference to the re-sale of stamps.

7.0 After some remarks from Mr. NANSETTI (Dublin, College-green),

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN moved that the question be now put.

The Committee divided, and the numbers were:—

For the closure	204
Against	122
Majority	—82

The Committee then divided on the amendment, and voted:—

For the amendment	122
Against	199
Majority	—77

7.30 Another division was taken on the vote, the numbers being:—

For the vote	199
Against	95
Majority	—104

Progress was then reported, and the sitting was suspended at 20 minutes to 8 o'clock.

9.0 The sitting was resumed at 9 o'clock.

On the vote to complete the sum of £786,790 for the expenses of the Post Office Packet Service,

Mr. WEIR complained of the insufficient mail packet service for the Hebrides. He moved the reduction of the

10.30 vote by £50 in respect of the contracts for the conveyance of mails. 12.5.03.

Mr. C. WASON (Orkney) complained of the inadequate mail service to Lerwick. There were only three mails in the week, and often they all arrived together. The service from Lerwick to Fair Island, the hon. member said, was also very irregular and unsatisfactory, though the subsidy in this case was ample. The service between Thurso and Kirkwall and Stromness was also very often hours late, and he believed the fault was at this end. He appealed to the right hon. gentleman to improve the services.

Mr. DEWAR (Inverness), in supporting the appeal of the hon. member, said he must congratulate the Postmaster-General on the great improvements that had been made in the last two years. On one island in his constituency the news of the death of the late Queen was not received until nine days after it occurred. Since then, he was glad to say, the island had been given a telegraph station. The irregularities of which they complained were chiefly due to the steamer service, which was a monopoly.

Mr. CULLINAN (Tipperary, S.) complained of delays in the mail service between England and Ireland. He had received very serious complaints with regard to the delays in the south of Ireland.

Mr. A. DAVIES (Carmarthen Boroughs), referring to an item of £4,660 for outward mails, which he took it was in respect of the Cunard line, said that on the North-German Lloyd steamers and another foreign line there were post-offices on board, and the mails were sorted before arriving at New York. In the Cunard steamers, however, they were not sorted, with the result that the mails carried on the Cunard line were delivered some hours later. He thought this neglect was hardly fair to British steamship-owners.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said the real difficulty in regard to the Western islands was one which was known to all members who were acquainted with the district. It was that the service of boats was practically a monopoly in the hands of one firm, who, by their power of controlling business and by the fact that they and they alone could offer to traders the facilities which traders must have, were really in a position, he would not say to impose any terms on the Post Office, but to resist some petitions which he should think might reasonably be accepted if there were a little healthy competition. (Hear, hear.) He did not himself think that the service was carried on with the enterprise and vigour which were necessary to a successful undertaking, and he did not believe that it could be maintained indefinitely under present conditions. All he could say for the Post Office was that they would gladly take advantage of a better service if they could get one. He was very much in the same position with regard to the mails to Orkney. There he would gladly give a better service if he could obtain one at a reasonable cost. The price they had to pay now was out of all proportion to the revenue

derived from the service, and he had not seen the opportunity of getting a better one at any price which he could look at. The irregularities in the Irish mail train service, of which the hon. member for South Tipperary had complained, were engaging his attention. The Post Office did its utmost to secure punctuality and despatch in the running of mail trains, but its powers over the railway companies were not so drastic as some hon. members seemed to imagine.

11.0

The amendment was by leave withdrawn.

SIR J. LENG (Dundee) complained of the slowness of the mail boats crossing the Atlantic. During the past winter the boats going westward had on 17 occasions taken ten days, while none of the boats going eastward had even once taken that length of time, which showed that there was not the same watchfulness on the part of the postal authorities at home as in America in the despatch of the mails. The mail carrying lines should be required to keep up the speed, and not slow down as they had done. He also asked for information regarding the new arrangements with the Cunard Company.

12.5.03

Mr. A. DAVIES suggested the institution of a travelling sorting office on the Atlantic passage.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN believed the Wednesday mail service had not been altogether satisfactory this winter. Too many of the fast boats had been laid up, and they had been too much dependent on the slower vessels. The new agreement with the Cunard Company was still matter of negotiation, and only that morning he was dealing with proposed mail clauses for incorporation in the contract. As negotiations were proceeding he could make no further statement on the subject. He did not think that very much would be gained by having a travelling sorting office as suggested—at all events, as regards mails coming from America to this country—as the Post Office could deal very rapidly with the mails as they arrived on this side. It was not quite the same as regards the voyage to the other side. The accommodation required was very considerable and was very expensive in the fast liners; and the department had not yet seen any advantages which would accrue for the great increase of expense involved. He was trying to find out whether in connexion with the new contract some arrangement could be made for a post office of this kind. Hitherto he had not been successful, but the negotiations were not yet concluded. He promised not to lose sight of the subject.

Mr. CALDWELL (Lanark, Mid) referred to the India and China mail contracts and the slow speed of the British vessels. The P. and O. had the slowest mail steamers either going to India, China, or Australia. The rate was 12½ knots, a slow speed which was altogether inconsistent with modern requirements. It was much less than the German boats; and the reason was to be found in the fact that the P. and O. Company obtained such a large subsidy from the Post Office that they were able practically to drive every competitor out of the field. Nearly 40 days were taken to reach Peking, as against 19 days by the Siberian Railway. This important mail service ought to be as speedy as any service starting from Germany, Russia, or any other part of the Continent of Europe. Germany was our main competitor with regard to trade in China; and if she could send her letters in 19 days and we required 40 days it was obvious that this country was placed at a disadvantage. If there had been quicker mail vessels to Bombay there would not have been the same inducement as existed now to start a railway to the East by the Baghdad route. When the contract was made it was stated that competition would oblige the company to keep up with increases of speed on other lines. This prediction, however, had not been realized, and he hoped the Postmaster-General would press the company for an improvement in this matter. He was sure that if a contract was offered to other people they would build vessels to steam 20 knots. Then, as far as China was concerned, there was the Siberian Railway. Even at the present speed of 19 miles an hour the distance was covered in 19 days; but the speed could easily be increased so as to complete the journey in ten days. Letters to China and Japan must eventually go by that route, so that there was no need to think about renewing the contract by sea.

11.30

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN agreed that this was one of the most important mail services. Notice had been given to terminate the existing contract, under the provisions of the contract, in order that the Government might consider what arrangements might be made for the future. It was a service in which Australasia and the Government of India and our colonial dependencies in the Far East were interested as well as ourselves and they would have to be consulted. They, as well as the Post Office at home, shared the desire of the hon. gentleman that in the new contract we should obtain greater speed at a lower price. A great number of questions, some of them of great importance, arose under this contract; and he proposed to refer them for consideration, in accordance with precedent, to an inter-Departmental committee, in which the other offices concerned, the India Office, Colonial Office, Admiralty, and others, would be represented. Wherever it was possible he preferred to send British mails by British routes; but if the Siberian Railway offered a regular service which was much more expeditious than we could obtain by sea he had no doubt we should be obliged to make use of it. Communications were now passing with the view of seeing on what terms the Siberian train service would be at our command for the purpose of sending mails to Peking and the Far East. The Government had not yet been able to come to any agreement with the authorities, and he was therefore not able to make any more definite statement on the subject. It was suggested that the Post Office followed some foolish notions of its own in regard to the services to the Admiralty to be covered by the mail subsidy. It was entirely for the Admiralty to say what ships were required as armed cruisers or mercantile cruisers. The only desire of the Post Office in this matter was to make the service as useful as it could be made to the nation in all respects, and the Committee would rightly blame them if in making a mail contract involving payment of a considerable subsidy they did not consult the Admiralty as to any conditions they would like to have inserted. Nothing was paid for ships for naval purposes which the Admiralty did not think worth having. Messrs. Hoult's offer, which had been referred to, was to build for a portion of the service a special class of ships, carrying nothing but mails and the attendants. Whether arrangements of that kind would be very fruitful and what margin of staff they would have to allow for sickness on the voyages the Committee could form as good a guess as he could; but an inter-Departmental committee had come to the conclusion that it would be undesirable to entertain this service because it would be useful for the mails only, and afford no correlative or collateral advantage such as our ordinary mail services did, and would be more expensive. There were many questions which would have to be carefully considered before a new contract was made; and he had little doubt, if they could not fulfil all the expectations that were entertained in some quarters, that at all events they would be able to secure a better service than it was possible to obtain when the present contract was entered into.

CASH-ON-DELIVERY POST.

12.5.03.

MR. A. CHAMBERLAIN FAVOURS THE PROPOSAL.

Amid a host of critics, and a multitude of suggestions for the improvement of the Post Office, Mr. Austen Chamberlain was momentarily encouraged in Parliament yesterday by the observation of Mr. Schwann that his department is conducted too much like a business institution. Mr. Schwann, the solitary Liberal member for Manchester, did not intend to be complimentary. He meant that the Post Office is managed too much for profit, as a revenue-earning machine for the Treasury.

On the vote for Post Office salaries Mr. Henniker Heaton propounded many schemes by which the surplus of some four millions could be utilised for the benefit of the public, whose grievances, he maintains, are quite as great as those of the postal servants. Mr. Heaton desires:—

Universal penny postage.
Cash-on-delivery parcel post.
Postcards to be sold at face value.
Cheaper postal orders to the Continent.
Interchangeable postal orders for the Colonies.
Guinea postal orders.
Surcharge on mis-stamped letters to be reduced.
No more Teutonic designs for stamps.
The Queen's head on stamps.
Right to withdraw letters after posting.

The Postmaster-General stated that the Colonial penny postage which is now in force cannot be regarded as remunerative, but it is justified by its political and Imperial advantages. In these circumstances, however, he did not feel justified in proposing the enormous and greater sacrifice of a foreign penny postage.

For himself, and not on behalf of the Government, he favoured the idea of a parcel post system by which the cash value of goods would be collected on delivery. But he reminded the House that when the change was proposed before, it was overwhelmed by opposition. However, he would not stand in the way if there was a general demand.

CARRIED ON AT A LOSS.

The arrangement for postal orders with the Colonies is under consideration, and Mr. Chamberlain hopes to arrange a simple method for the transmission of money from the Colonies to this country. As to selling postcards for a halfpenny and extending the halfpenny postage to magazines and periodicals, it must be kept in mind that the whole of the halfpenny postal work is virtually carried on at a loss, not on account of the weight of the missives but of the handling, and he could not promise any concessions.

Other points in the indictment Mr. Chamberlain disregarded, for the reason that Mr. Heaton had not offered him the compliment of waiting to hear his reply, after speaking himself for an hour and a half. Mr. Chamberlain stated that notice had been given to terminate the P. and O. mail contract to the Far East, and the terms of a new contract were to be fully considered. He hoped there would be increased speed and a better service.

The [illegible] of [illegible] taken to inquire into [illegible] of certain classes of postal servants was [illegible] criticised because of its limited scope, and because it will not be composed of members of Parliament. Mr. Chamberlain declined to alter his plan. From the front Opposition bench Sir Walter Foster indignantly opposed the new instruction preventing people reselling small quantities of stamps to the Post Office, and insisted on a division on the whole vote. The discussion was thereupon closured, and the money voted by a large majority.

POST OFFICE CHANGES.

Two of the reforms outlined by the Postmaster-General in the House of Commons a few days ago were put into force for the first time yesterday.

Telegrams which have to be re-addressed owing to the absence of persons to whom they are sent are now forwarded by post without extra charge, and the fee for receipts for telegrams is reduced from twopence to a penny.

The new series of postal orders ranging in sixpenny values from sixpence to one pound will be issued on July 1. The restrictions on the sale of postage stamps by the public to the post offices will not come into operation till January 1 next year.

MR. HENNIKER HEATON, as standing critic of the Post Office, performs a most useful function. He starts with his list of one hundred reforms. The Post Office grants two, let us say, and thinks a great deal of itself in consequence. But Mr. Heaton is ever at hand to remind it of the ninety-eight improvements still to come. He pegs away, and after a year or two the number is reduced to ninety-six, and thus progress is made. In the House of Commons yesterday Mr. Austen Chamberlain said that his promised reforms had been "welcomed throughout the country." We do not dispute it, but the country would welcome with yet greater satisfaction the concession of some more items on Mr. Heaton's list—the provision of postal orders for a guinea, for instance; the sale of postcards at face value; the affixing of letter-boxes to through trains (as on the Continent); and the establishment of postal orders for the Colonies. In one respect we think Mr. Henniker Heaton himself did not go far enough. He pleaded for facilities for buying stamps at the railway stations where late posting is conceded. We would plead for facilities for buying stamps at many other places. There can be no reason why the means of communication should not be rendered easier by the possibility of buying a stamp elsewhere than at a post-office. On the Continent the tobacconist—the last to close his shop—is the recognised stamp purveyor, and the Post Office might afford similar opportunities here. But with Mr. Heaton's suggestion that senders of letters should have the power of recalling them, we cannot agree. The inviolability of a letter once posted should be rigorously maintained. Much of the debate on the Post Office Vote yesterday turned on the grievances of the employees and Mr. Chamberlain's Commission of Inquiry. The demand was made that the Commission should include so many representatives of one side, and so many of the other. That is the usual way in which Commissions are made up, we know, and it is also the reason why so many of them produce unsatisfactory reports. Whether the Postmaster-General ought to depute this particular inquiry to any Committee or Commission is another question; but if there is to be such a body, we cannot blame him for seeking to appoint to it men without any preconceived views, and representative only of impartial sense and experience. Let us hope he has succeeded in finding them. 12.5.03.

A POSTAL EXPERIENCE.—A correspondent, who signs himself "J. E. C.," writes under date May 18 as follows:—"At this season so many of your readers are sending and receiving printed invitations by post that the following experience may be of general interest. Last night I posted a batch of 113 invitations to an 'At Home,' each consisting of a sheet of notepaper bearing a few printed words, folded in two, fastened by a gummed flap forming part of the upper edge of the blank half-sheet, and stamped with a halfpenny stamp. This morning I received a notice from the postmaster of one of the chief district offices in London to the effect that 80 of these circulars were there detained on account of insufficient prepayment, as they were 'sealed contrary to regulations,' and that if additional postage were not paid to-day they would be sent on and surcharged to the recipients. On my attending at the district office I elicited the fact that the postal regulation relied on was as follows:—'Every book packet must be posted either without a cover, or in an unfastened envelope, or in a cover which can be easily removed for the purposes of examination without breaking any seal or tearing any paper or separating any adhering surfaces. A packet posted without a cover may not be fastened or otherwise treated so as to prevent easy examination.' I pointed out that the fastening objected to permitted every part of the sheet of paper to be examined with ease from one end. After some discussion and reference to higher authority, I was informed that the regulation might admit of some difference of opinion; that so far as that office was concerned the demand for additional payment would be withdrawn, but that there was always the risk that some other office might surcharge some of the circulars. This is scarcely a satisfactory condition of affairs, and I submit, Sir, that the postal regulations should be perfectly explicit on such a point, which must be of constant occurrence." 23. 5. 03

THE POSTAL TELEGRAPHISTS.

8.6.03.

An emergency Conference of the Postal Telegraph Clerks' Association was held at Liverpool on Saturday for the purpose of discussing the attitude to be adopted towards the Committee the Postmaster General proposes to appoint on the question of salaries in the Post Office service. Mr. Andrews (Liverpool) presided, and 37 Delegates attended, representing towns in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Mr. C. H. Garland (London) proposed a Resolution viewing with extreme dissatisfaction the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry which was not composed of members of Parliament, and which would be an altogether irresponsible body, protesting against the scope of the inquiry being limited to a single grievance and to a minority of the Postal Staff, and pledging the Association to continue every endeavour to obtain a Parliamentary Committee to inquire into the causes of discontent in the Postal and Telegraph service, believing such a tribunal to be the only one likely to prove satisfactory, or to obtain the confidence of the aggrieved staffs. Mr. R. H. Davies (London), seconded the Resolution, remarking that the proposed Committee would be responsible to no one, and would be composed of men whose sole interest was to keep down the wages of the *employés*. Mr. Markin (Manchester) and Mr. Page (Southampton) supported the Resolution. Mr. Donaldson (Belfast) proposed an Amendment, deleting from the Resolution that portion which pledged the Conference to continue to agitate for a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry. He thought they could put their demands directly before the Postmaster General and the House of Commons. Mr. McMullan (Belfast) seconded the Amendment. Delegates from Dublin, Sheffield, Birmingham, and Glasgow took part in the discussion, and, on a division, the Amendment was rejected by 26 to 5, the Resolution being adopted in its entirety by the Conference. Mr. Wayte (Hanley) proposed that the Association refuse to give evidence before Mr. Austen Chamberlain's Committee, and this was seconded by Mr. McCusker (Armagh). On a vote the Motion was rejected, an Amendment, in the form of a direct negative, being carried by an overwhelming majority. Mr. G. M. Weir (Edinburgh) proposed that the Conference instruct the Central Committee to prepare an official statement of the demands of the telegraph clerks as regards wages for presentation to the Committee. This Resolution was seconded by Mr. McLachlan (Edinburgh), but the proposal was rejected in favour of an Amendment referring the matter to the National Defence Committee and the officers of the Association.

A POSTAL GRIEVANCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

SIR,—When discussing the Post Office Vote in the House of Commons, a short time since, the Postmaster General expressed a hope that ere long he might be able to arrange for a second delivery in country places. Before making this much-to-be-desired concession, may I be permitted to direct Mr. Austen Chamberlain's attention to the fact that there are still country places where but two deliveries a week take place?

I have a friend occupying a farm in the parish of Hook Norton, North Oxon, who, with his two or three near neighbours, is treated to a postal delivery on Mondays and Fridays only. His residence is within a mile and a-half of Hook Norton Post-office, and is nearer the post-office of the adjacent village of Great Rollright by a quarter of a mile. Surely this is not very creditable to the postal authorities.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

NORTH OXON.

June 8. 9.6.03.

9.6.03 POST OFFICE PACKET SERVICE.

On the vote to complete the sum of £786,790 for the expenses of the Post Office Packet Service,

Mr. CALDWELL said that since this vote was last before the Committee the Postmaster-General had announced, in view of the renewal of mail contracts, the appointment of a committee to consider the best means of conveying the mails to China, the present contract for which was held by the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company. He reminded the right hon. gentlemen that a year ago the late Chancellor of the Exchequer promised to appoint a committee to inquire into these mail contracts. But that was to be a Committee of the House of Commons, for the reason that a mail contract was a matter which practically devolved upon the House to sanction. No contract for the conveyance of mails by sea could be acted upon until it had been sanctioned by that House; and, therefore, any committee appointed to inquire into the terms and conditions of the contract ought to be a committee in whom that House had confidence. If this committee were merely to make a preliminary inquiry, leaving the House of Commons afterwards to have a full inquiry, there was not much to be said, except that there would be a double inquiry. He objected to the Admiralty's being represented on the committee. The question of mail contracts should be dealt with entirely by itself, and the Admiralty should be left to take their choice of vessels to be used as armed cruisers from the whole of the British shipping; they should not be trammelled by the terms of any mail contract. With regard to the terms of reference to the committee, he wished to know whether there would be an opportunity for other companies to tender besides the Peninsular and Oriental Company. If they gave the Peninsular and Oriental Company the monopoly of a trade route, they prevented other British shipowners from competing, but they did not kill the competition of foreigners. Were the committee to inquire into the terms on which the Siberian Railway would convey letters? He wished also to know why they should not convey mails by Admiralty cruisers. Here was an enormous fleet doing nothing in peace time.

5.30 He examined the conditions of the Canadian Pacific mail contract, and declared that every one of the advantages promised when that contract was entered into had been falsified by events. It was said that the conveyance of the mails from London to Hong-kong *via* the Canadian Pacific Railway would take the same time as *via* the Suez Canal; but, as a matter of fact, the time taken by the former route was 11 days longer, while the service was much less frequent. The whole thing, so far as postal facilities by the Canadian Pacific route were concerned, was mere buncombe. There was no advantage and no saving to send letters by the Canadian Pacific route. How had this breakdown occurred? The Canadian Pacific had promised to establish a fast mail service between this country and Canada, but nothing had been done for ten years. The British Government had been fooled in the matter of the contract, and now, at the end of the ten years, the Government proposed to give the Canadian Pacific another five years, in the hope that it might be able to establish a quick service. It was urged, however, that there were naval and military considerations, and the contract contained a clause for the conveyance of officers and troops to China by way of the Vancouver route. But had these troops being sent? Not at all, for no one would think of sending men to Halifax, then across land to Vancouver, and on to Hong-kong so as to arrive later than if they had been shipped at Southampton and taken direct to Shanghai. It was found, therefore, that in the renewal contract the naval and military advantages had been eliminated, though there was a clause allowing officers travelling first, second, and third class to be charged fares at the same rates as those paid by the ordinary public.

6.0 Even if the Suez Canal were blocked this Canadian route would not be used, because the mails would be carried from Port Said to Suez overland. Neither was this subsidy a sop to Canada. It was an advantage given to a public company, whose shares rose from 54 to 63½ in a few months after the signing of the contract. For ten years the contract had been conducted without any benefit to this country, and it was difficult to see why it should be renewed for another five years.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON (Canterbury) said that he did not object to the subsidy, but he objected to its being charged to the Post Office and not to the Admiralty. We paid 3s. a pound for mails to America carried in British ships and only 1s. 8d. a pound for mails carried in foreign ships. It was absurd to charge this enormous sum to mail-carrying purposes when really the expenditure was for other purposes. Many hon. members were anxious that these subsidies should continue, but not that they should be put fraudulently, as he intended, under the Post Office vote. He doubted whether, strong as the Postmaster-General was, he would be strong enough to break through the traditions with which he was hampered in this matter.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN (Worcestershire, E.), dealing first with the question as to the committee he had appointed, said that the two years' notice given on January 31 of this year to the P. and O. Company to terminate the mail contract was given at the request of certain Colonial and other Administrations who were parties to the contract. The Australasian Administrations, in particular, preferred the request; but practically every Administration entering into the contract and contributing towards the service desired some changes. Speaking generally, the changes desired were greater speed and a smaller cost. It must be a matter for negotiation and consideration how far success in these directions could be achieved. A service in which so many different Administrations were interested was a matter of some complication, and his desire to be advised by people with knowledge as to how these various interests could best be met would be readily understood. He had therefore appointed the committee, and the hon. member for Aston Manor to be the chairman, not only in view of the interest he had taken in the subject, but because of his experience as chairman of the committee on the effect of subsidies to British shipping on British trade. There was a unanimous opinion that he had conducted that committee's deliberations with great skill and fairness, and he had acquired experience in that way which would be valuable to the Mail Contract Committee. (Hear, hear.) On the committee he had placed representatives of the Post Office, and he had invited the Colonial Office and the India Office to nominate representatives specially to look after the interests of Indian and Colonial Administrations. He had also invited the Admiralty to name an Admiralty representative—and they had as a matter of fact named two—in order that Admiralty interests might not be overlooked, and that the harmonious co-operation of the different departments of Government concerned might be secured. He regretted the suggestion that because the First Lord of the Admiralty was some years ago a P. and O. director this would make it impossible for any Admiralty official to sit on this committee with an open and impartial mind. This was a larger extension of modern doctrines concerning the position of Ministers than any other authority in the House was likely to approve, except the hon. member opposite. The report of the Admiralty committee on the use that might be made of merchant cruisers had not been presented to the House; but one of the points particularly emphasized by the evidence they took was the desirability of a closer connexion between the Admiralty and the Post Office in regard to these contracts. He entirely shared that view, and thought it only reasonable and businesslike—in fact common sense—that the Government should obtain the advantages to be secured by negotiating as far as possible as a whole, and that the Admiralty should be associated with other departments in the consideration of a contract in which they had a great interest. He agreed that the Admiralty should be unhampered in their choice of mercantile cruisers by considerations which were pre-eminently the business of the Postmaster-General; but that was not a reason why the Postmaster-General, in making a big contract of this kind, should neglect Admiralty interests altogether or exclude Admiralty interests from consideration. It was not for the Postmaster-General to decide whether any ship should be used as a mercantile cruiser; but it was right that he should assure himself whether any condition useful to the Admiralty might be inserted in the mail contract, and whether any subsidy could be paid in respect of any naval advantages which the Admiralty might obtain, at the same time as the Postmaster-General was arranging for the conveyance of the mails. The reference to the committee for which the hon. member for Mid Lanark had asked had already been published. Substantially it was a simple reference requesting them to consider what provision should be made for the mail service to the East and Australia on the expiration of the present contract. They would, of course, have to consider what alternatives to the present method of carrying the mails were available, and whether the opening of new routes and other facilities which had come into existence since the present contract was concluded should alter the conditions of carriage and of any new contract. But he did not propose to ask them to consider the suggestion of the hon. member that cruisers should be employed in leisure times as ordinary mail ships. To that he would anticipate the strongest opposition from the Admiralty, and he did not think any one acquainted with the Admiralty would associate himself with the hon. member in that proposal. While it was in accordance with precedent that such a committee as he had appointed should be called together, it would, of course, be for the Postmaster-General and other Ministers concerned, and especially for the Treasury, to consider carefully any report which they might present.

6.30 Personally, as at present advised, he did not think that a committee of the House to look into mail contracts in general was required, or was likely to get us much new information or to render any useful service. He thought that, if there was an inter-departmental committee on the lines he had indicated to consider the conditions of the new contract for the mail service to the East and Australia, it would be possible to put the House in possession of full information; and, as the hon. member had said, no such contract could be made binding for a term of years without the assent of the House. A big question had arisen in connexion with the Australian contract to which he did not wish to do more than allude at the present time, as it was still under discussion. It might, however, appear as if he were trying to withhold information from the Committee if he passed by the subject without reference. It was known to hon. members through statements which had appeared in the Press that the Government of the Australian Commonwealth had desired the insertion in any new contract to which they were a party of a provision directed against the employment of coloured labour on the mail ships. His Majesty's Government had felt themselves precluded now as on previous occasions from assenting to any stipulation for the exclusion of a class of his Majesty's subjects. (Hear, hear.) He need scarcely say that if it would be, as in his opinion it would be, impossible for his Majesty's Government to assent to such a stipulation in any contract, it was doubly impossible in a contract to which the Indian Government was also a party. With regard to the service from Vancouver across the Pacific, which was worked in connexion with the Canadian Pacific Railway, he need say the less, as the hon. gentleman opposite had given the Committee a very full and detailed account of the cir-

cumstances in which the contract had arisen. He did not wish to challenge in the main the hon. member's statement of facts; but he demurred to the statement that in connexion with this contract the Government were conferring a favour upon the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, or that they had been fooled by the company. The contract was entered into as a great Imperial service by British ships at the urgent request of the Dominion Government, and not for the purpose of pleasing the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. It was quite true that the expectations with which the service was established had not been fulfilled. In one respect only the hon. member had not given quite a fair account to the Committee. He had said that since this contract was made the P. and O. Company's service, providing an alternative route to the East, had been quickened, so that this route, which would otherwise have been the shorter route to certain places, had lost its advantage even in regard to nearly all those places.

Mr. CALDWELL.—Did this occur before the renewal?

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that was the case; but the hon. gentleman had quoted so much from the minute of 1889 that he had thought it only fair to show that a quickening was secured on the alternative route. It was perfectly true that we had failed to obtain hitherto any fast Atlantic service in connexion with this route, such as had been hoped for and such as he still hoped to see established. The Canadian Government had from time to time made efforts to secure the establishment of such a service. Those efforts had not hitherto been successful, but it was within the knowledge of the Committee that quite recently they called for fresh offers for a fast Atlantic service between this country and Canada. They had not yet communicated the result of any such offers to his Majesty's Government, and in the meantime it was perfectly true to say that this service as it at present existed was of very little advantage as a mail service. We made a very small use of it, and the revenue which was obtained from letters and packages which went that way bore no proportion to the subsidy which had to be paid for the service. In his opinion, his Majesty's Government, in their anxiety to meet the wishes of Canada and give Canada every opportunity for facilitating the establishment of this fast Atlantic service, had gone to the utmost limits to which they could be expected to go in assenting to the renewal of the contract for five years, in the hope that by that time the establishment of an Atlantic service might become an accomplished fact, and that we might then get a further quickening on the Pacific side, and soon make this route a route of real value. If these results were not achieved in the further interval which was left, he did not think it likely that whoever might be then responsible at the Treasury or Post Office would be inclined to concur in any further extension of the contract on its present basis. He did not agree, however, that we had obtained no advantage from the contract. It was some advantage to have this alternative route, even though it was not a very effective route in the piping times of peace; and it was some advantage to have the British marine represented in the North Pacific. It was an advantage, at any rate, in the view of the Admiralty, to have these ships as mercantile cruisers, for which they were willing to make a contribution of £7,312. The ships were slow contrasted with the Atlantic greyhounds, but their value to the Admiralty in certain conditions would depend, not on that comparison, but on the speed of other vessels in the same waters. Sometimes it was necessary to lay out one's money for a return which would not be immediate. It must be borne in mind by the Committee in considering this question of mail contracts that it involved not merely the conveyance of a certain bulk of mails between certain ports, but the running of a service in which vessels should start at fixed dates at a given time with or without passengers or cargo, with return at a given time and no waiting for cargo; and this regularity of service, which prevented the turning aside to obtain a cargo from other sources, had to be paid for. Under such circumstances it was not altogether fair to divide the amount of subsidy paid by the amount of mails carried, working it out and saying they might be carried cheaper in foreign ships. Possibly that might be so; but we had the advantage of the regular service, upon which we could rely, and so far as he was concerned he preferred wherever it was possible to send British mails by British ships. (Hear, hear.) He did not altogether agree with the hon. member that it was wrong to include the packet service votes among the Post Office votes. It was true that beyond the appropriations in aid they might serve a great national interest altogether outside the Post Office; but he did not know under what better classification the service could be put. As each contract came up for consideration the Department did its best to secure the most advantageous terms in speed, regularity, and convenience of service; but the conditions were so widely different, the circumstances under which one contract was carried out were so entirely altered from those which existed in reference to another contract, that each must be judged on its merits and examined by itself, and there would be no advantage in having them all thrown together and considered by the House of Commons. He had dealt with the points raised and as there had been considerable discussion on a previous occasion he hoped the Committee would agree to pass on to the telegraph vote, upon which there had not yet been any discussion. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. CALDWELL said he had not moved a reduction of the vote, and did not wish to do so, being quite satisfied that the matter would receive the personal attention of the Postmaster-General. It was to secure this attention that he had raised the question, having more faith in the right hon. gentleman's personal attention than in the consideration by his committee. He was satisfied with the answer given; and only desired to refer to the necessity for making the contracts for short periods, so that the service should obtain full advantage of the improvements in speed and other developments. In no case should a contract be entered into for more than five years.

The vote was then agreed to. 9.6.03

TELEGRAPH SERVICE.

On the vote to complete the sum of £4,549,430 for salaries and working expenses of the Postal Telegraph service,

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON with reluctance called attention to a number of details in relation to the service, upon which he suggested reforms should be instituted. In the first place the large and increasing loss on the telegraph service called for inquiry; no business men could be satisfied with the present state of affairs. The loss in the past year he estimated at a million sterling, and probably it was more. Some explanation was due to the Committee, and they should know whether they were at the limit of loss or whether it was likely to increase.

7.0 He next urged that the Government should give their attention to the purchase of cables, where a large amount of money could be saved. As to their telegraph tariffs to various parts of the world, there was a great deal to be desired; and he instanced Russia, where a reduction might well be made. They should at least make the telegraph and postal communication as cheap as possible. As regards telegrams, surely it was common sense to make the best possible arrangements with regard to communications between this and other countries. He hoped this matter would not go beyond the present Postmaster-General to have the matter fully gone into. The charge as to telegrams to Egypt was, in his opinion, unjustifiable, and as to the enormous charges for telephonic communication with the various countries he thought this should be seen into without delay. From here to Paris the charge was 8s. for three minutes, and 16s. for six minutes. That was far too high, and he hoped inquiry would be made to see whether they could not reduce the rate to 2s. 6d. for three minutes instead of 8s. He thought they ought to have statistics to show the revenue and the expenditure on telephones with a view to the reduction he suggested. They were all agreed that the charge for telephonic communication on the trunk lines was too high. He suggested that a lesson could be learnt from Rome in regard to the charges for telephone messages and telegrams. He also complained of carelessness in telegrams, which resulted in loss to the senders, and as to porterage, delivery was free from the Post Office door up to three miles, but if the distance was a yard beyond that, four miles of porterage, or 1s., was charged. He held this to be unfair, as the porterage charged should only commence at the end of the three-mile limit. He thought the name of every place in the country should be counted as one word in a telegram. Why should a person be punished for living in a place called "Mud-in-the-Hole" by having its name charged as four words? He could never understand why "Charing Cross" was charged as two words and "St. Pancras" as only one word, except it was that the Post Office authorities desired to square the saints. His friend Marconi, in his efforts to extend the use of wireless telegraphy, had not at all been fairly treated by the Post Office authorities. A little while ago Marconi offered to connect the islands of Guernsey and Sark with the mainland by wireless telegraphy, without a penny of expense to the State, but the offer was refused by the Post Office. Marconi had never got anything but opposition from the Post Office; but worse than that, a letter, which he believed emanated from the Post Office, was sent to all the Colonial governors warning them against taking up wireless telegraphy. But he was bound to add that during the short time the present Postmaster-General had been in office the position of Marconi was made more comfortable.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL (Yorkshire, Cleveland) asked whether the Postmaster-General could tell the Committee the result financially of the Post Office telephone system, and also the issue of the negotiations between the Post Office and the Marconi Company.

Mr. HAY asked whether the right hon. gentleman could give the names of the members of the proposed committee of inquiry into the grievances of the Post Office servants; and whether it was intended to lay the report of the committee before the House.

SIR J. LENG urged that, in the interest of trade and commerce, it was most desirable that the rates for telegraphing to India and foreign countries should be reduced to the lowest possible point.

The hon. member was speaking when, at 7.30 o'clock, the sitting was suspended.

GREAT NORTHERN, PICCADILLY, AND BROMPTON RAILWAY (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL.

8.0 When the sitting was resumed at 9 o'clock, this Bill was advanced a stage, being considered and ordered for third reading. 9.6.03.

TELEGRAPH SERVICE.

Committee of Supply being resumed, the consideration of the vote for the telegraph service was continued.

SIR J. LENG, proceeding with his speech, referred to a widespread impression that the Post Office had been somewhat ungenerous in its treatment of Mr. Marconi. His system had been employed on between 100 and 200 vessels in the Navy, and had been much appreciated. (Hear, hear.) He would be glad to have information from the Postmaster-General as to anything that had been done in the way of facilitating the transmission of Marconi messages from the sea through the ordinary post offices on shore. He desired also to know what progress had been made in facilitating communication between the lightships on the coast and the shore lighthouses, so that in the event of shipwreck instant communication could be obtained with the coastguard and lifeboat

services. He also asked what progress had been made with the laying of underground telegraph wires with a view to the avoidance of those serious interruptions of telegraphic communication with Scotland by the blowing down of wires in high winds or their breakage by snow-storms. Perhaps, also, the Postmaster-General would give some information respecting the proceedings of the International Conference. He complimented the Postmaster-General, in conclusion, on his able discharge of the duties of his office, and disclaimed any desire to reflect upon his administration or do otherwise than assist him in Post Office reforms by the suggestions he made.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN thanked the hon. member for the way in which he had spoken of him personally, and said he had to acknowledge that he had received nothing but kindness and consideration from both sides of the House in the discharge of his official duties. He was not yet able to make any further announcement as to the committee on rates of wages to Post Office *employés*. The time likely to be occupied by the inquiry must depend on the method employed by the members of the staff in presenting their cases. He hoped they would select people competent to speak on their behalf and to put their case within reasonable limits and without unduly prolonging discussion, so that there would be a report before any long period had elapsed. At the same time he thought it was more important that the work should be well done, and that the inquiry should result in securing a satisfactory judgment than that matters should be hastened so as to obtain any report at a very early stage. The discussion had been chiefly concerned with the interests and grievances of the public. These were too often omitted from their debates on the postal and telegraph services, but they did deserve some attention. After all, the Post Office existed for the service of the public; and, whilst their desire was that *employés* of the State should be well treated and that its service should be a good service, the *raison d'être* of the Post Office was that it should be of service to the public. The hon. member for Canterbury called attention to the annual loss which was incurred upon the telegraph service as distinct from the postal service, and invited him to give to the Committee detailed reasons for the loss. The deficit was due to a variety of causes. He thought, in the first place, that the State paid an exorbitant sum when it originally bought the telegraphs. (Hear, hear.) The Government of this country were more tender in regard to private interests than most other Governments were, and the result was that, when the State decided to take over the telegraphs, it had to pay a sum which not only forestalled future profits, but, he thought, exceeded any profits which could be fairly taken into account at that time. (Hear, hear.) In the next place, in recent years there had been two streams of public opinion constantly washing against the Post Office and producing their effect upon its policy. One was the demand, admirably represented by his hon. friend the member for Canterbury, for greater facilities for the public in every respect. The other was the demand, represented on both sides of the House, for higher pay to the servants of the State in whatever position they served. If during a period of years they had a steady increase in the cost of labour and a steady reduction in the price at which they supplied their published product or gave their service to the public, he was afraid the result was bound to be what they said in regard to the telegraphs—a deficit instead of a profit. But the House of Commons was master in these matters. It had to decide, in the last resort, whether it was satisfied with the treatment of the *employés*; and it must decide also whether the public ought to get increased benefits as senders of telegrams, or whether they were to get increased benefits as the owners of the telegraph system of the country. They could not have it both ways. They could not raise wages and increase the services rendered to the public and at the same time decrease the loss or turn the loss into a profit. (Hear, hear.) The endeavour of his predecessors and himself had been to hold the balance fairly between these conflicting claims—to see that the State was not a discreditable employer of labour, to give to that section of the public which were their customers such facilities as they fairly could, and then to come to the House of Commons to support them when they refused, in the interests of the public at large, to confer extravagant benefits on particular individuals or classes.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON.—I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. friend, but I do desire that he will tell the Committee the amount of money expended on the *employés* and the amount of concession given to the public. I can tell the Committee in a moment. It is £600,000 to the *employés* and about £20,000 to the public.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said his hon. friend had been good enough to save him the necessity of replying to the question.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL asked if the £600,000 was for telegraph *employés* alone.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN replied that the sum referred to was for postal *employés* generally. He thought that in some directions there were signs of improvement in their telegraph service. They were now embarking more and more largely on the telephone system, which he hoped would be a remunerative investment. He did not want the State to make an exaggerated profit out of the business it conducted; but, on the other hand, he held that if they gave up the idea of profit altogether they probably gave up also sound business management and the best incentive to economy and efficiency. (Hear, hear.) He did not think they ought to supply to what was only a section of the public after all a great service at the cost of the public as a whole, or without making a reasonable return on the capital which the public as a whole had put into the business. If he was right in his expectations that their telephone service would prove to be remunerative, and he would do his best to make it so, the telephones being part of the monopoly of the Postmaster-General, that would come in to reduce the deficit on the telegraph service. It was true that already a reduction was made in the deficit by the telephone system, for they drew in royalties from the National Telephone Company something like £150,000 a year in aid of their revenue. He did not think that with the telegraph service in its present condition the committee could expect that the Treasury or even the Postmaster-General should be willing to launch out in large fresh concessions involving greatly increased expenditure without commensurate return. His hon. friend had said they were collecting a revenue of something like £60,000 a year from those who registered telegraph addresses—a rather mean way of obtaining revenue, he thought—and that they ought to give it up and allow 20 words without addresses or a less number of words including addresses. He had found many difficulties arising out of the present arrangement, but he thought that nearly every difficulty he had to confront arose out of some concession made to the public demand by one of his predecessors. ("Hear, hear," and laughter.) And when those officials to whom he was so greatly indebted and to whom his hon. friend did scant justice when he spoke of their efforts to serve the public came to him with criticisms or with objections to suggestions which he made, it was only to save him from the fate of having added to the difficulties of his successors, as he was sometimes inclined to reproach his predecessors past and gone for having landed him in these difficulties. There was the £60,000 with which his hon. friend taunted him. He should be glad to drop that sum to-morrow if he could give up the registered addresses with it, and he should consider it the best stroke of business that any Postmaster-General had done for a long time. But he could not give up the registered addresses. It had got too firm a hold on the public. Even if he could do away with it for domestic purposes, he could not do it for foreign and Colonial messages. But if his hon. friend thought that the £60,000 paid the Post Office for the trouble, the inconvenience, and the interruption of working which were caused by the system of registered addresses he made a great mistake. He should be very glad to get rid of registered addresses if he could. There had been recently introduced by the engineers of the telegraph service of the Post Office a switch-board something like the switch-board which was in operation in the telephone system throughout the country.

9.30 The system hitherto had been that practically every branch office in London wishing to communicate with another district office had to telegraph into the Central Telegraph Office in London, the message had to be read off, written out, carried to another operator in the same building, and again telegraphed. That system was cumbersome, slow, and gave an added risk of mistakes; but there had not been business enough to enable them to run a wire between the offices. They had now, however, got this arrangement of a switchboard by which, say, Kensington, could be switched straight through to Chelsea, thus saving the operation at the Central Telegraph Office. (Hear, hear.) There had been difficulties in the way, but the engineers had successfully overcome them, and the system was working very satisfactorily in a great number of offices with a great saving of time in the delivery of messages and a certain saving of labour. As to the registration of addresses, he had looked very carefully into the matter, and could not see his way to giving a free address with a slightly reduced number of words to the message. If he could have done so he would; but there were obstacles in the way, and he was quite sure he should have the whole commercial community against him in regard to such a change. He hoped he might be able to announce before very long some further reduction in certain of the rates to foreign countries. (Hear, hear.) But it was not quite so simple a matter as his hon. friend seemed to think. It was a matter of negotiation with foreign countries and cable companies. There were many things which he was prepared to do and to which he believed he could secure the assent of the Treasury without much difficulty; but the assent of foreign countries was also necessary. They must also bear in mind that the strategic and other interests of this country in the great cable system of the world must be considered. But he should lose no opportunity that offered of securing a reduction. In passing he must say that his hon. friend was over-sanguine as to the results of reductions, cable traffic did not respond rapidly to reductions in rates. The Australian traffic had made no great progress since the great reductions that had taken place, and the South African traffic was perhaps the one instance to the contrary. They must also remember that while 3s. 6d. or 10s. 6d. per word seemed a monstrous rate to pay, yet that word, thanks to the use of codes and ciphers, generally conveyed a whole sentence, or as much as five minutes' talk (laughter)—and, if they considered it as a rate for information conveyed, the charges were by no means so monstrous. Lord Balfour's Committee came to the conclusion that, speaking generally, the rates were not exorbitant. There were some exceptions, and to these he had been giving his attention. He could not at present give the Committee any further information; but he hoped, in connexion with the International Telegraph Conference, that they might arrive at some further reductions. As to the other questions raised by his hon. friend, he did not propose at the present time to adopt the policy of purchase in regard to the Spanish cable. They were in communication with the company as to the terms on which the rates might be renewed, and would do their best to serve the public. As to the rates between Germany and Spain, it must be remembered that the German Government subsidized their cable. With regard to wireless telegraphy, his hon. friend seemed to have rather inconsistent ideas. If he were quite as certain of the possibilities of the future of wireless telegraphy as his hon. friend was, this would not be the moment at which he should press upon his friends the claims of investments in cable shares. He did not think those who owned cable

shares had any occasion to become frightened about their investments; but he did not know that it was a moment for launching out in great cable speculation. Before doing so he though they might well watch the progress of Mr. Marconi's system. He was bound to say that scant justice had been done to the Post Office in this matter by various speakers. But long before the inventions of Mr. Marconi had reached their present point he received such facilities as the Post Office could give for his experiments. The Post Office did everything they could to assist what they thought might be a great progress in civilization, and they had neither shown any disposition to strangle the invention at its birth nor to prevent its development and success. The Post Office, however, desired not to bind themselves to give away the rights of the Postmaster-General in the same way in which they were given away in regard to telephones, before the importance of telephones was seen. (Hear, hear.) For that action his predecessors and himself had never ceased to be criticized, and the Post Office had still to bear the burden. At present they knew very little about wireless telegraphy. We knew very little of the conditions under which wireless telegraphy would have to be worked. In most countries the Post Office was in the position of a monopolist; but in this country the monopoly of the Postmaster-General did not cover communications with a foreign shore or outside the three-mile limit. The Post Office, therefore, could not strangle the invention even if it wanted to. Their business communications had not been with Mr. Marconi, though personally his relations with that gentleman had been most friendly. They had been dealing with the company which possessed the inventor's rights. The company did not ask merely for what the cable companies had. They asked for an exclusive right to work wireless telegraphy in this country, and they asked for permanence. He could not give them either. He said he would give them a private wire at Poldhu; and when they applied for it they had that private wire, and they had had it for some time past. There was no difficulty at any time about the company's having their private wire on ordinary terms, or obtaining delivery of any messages sent to them from any point in this country, or having messages received at Poldhu put on the Post Office wires. But they asked the Post Office to become their agents for the collection of messages to be transmitted by their wireless system in the same way that anybody could hand in a message at any post-office to be transmitted by the cable companies. He wrote explaining generally the terms on which he was prepared to act, and laid down certain conditions he would have to enforce in order to prevent interference with the Admiralty for strategic reasons and to safeguard national interests. He further said they must satisfy his technical officers of what was disputed by him—namely, that the company were in a position to carry on their business and transmit messages from one side of the Atlantic to the other. That letter was written on March 31 last, and he was still waiting for a reply. He did not complain of the delay in the least; but he did complain that the delay should be attributed to the Post Office. As regarded the progress of underground wires to the north, in a statement he made to the Scotch chambers of commerce early in the year he explained what progress had been made in the past year and the programme for this year, which he believed would be fulfilled before the end of the year. He thought the Post Office deserved great credit for the constant progress that had been made in the scientific development of these underground cables. The sum provided for this purpose during the last two years was £30,000 a year, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had provided this year £130,000. As to the telephone system, he had had a good many interviews with local authorities; and was glad to say that the relations of the Post Office with those bodies were now on a much better footing than they had been hitherto, and he hoped that in the future there would be less friction than in the past. They had laid about 1,000 miles of pipes in the streets of London to carry the cables, and into those pipes they had already drawn over 100,000 miles of wires. (Hear, hear.) The net result was that during the last six months there had been a most rapid increase in the number of telephone subscribers and in the number of calls. Of course he had had complaints, but the friction had mostly been between the Post Office exchanges and the Telephone Company, and not in consequence of bad working on the part of the Post Office system itself. He regretted that the Post Office monopoly in this matter had ever been made the subject of licences to any private company at all. (Hear, hear.) This was not a suitable matter for competition. It was one of those cases in which the public could only lose by competition and could only gain by a monopoly. If there was a monopoly it ought to be in the hands of a public authority. (Hear, hear.) In a great part of the country the licence of the Telephone Company came to an end in 1911; and he could not conceive that after that period any Postmaster-General would ever allow the system to pass out of his hands again. (Hear, hear.) The Post Office were steadily extending their system in various directions. The Central London Exchange was, he thought, the biggest exchange in the whole world, and they were looking forward to an enormous development in a few years.

10.0 He believed that the telephone facilities of this country would develop enormously in the course of the next few years. The International Telegraph Conference was mainly concerned with the details of telegraph administration. These details had their interest for the public, as on them depended the smooth working and efficiency of the international telegraph system. With regard to the question of the reduction of charge, they might obtain some advantage; but he could not say more at present. Then there was the question of the compulsory adoption of the Berne vocabulary for all codes. He had instructed the British delegates to oppose the compulsory adoption of that vocabulary. He could not say what the decision of the conference might be; but he felt strongly that the inconvenience to the commercial community which would result from its adoption would far outweigh any possible advantages which it might have from an administrative point of view.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL urged that the telephone charges should be disentangled from the telegraph charges. 9.6.08

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that as far as he could he proposed to show the actual cost of the working of the London telephone system, but it was impossible to keep the telephone charges and the telegraph charges distinct throughout the whole country.

Mr. F. WILSON (Norfolk, Mid) said there should be more liberality in encouraging the establishment of telegraphic centres in villages.

Mr. DALZIEL (Kirkcaldy Burghs) said he hoped that the Government would do nothing to identify themselves with the Marconi system of telegraphy as against other systems which had been more successful but had not been so well advertised. He submitted that the time had not arrived when the Government should identify themselves with any particular system; and he hoped that the House would be given an opportunity of considering the question before any large expenditure was incurred.

Mr. J. CAMPBELL (Armagh, S.) suggested that the sender of a telegram should be allowed to insert in the form the time at which he handed in the message according to the post-office clock. A telegram which he had sent had been post-timed 30 minutes by the clerk.

Mr. DALZIEL thought it was inadvisable to have public telephones in publichouses.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that the Post Office authorities never set up a telephone in a publichouse when another agency could be found. The telephones to which the hon. gentleman referred were taken by the publicans as ordinary subscribers, and were placed by them at the disposal of customers.

The vote was agreed to. 9.6.08

PICTURE POSTCARDS.—We have received the following from the Post Office:—Complaints have reached the Postmaster-General from the recipients and senders of postcards, especially picture postcards, which have been charged as insufficiently prepaid letters when sent abroad, because they bore on the front writing other than the address and the necessary postal indications. A written communication on the address side of a postcard is not objected to in the inland service of the United Kingdom, so long as the right hand half is reserved exclusively for the address; but any communication upon the address side of a postcard for or from a place abroad renders it liable, under the regulations of the Postal Union, to be treated as an insufficiently prepaid letter. Many picture postcards, no doubt intended solely for inland circulation, bear on the front a printed inscription in some such words as the following:—"This space as well as the back may now be used for communication (Post Office regulations)." This inscription, without any indication that it applies to the inland service only, is misleading; and the Postmaster-General invites the attention of publishers of picture postcards to the expediency of printing the words "for inland use only" immediately below the title "postcard" on all postcards, such as those in question, which are ineligible for transmission abroad. 13.6.08.

"THE CHEAPEST POST OFFICE IN THE WORLD."—A correspondent, H.H., sends us extracts from the report of the Hon. Noel Trotter, the Postmaster-General at Singapore, to show that the Straits Settlements has the cheapest Post Office in the world:—"Postcards available in the colony and to the Federated Malay States are sold at one-fifth of a penny each, the letter rate of postage throughout the same area is slightly over a halfpenny; the postage on letters to any place (with very few exceptions) in the British Empire is four-fifths of a penny per ½oz.; up to 2oz. of printed matter can be sent to any part of the civilized world for one-fifth of a penny, and 10oz. for a penny, which is absolutely the cheapest international postage I have ever heard of. Thus a letter and a newspaper can be mailed hence to almost any part of the Empire at a total cost of a penny. Our registration fee of one penny is without parallel for cheapness; most other countries charge 2d. or 2½d.; we carry and register up to $20 a parcel up to 11lb. in weight to any part of the colony or the Federated Malay States for 13d., and convey parcels to the same limit of weight to the United Kingdom for 2s. 4d. each, the charge from there being 3s.; and we carry Chinese coolies' letters in clubbed packets to China at the rate of a little over two a penny. . . . It will be seen from an accompanying return that during the year under review 10,890,465 articles were received and despatched, as compared with 8,068,788 articles in 1899, the increase being about 36 per cent." 17.6.03.

DISTRUCTION OF PARCELS AT PETERBOROUGH STATION.—A remarkable accident occurred at Peterborough early on Saturday morning. It is the custom for the parcels from the Peterborough postal area, which covers the greater part of the eastern midlands, to be sorted and made up into baskets or hampers for their various destinations all over the country. Those for the southern districts of England are usually transmitted by the Great Northern Railway by the mail train leaving Peterborough at 1 25 a.m. On Saturday morning 11 baskets full of parcels were handed over to a porter in time for this train. As they were being wheeled on to the up line platform the porter's foot slipped, and he lost control of his trolley, which tilted up and overturned the whole consignment on to the line. An express through train was then approaching. The truck, which was on a level with the platform on the piled up baskets, was dragged away, and in striving to get the baskets off the 4ft. way one of the attendants had a narrow escape of his life. The train ploughed through the obstacle, scattering the hampers in all directions, carrying some quite 100 yards. An approaching down train was stopped in time. Six intact hampers were removed from the line and the contents of five wrecked hampers were collected. The parcels were mostly in fragments. 22.6.03.

services. He also asked what progress had been made with the laying of underground telegraph wires with a view to the avoidance of those serious interruptions of telegraphic communication with Scotland by the blowing down of wires in high winds or their breakage by snow-storms. Perhaps, also, the Postmaster-General would give some information respecting the proceedings of the International Conference. He complimented the Postmaster-General, in conclusion, on his able discharge of the duties of his office, and disclaimed any desire to reflect upon his administration or do otherwise than assist him in Post Office reforms by the suggestions he made.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN thanked the hon. member for the way in which he had spoken of him personally, and said he had to acknowledge that he had received nothing but kindness and consideration from both sides of the House in the discharge of his official duties. He was not yet able to make any further announcement as to the committee on rates of wages to Post Office *employés*. The time likely to be occupied by the inquiry must depend on the method employed by the members of the staff in presenting their cases. He hoped they would select people competent to speak on their behalf and to put their case within reasonable limits and without unduly prolonging discussion, so that there would be a report before any long period had elapsed. At the same time he thought it was more important that the work should be well done, and that the inquiry should result in securing a satisfactory judgment than that matters should be hastened so as to obtain any report at a very early stage. The discussion had been chiefly concerned with the interests and grievances of the public. These were too often omitted from their debates on the postal and telegraph services, but they did deserve some attention. After all, the Post Office existed for the service of the public; and, whilst their desire was that *employés* of the State should be well treated and that its service should be a good service, the *raison d'être* of the Post Office was that it should be of service to the public. The hon. member for Canterbury called attention to the annual loss which was incurred upon the telegraph service as distinct from the postal service, and invited him to give to the Committee detailed reasons for the loss. The deficit was due to a variety of causes. He thought, in the first place, that the State paid an exorbitant sum when it originally bought the telegraphs. (Hear, hear.) The Government of this country were more tender in regard to private interests than most other Governments were, and the result was that, when the State decided to take over the telegraphs, it had to pay a sum which not only forestalled future profits, but, he thought, exceeded any profits which could be fairly taken into account at that time. (Hear, hear.) In the next place, in recent years there had been two streams of public opinion constantly washing against the Post Office and producing their effect upon its policy. One was the demand, admirably represented by his hon. friend the member for Canterbury, for greater facilities for the public in every respect. The other was the demand, represented on both sides of the House, for higher pay to the servants of the State in whatever position they served. If during a period of years they had a steady increase in the cost of labour and a steady reduction in the price at which they supplied their finished product or gave their service to the public, he was afraid the result was bound to be what they said in regard to the telegraphs—a deficit instead of a profit. But the House of Commons was master in these matters. It had to decide, in the last resort, whether it was satisfied with the treatment of the *employés*; and it must decide also whether the public ought to get increased benefits as senders of telegrams, or whether they were to get increased benefits as the owners of the telegraph system of the country. They could not have it both ways. They could not raise wages and increase the services rendered to the public and at the same time decrease the loss or turn the loss into a profit. (Hear, hear.) The endeavour of his predecessors and himself had been to hold the balance fairly between these conflicting claims—to see that the State was not a discreditable employer of labour, to give to that section of the public which were their customers such facilities as they fairly could, and then to come to the House of Commons to support them when they refused, in the interests of the public at large, to confer extravagant benefits on particular individuals or classes.

Mr. HENNIKER HEATON.—I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. friend, but I do desire that he will tell the Committee the amount of money expended on the *employés* and the amount of concession given to the public. I can tell the Committee in a moment. It is £600,000 to the *employés* and about £20,000 to the public.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said his hon. friend had been good enough to save him the necessity of replying to the question.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL asked if the £600,000 was for telegraph *employés* alone.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN replied that the sum referred to was for postal *employés* generally. He thought that in some directions there were signs of improvement in their telegraph service. They were now embarking more and more largely on the telephone system, which he hoped would be a remunerative investment. He did not want the State to make an exaggerated profit out of the business it conducted; but, on the other hand, he held that if they gave up the idea of profit altogether they probably gave up also sound business management and the best incentive to economy and efficiency. (Hear, hear.) He did not think they ought to supply to what was only a section of the public after all a great service at the cost of the public as a whole, or without making a reasonable return on the capital which the public as a whole had put into the business. If he was right in his expectations that their telephone service would prove to be remunerative, and he would do his best to make it so, the telephones being part of the monopoly of the Postmaster-General, that would come in to reduce the deficit on the telegraph service. It was true that already a reduction was made in the deficit by the telephone system, for they drew in royalties from the National Telephone Company something like £150,000 a year in aid of their revenue. He did not think that with the telegraph service in its present condition the committee could expect that the Treasury or even the Postmaster-General should be willing to launch out in large fresh concessions involving greatly increased expenditure without commensurate return. His hon. friend had said they were collecting a revenue of something like £60,000 a year from those who registered telegraph addresses—a rather mean way of obtaining revenue, he thought—and that they ought to give it up and allow 20 words without addresses or a less number of words including addresses. He had found many difficulties arising out of the present arrangement, but he thought that nearly every difficulty he had to confront arose out of some concession made to the public demand by one of his predecessors. ("Hear, hear," and laughter.) And when those officials to whom he was so greatly indebted and to whom his hon. friend did scant justice when he spoke of their efforts to serve the public came to him with criticisms or with objections to suggestions which he made, it was only to save him from the fate of having added to the difficulties of his successors, as he was sometimes inclined to reproach his predecessors past and gone for having landed him in these difficulties. There was the £60,000 with which his hon. friend taunted him. He should be glad to drop that sum to-morrow if he could give up the registered addresses with it, and he should consider it the best stroke of business that any Postmaster-General had done for a long time. But he could not give up the registered addresses. It had got too firm a hold on the public. Even if he could do away with it for domestic purposes, he could not do it for foreign and Colonial messages. But if his hon. friend thought that the £60,000 paid the Post Office for the trouble, the inconvenience, and the interruption of working which were caused by the system of registered addresses he made a great mistake. He should be very glad to get rid of registered addresses if he could. There had been recently introduced by the engineers of the telegraph service of the Post Office a switch-board something like the switch-board which was in operation in the telephone system throughout the country.

9.30 The system hitherto had been that practically every branch office in London wishing to communicate with another district office had to telegraph into the Central Telegraph Office in London, the message had to be read off, written out, carried to another operator in the same building, and again telegraphed. That system was cumbersome, slow, and gave an added risk of mistakes; but there had not been business enough to enable them to run a wire between the offices. They had now, however, got this arrangement of a switchboard by which, say, Kensington, could be switched straight through to Chelsea, thus saving the operation at the Central Telegraph Office. (Hear, hear.) There had been difficulties in the way, but the engineers had successfully overcome them, and the system was working very satisfactorily in a great number of offices with a great saving of time in the delivery of messages and a certain saving of labour. As to the registration of addresses, he had looked very carefully into the matter, and could not see his way to giving a free address with a slightly reduced number of words to the message. If he could have done so he would; but there were obstacles in the way, and he was quite sure he should have the whole commercial community against him in regard to such a change. He hoped he might be able to announce before very long some further reduction in certain of the rates to foreign countries. (Hear, hear.) But it was not quite so simple a matter as his hon. friend seemed to think, it was a matter of negotiation with foreign countries and cable companies. There were many things which he was prepared to do and to which he believed he could secure the assent of the Treasury without much difficulty; but the assent of foreign countries was also necessary. They must also bear in mind that the strategic and other interests of this country in the great cable system of the world must be considered. But he should lose no opportunity that offered of securing a reduction. In passing he must say that his hon. friend was over-sanguine as to the results of reductions; cable traffic did not respond rapidly to reductions in rates. The Australian traffic had made no great progress since the great reductions that had taken place, and the South African traffic was perhaps the one instance to the contrary. They must also remember that while 3s. 6d. or 10s. 6d. per word seemed a monstrous rate to pay, yet that word, thanks to the use of codes and ciphers, generally conveyed a whole sentence, or as much as five minutes' talk (laughter)—and, if they considered it as a rate for information conveyed, the charges were by no means so monstrous. Lord Balfour's Committee came to the conclusion that, speaking generally, the rates were not exorbitant. There were some exceptions, and to these he had been giving his attention. He could not at present give the Committee any further information; but he hoped, in connexion with the International Telegraph Conference, that they might arrive at some further reductions. As to the other questions raised by his hon. friend, he did not propose at the present time to adopt the policy of purchase in regard to the Spanish cable. They were in communication with the company as to the terms on which the rates might be renewed, and would do their best to serve the public. As to the rates between Germany and Spain, it must be remembered that the German Government subsidized their cable. With regard to wireless telegraphy, his hon. friend seemed to have rather inconsistent ideas. If he were quite as certain of the possibilities of the future of wireless telegraphy as his hon. friend was, this would not be the moment at which he should press upon his friends the claims of investments in cable shares. He did not think those who owned cable

shares had any occasion to become frightened about their investments; but he did not know that it was a moment for launching out in great cable speculation. Before doing so he though they might well watch the progress of Mr. Marconi's system. He was bound to say that scant justice had been done to the Post Office in this matter by various speakers. But long before the inventions of Mr. Marconi had reached their present point he received such facilities as the Post Office could give for his experiments. The Post Office did everything they could to assist what they thought might be a great progress in civilization, and they had neither shown any disposition to strangle the invention at its birth nor to prevent its development and success. The Post Office, however, desired not to bind themselves to give away the rights of the Postmaster-General in the same way in which they were given away in regard to telephones, before the importance of telephones was seen. (Hear, hear.) For that action his predecessors and himself had never ceased to be criticized, and the Post Office had still to bear the burden. At present they knew very little about wireless telegraphy. We knew very little of the conditions under which wireless telegraphy would have to be worked. In most countries the Post Office was in the position of a monopolist; but in this country the monopoly of the Postmaster-General did not cover communications with a foreign shore or outside the three-mile limit. The Post Office, therefore, could not strangle the invention even if it wanted to. Their business communications had not been with Mr. Marconi, though personally his relations with that gentleman had been most friendly. They had been dealing with the company which possessed the inventor's rights. The company did not ask merely for what the cable companies had. They asked for an exclusive right to work wireless telegraphy in this country, and they asked for permanence. He could not give them either. He said he would give them a private wire at Poldhu; and when they applied for it they had that private wire, and they had had it for some time past. There was no difficulty at any time about the company's having their private wire on ordinary terms, or obtaining delivery of any messages sent to them from any point in this country, or having messages received at Poldhu put on the Post Office wires. But they asked the Post Office to become their agents for the collection of messages to be transmitted by their wireless system in the same way that anybody could hand in a message at any post-office to be transmitted by the cable companies. He wrote explaining generally the terms on which he was prepared to act, and laid down certain conditions he would have to enforce in order to prevent interference with the Admiralty for strategic reasons and to safeguard national interests. He further said they must satisfy his technical officers of what was disputed by him—namely, that the company were in a position to carry on their business and transmit messages from one side of the Atlantic to the other. That letter was written on March 31 last, and he was still waiting for a reply. He did not complain of the delay in the least; but he did complain that the delay should be attributed to the Post Office. As regarded the progress of underground wires to the north, in a statement he made to the Scotch chambers of commerce early in the year he explained what progress had been made in the past year and the programme for this year, which he believed would be fulfilled before the end of the year. He thought the Post Office deserved great credit for the constant progress that had been made in the scientific development of these underground cables. The sum provided for this purpose during the last two years was £30,000 a year, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had provided this year £130,000. As to the telephone system, he had had a good many interviews with local authorities; and was glad to say that the relations of the Post Office with those bodies were now on a much better footing than they had been hitherto, and he hoped that in the future there would be less friction than in the past. They had laid about 1,000 miles of pipes in the streets of London to carry the cables, and into those pipes they had already drawn over 100,000 miles of wires. (Hear, hear.) The net result was that during the last six months there had been a most rapid increase in the number of telephone subscribers and in the number of calls. Of course he had had complaints, but the friction had mostly been between the Post Office exchanges and the Telephone Company, and not in consequence of bad working on the part of the Post Office system itself. He regretted that the Post Office monopoly in this matter had ever been made the subject of licences to any private company at all. (Hear, hear.) This was not a suitable matter for competition. It was one of those cases in which the public could only lose by competition and could only gain by a monopoly. If there was a monopoly it ought to be in the hands of a public authority. (Hear, hear.) In a great part of the country the licence of the Telephone Company came to an end in 1911; and he could not conceive that after that period any Postmaster-General would ever allow the system to pass out of his hands again. (Hear, hear.) The Post Office were steadily extending their system in various directions. The Central London Exchange was, he thought, the biggest exchange in the whole world, and they were looking forward to an enormous development in a few years.

10.0 He believed that the telephone facilities of this country would develop enormously in the course of the next few years. The International Telegraph Conference was mainly concerned with the details of telegraph administration. These details had their interest for the public, as on them depended the smooth working and efficiency of the international telegraph system. With regard to the question of the reduction of charge, they might obtain some advantage; but he could not say more at present. Then there was the question of the compulsory adoption of the Berne vocabulary for all codes. He had instructed the British delegates to oppose the compulsory adoption of that vocabulary. He could not say what the decision of the conference might be; but he felt strongly that the inconvenience to the commercial community which would result from its adoption would far outweigh any possible advantages which it might have from an administrative point of view.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL urged that the telephone charges should be disentangled from the telegraph charges. 9.6.03

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that as far as he could he proposed to show the actual cost of the working of the London telephone system, but it was impossible to keep the telephone charges and the telegraph charges distinct throughout the whole country.

Mr. F. WILSON (Norfolk, Mid) said there should be more liberality in encouraging the establishment of telegraphic centres in villages.

Mr. DALZIEL (Kirkcaldy Burghs) said he hoped that the Government would do nothing to identify themselves with the Marconi system of telegraphy as against other systems which had been more successful but had not been so well advertised. He submitted that the time had not arrived when the Government should identify themselves with any particular system; and he hoped that the House would be given an opportunity of considering the question before any large expenditure was incurred.

Mr. J. CAMPBELL (Armagh, S.) suggested that the sender of a telegram should be allowed to insert in the form the time at which he handed in the message according to the post-office clock. A telegram which he had sent had been post-timed 20 minutes by the clerk.

Mr. DALZIEL thought it was inadvisable to have public telephones in publichouses.

Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN said that the Post Office authorities never set up a telephone in a publichouse when another agency could be found. The telephones to which the hon. gentleman referred were taken by the publicans as ordinary subscribers, and were placed by them at the disposal of customers.

The vote was agreed to. 9.6.03

PICTURE POSTCARDS.—We have received the following from the Post Office:—Complaints have reached the Postmaster-General from the recipients and senders of postcards, especially picture postcards, which have been charged as insufficiently prepaid letters when sent abroad, because they bore on the front writing other than the address and the necessary postal indications. A written communication on the address side of a postcard is not objected to in the inland service of the United Kingdom, so long as the right hand half is reserved exclusively for the address; but any communication upon the address side of a postcard for or from a place abroad renders it liable, under the regulations of the Postal Union, to be treated as an insufficiently prepaid letter. Many picture postcards, no doubt intended solely for inland circulation, bear on the front a printed inscription in some such words as the following:—"This space as well as the back may now be used for communication (Post Office regulation)." This inscription, without any indication that it applies to the inland service only, is misleading; and the Postmaster-General invites the attention of publishers of picture postcards to the expediency of printing the words "for inland use only" immediately below the title "postcard" on all postcards, such as those in question, which are ineligible for transmission abroad. 13.6.03.

"THE CHEAPEST POST OFFICE IN THE WORLD."—A correspondent, H.H., sends us extracts from the report of the Hon. Noel Trotter, the Postmaster-General at Singapore, to show that the Straits Settlements has the cheapest Post Office in the world:—"Postcards available in the colony and to the Federated Malay States are sold at one-fifth of a penny each, the letter rate of postage throughout the same area is slightly over a halfpenny; the postage on letters to any place (with very few exceptions) in the British Empire is four-fifths of a penny per ½oz.; up to 2oz. of printed matter can be sent to any part of the civilized world for one-fifth of a penny, and 10oz. for a penny, which is absolutely the cheapest international postage I have ever heard of. Thus a letter and a newspaper can be mailed hence to almost any part of the Empire at a total cost of a penny. Our registration fee of one penny is without parallel for cheapness; most other countries charge 2d. or 2½d.; we carry and register up to $20 a parcel up to 11lb. in weight to any part of the colony or the Federated Malay States for 13d., and convey parcels to the same limit of weight to the United Kingdom for 2s. 4d. each, the charge from there being 3s.; and we carry Chinese coolies' letters in clubbed packets to China at the rate of a little over two a penny. . . . It will be seen from an accompanying return that during the year under review 10,890,465 articles were received and despatched, as compared with 8,068,788 articles in 1899, the increase being about 36 per cent." 17.6.03.

DESTRUCTION OF PARCELS AT PETERBOROUGH STATION.—A remarkable accident occurred at Peterborough early on Saturday morning. It is the custom for the parcels from the Peterborough postal area, which covers the greater part of the eastern midlands, to be sorted and made up into baskets or hampers for their various destinations all over the country. Those for the southern districts of England are usually transmitted by the Great Northern Railway by the mail train leaving Peterborough at 1 25 a.m. On Saturday morning 11 baskets full of parcels were handed over to a porter in time for this train. As they were being wheeled on to the up line platform the porter's foot slipped, and he lost control of his trolley, which tilted up and overturned the whole consignment on to the line. An express through train was then approaching. The truck, which was on a level with the platform on the piled up baskets, was dragged away, and in striving to get the baskets off the 4ft. way one of the attendants had a narrow escape of his life. The train ploughed through the obstacle, scattering the hampers in all directions, carrying some quite 100 yards. An approaching down train was stopped in time. Six intact hampers were removed from the line and the contents of five wrecked hampers were collected. The parcels were mostly in fragments. 22.6.03.

POST OFFICE VAGARIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD.

Sir,—Like all political agents of all Parties, I have been busy sending out "lodger-claims." I have done the same for the past twenty years, always sending them out by halfpenny postage, and enclosing a halfpenny stamped envelope for the return. There has never been any question about the matter till the afternoon of the 15th inst., when, after a considerable number had been passed, some official at the N.W. district office decided that claims were liable to letter rate, and surcharged all that came in.

Surely, if there has been any new rule, some notice should have been given to the persons concerned, so that we might have conformed to it, and so saved the trouble and delay that this surcharging causes.

Or, on the other hand, if the officials have been passing, for twenty years at least, thousands upon thousands of documents for one halfpenny instead of charging one penny, some one or some many officials have not been doing their duty.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHAS. H. BALL, Secretary.

East St. Pancras Conservative Association,
18, Camden-street, July 18.

The death is announced of MR. G. W. DE SAULLES, chief engraver to the Royal Mint, who died on Wednesday, at his residence, 31, Fairfax-road, Bedford-park. The funeral will take place on Saturday at 12 45, at Chiswick Old Parish Church. 24.7.03.

A Boston cable from New York announces the

THE POST OFFICE AND MOTOR-VANS.—With the object of ascertaining whether a trustworthy parcel service can be run in districts within easy reach of London the Post Office authorities have started a series of experiments with motor parcel vans. Several of these leave the Mount Pleasant office nightly for Epping, Redhill, and other outlying districts, and up to the present the trials have proved satisfactory. The majority of the new vans are driven by petrol, but one of them is propelled by electricity. An experiment has also been made with a motor-van for parcel work within the City, for which it is believed much time may be saved. 5.8.03.

PICTORIAL POST-CARDS.—"R. R. S." writes to us as follows:—The latest idea, craze, or "fad" brings "grist to the mill," no doubt, both to the Postmaster-General and the vendor; but the public should be protected against the subterfuges of the Post Office by the publishers of the cards. My reason for thus troubling you is that the Post Office authorities have seen fit to decree (page 8 of "Post Office Guide") that post-cards shall "not exceed 5½in. by 3½in., nor" (the Guide says "or") "be less than 3½in. by 2½in."; and these rules are subject to the usual anomalous (from an ordinary mercantile point of view) penalty of double postage, leviable upon the receiver. Of course, publishers should be acquainted with this rule; but one of my household has been mulcted in the sum of 1d. because a post-card sent her ("Tribune series," I cannot trace the publisher) measures 5¾in. by 4¼in. 10.9.03

PENNY POSTAGE TO AUSTRALIA.

15.8.03.

The secretary of the British Empire League has received the following letter in reply to the resolution adopted by the council of the League at a recent meeting.

"General Post Office, London, Aug. 12.

"Sir,—I am directed by the Postmaster-General to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 20th ult., setting forth a resolution adopted at a meeting of the council of the British Empire League, in which the hope is expressed that Mr. Austen Chamberlain may see his way to avail himself of the offer of the Postmaster-General of Australia, to accept letters posted in any other part of the Empire, addressed to places within the Commonwealth, at the rate of 1d. per half-ounce, as has already been done by the Postmasters-General of Canada and New Zealand. In reply I am directed to acquaint you, for the information of the council, that from the commencement of the Imperial penny postage in 1898, his Majesty's Government has always attached great importance to the arrangement being a reciprocal one. It was on this basis that the post-offices of the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and other British colonies and possessions adopted the penny rate for letters exchanged among themselves, while the Australian Colonies held aloof on the ground of the financial loss involved. The recent offer of the Postmaster-General of the Commonwealth did not extend to a reduction of its own postage, but contemplated an arrangement under which the postage from Australia would remain as at present, while the rate from this country would be reduced. The main obstacle to the establishment of a penny rate from this country to Australia, so long as a charge of 2½d. is made in the opposite direction, is that it would result in fining a number of persons in this country a sum of 3d. on each letter received from Australia insufficiently stamped. The Australian sender would naturally suppose that he could reply to a penny letter for a penny, and the number of insufficiently paid letters to this country would thus be largely increased. As the penalty for insufficient postage is recovered not from the sender but from the addressee, the British Post Office would thus be compelled to fine residents in this country for the defaults of Australians. That the danger is a real one is shown clearly by an examination made by the Postmaster-General's directions, of one of the recent mails from Australia. It should be stated that whilst the postage on a post-card from this country to Australia is 1d., the homeward rate is 1½d. The result of the examination showed that out of a total of 2,275 cards received 739, or almost one-third, were paid 1d. only. It will be obvious to the council of the British Empire League that if a similar proportion of the letters were paid 1d. only, instead of 2½d., the resulting inconvenience would be much more serious. Many more letters are sent than post-cards, and there is naturally a greater reluctance on the part of the public to refuse a taxed post-card than a taxed letter. These surcharges, in the case of post-cards and in other similar instances, already give rise to numerous complaints against the Post Office, and the Postmaster-General is of opinion that it would be unfair both to the people of this country, that they should be exposed to so great an extension of them as would follow the adoption of the Commonwealth's proposal, and to the British Post Office that it should be forced to take upon itself the odium of collecting the surcharge indefinitely, as it would be required by the Australian Administration to do. Under these circumstances Mr. Chamberlain has come with great regret to the conclusion that he cannot at the present time take any further steps in the direction indicated by your council. He still hopes, however, that the growth of Australian revenue will before long make it possible for the Commonwealth Government to indicate a date upon which they can bring the lower rates into force, and I am to assure you that when they are in a position to do this, they will find the British Post Office most ready to meet them. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, H. BUXTON FORMAN."

HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

24. 5. 04

The fourth report of the Controller of his Majesty's Stationery Office has just been issued as a Blue-book [Cd. 2,083]. The Controller (Mr. T. Digby Pigott), who says that in less than a year he will be surrendering the trust confided to him 27 years ago, explains that 14 years have passed since a general statement with regard to the work of the Stationery Office was last presented to Parliament, and the expenditure of the Department during that period has increased more than 50 per cent. The report then sets forth the steps which have been taken from time to time with the object of effecting economies since, in 1874, special attention was drawn by a Select Committee of the House of Commons to printing and other matters coming within the province of the office; and the system under which Government printing is now carried on is clearly stated. The work is, as recommended by several committees which have inquired into the subject, done by contractors, paid at rates fixed by open competition. It has been broken up into groups of convenient size, and the contracts are so framed as to ensure the payment of fair wages to all employed, and to allow, so far as the requirements of the service may admit, provincial firms to compete. Mr. Pigott says, with reference to the printing of Blue-books, the style of which is not infrequently a subject of criticism, that the matter is regulated entirely by Parliament, and the regulations now in force, which were re-written by a Select Committee in 1894, are strictly adhered to. He adds that there is nothing in the Stationery Office contracts, even now existing, to prevent the adoption of any style of printing or quality of paper which may be required. "Wide spaces between the lines and broad margins no doubt improve the appearance and legibility of a book, but they are costly." Alluding to the complaint which, though much less frequent than formerly, is still occasionally made, that, owing to the want of some proper system for the advertisement and sale of Government publications, much valuable information is overlooked by the public to whom it might be of use, the Controller points out that a concentration of the many publishing agencies of the Government was carried out to meet the objections. The contracts for sale agencies are now held in England by Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, who pay for the privilege offered £2,730 a year; and in Scotland and Ireland by Messrs. Oliver and Boyd and Mr. Ponsonby, who pay, respectively, £130 and £150 a year. The net receipts for sales of Government publications, exclusive of Ordnance maps and Admiralty charts, have risen from £29,000 in 1896-7, the year in which the new sale agency arrangements were made, to nearly £45,000 last year—an advance of over 50 per cent. As to the arrangements in force for printing and publishing local Acts and the length of time which elapses between the passing of these Acts and the issue of the King's printers' copies, a matter which has lately again been a subject of remark in the House of Commons, Mr. Pigott says the question is one of some little difficulty. The proposals of a departmental committee which sat at the Home Office a few years ago have been acted upon with satisfactory results, and "complaints of inconvenience from delay in the issue of the King's printers' copies of local Acts are now practically unknown."

Another great improvement recently made, the report says, has been the systematic publication and collection into volumes of orders and regulations made by the several Government departments under powers conferred by statute. All statutory rules are now registered and numbered as they are made, and such as are of public and general interest are on sale at nominal prices and are later republished in annual volumes. A revised collection of the rules in force on December 31, 1903, has been prepared and will almost immediately be issued. When this has been done, Mr. Pigott states, the complete written law of the kingdom, so far as it may be of public and general interest, will be for the first time accessible to the general public, and will be purchasable through any bookseller at a comparatively trifling cost. Details are given of the arrangements under which the official *Gazettes* are published. The *London Gazette* is farmed to contractors who print it at their own cost and sell at fixed prices for their own profit, the proceeds of advertisements and the contractors' premium being alone appropriated in aid of the Stationery Office vote. The editorial work was formerly done in the *London Gazette* office, which had a staff numbering seven. "The new system has worked very satisfactorily." The entire cost of the *Gazette* office, amounting for salaries alone to £2,105 a year, has, with the exception of the salary of the indexer (£105) and of a small allowance of £15, been saved. The total receipts of the *Gazette* for advertisements and otherwise have risen from £22,246, on the average of the last three years of the old system, to £27,626, on the average of the last three years of the new system. Waste paper now appears to be of much less value than in past years. In 1889 the net profit realized was £5,537. Since that time prices have fallen. In 1902-3 there was an actual loss, and in 1903-4 the profit was only £1,100.

The Stationery Office vote, as the report states, is a barometer marking the rise and fall of activity in the public service. A table giving the approximate cost of printing, stationery, &c., for nine offices shows an increase from £247,695 in 1883-4 to £475,007 in 1902-3—an advance in the 20 years of more than 91¾ per cent. The prices, on the whole, were lower in the later than in the earlier year. The greatest increases were:—War Office, from £66,209 to £175,008; Post Office, £88,197 to £140,909; Admiralty, £42,008 to £82,876; Colonial Office, £1,461 to £6,851; Patent Office, £18,135 to £30,227; Home Office, £2,475 to £4,954; the Sessional papers of both Houses of Parliament, excluding the minutes and journals of the House of Lords and the votes and proceedings and journals of the House of Commons, in 1883 filled 95 volumes consisting of 72,564 pages; the same papers in 1902 filled 145 volumes containing 113,272 pages. The cost of the votes and proceedings of the House of Commons in the same two years was, respectively, £7,225 and £8,976. Taking the same years the use of steel pens went up from 33,218 gross to 56,949 gross, penholders from 217,262 to 448,130, pencils from 37,971 dozen to 92,873 dozen, pins from 4,289lbs. to 11,270lbs., cord and thread from 32,507lb. to 66,642lb., web and leather straps from 29,811 to 60,616, and bottles of gum from 5,467 to 19,368. For typewriters, which first appeared as an appreciable item of charge in the year 1889-90, £13,320 was paid last year. The growth of the establishment "throws a sidelight on the growth of the work of the department." In January, 1894, there were 49 established officers and 104 temporary *employés*—a total of 153; in January last the numbers were 94 and 206—a total of 300.

THE WAGES OF PUBLIC SERVANTS.

12.9.04

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

The recent Report of the Committee on Post Office Wages and the action respecting it taken by Post Office servants bring into prominence questions very seriously affecting the welfare and good government of the country. Apart from the Army and Navy, the Post Office is the largest public employer of labour in the United Kingdom, and it is natural that the problems connected with the position of public servants should arise in an accentuated form in the case of this great department. But the same difficulties are likely to be encountered sooner or later, not only by other departments of the State, but by county councils, municipalities, and all public bodies employing considerable numbers of men who are constituents of the councillors or other members of the employing body. In all such cases the temptation will present itself to use the Parliamentary or municipal vote for the purpose of extorting better terms for the voter who is also an *employé*. Individual workmen would, no doubt, mostly shrink from asking for a direct pecuniary benefit—in plain English, a bribe—from a candidate for office; but workmen organized in a union or association of any kind consider that in asking for a benefit for the class to which they belong they are not only blameless, but are performing a virtuous act. At least one must imagine that this is the habit of mind of the postmen and telegraphists, who plainly intimate to candidates that their votes will depend upon a promise to support in the House of Commons their claim to increased wages. It is said that in some constituencies, where party votes are nearly balanced, postal servants casting their suffrages together can turn the election, and there are many towns where the postal vote cannot be safely disregarded. What the power of postmen and telegraphists has become can be estimated by the fact that for many years the discussion on the Postal Estimates has degenerated into a prolonged attempt, proceeding from both sides of the House impartially, to force the Government of the day, against its sober judgment, to spend the public money in raising the pay of its servants. The occasion which, according to the theory of the Constitution, should be seized by the House of Commons to make sure that it has good value for the money it votes, and to urge upon the department improvements in the interests of the nation at large, is used mainly to advocate increased expenditure in the interests of a small privileged class. Success in influencing members has recently emboldened postal *employés* to go to strange lengths. On the eve of the debate on the Postal Estimates last session, members received a circular, bearing a slip to be signed, detached, and forwarded to the Postmaster-General, demanding that he would immediately give full effect to the recommendations of the Wages Committee. It was hoped, no doubt, to procure so many signatures that the Government would be threatened with a defeat, should they attempt to act on their own judgment. Fortunately, the good feeling of members revolted against such ill-mannered pressure, and the movement failed of effect. But the tone of the men appears sufficiently from the proceedings at a meeting of the Postal Telegraph Clerks' Association, recently reported in *The Times*. The chairman of the meeting boasted that, "by the time Parliament assembled next year, they would have an effective organization at their disposal, and the enemy would feel their pressure very considerably." Another speaker made the naïve suggestion that the Post Office should be managed by a committee of members of the House of Commons—that is, by men who could be unseated if they did not pay postmen and telegraphists as much as they chose to ask for—and a resolution was passed, "calling upon the Postmaster-General to adopt immediately the whole of the recommendations of the Committee on Post Office wages." A more arrogant or dictatorial tone it is impossible to imagine. Post Office *employés* feel able to dictate to the Government because they are paid out of public money, and because they can unseat, or try to unseat, those who have the handling of that money, if their behests are not obeyed.

The whole history of the postal wages agitation is, indeed, illustrative of the power of public servants who are also voters. It is not more than ten years since Parliamentary pressure resulted in the appointment of a committee, composed mainly of Government officials, and presided over by Lord Tweedmouth, to investigate alleged grievances. In compliance with the report of this committee, a very large addition to wages was made. The pressure, however, in no way abated; and an informal inquiry was then held before the Duke of Norfolk and the late Mr. Hanbury (at that time Postmaster-General and Secretary to the Treasury) at which the case of the men was presented by so able an advocate as Sir Albert Rollit. Again concessions were made, and wages increased, at the expense of the tax-payer. But the Parliamentary pressure still continued, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, hoping to touch firm ground, last year appointed a small committee of men of some distinction and experience (not members of the House) "To inquire into the scale of pay received by postmen, sorters, and telegraphists, and to report whether, having regard to the conditions of their employment and to the rates current in other occupations, their remuneration is adequate." The idea was excellent. The question to which the taxpayer really wants an answer is, Are postal servants fairly paid, having regard to the pay for corresponding work in the open labour market? Postal work, though not disagreeable, is in some respects exacting. It is well done; and no one wishes it to be otherwise than well paid. But it ought not to be over-paid. There is no reason why a postman or a telegraphist should get wages out of proportion to those paid for other work making equal demands upon strength and intelligence. It is obvious that, if excessive wages are paid, a present is being made at the expense of the taxpayers, many of whom are in humbler circumstances than the youngest postman. Mr. Fawcett used to say that he thought the State should be a model employer—an employer not paying extravagantly, but paying just enough to secure the pick of the kind of labour required. It is important to know, therefore, how, in the opinion of competent judges, Post Office pay corresponds with outside pay; and, if the inquiry instituted by Mr. Chamberlain had been fairly prosecuted, the answer would have been of the greatest value. Unfortunately, the Committee did not take the trouble to make the investigation for which they were appointed. They listened to the *employés'* statements, and to the views of the higher officials—ground already traversed in previous inquiries—but they neglected entirely to compare the remuneration given by the Post Office with that reigning in other employments. With extraordinary disregard of the duty they had accepted, they say—"We have not seen our way to obtain any specific evidence as to the comparative rates of wages current in other occupations. . . . Certain official information is already available, being obtained and published from time to time by the Board of Trade. This information, supplemented by our own experience, affords more reliable *data* than any particulars we could hope to obtain in the way of evidence within the limits of an inquiry of reasonable duration." On a mere question of procedure there may have been something to be said for this view. Satisfied with the evidence already existing, the Committee might have compared outside wages and work, as disclosed by the Board of Trade publications and ascertained by their own experience, with wages and work in the Post Office. But in their Report they do nothing of the kind. They declare that there cannot be a valid comparison between a national postal service and any form of private industrial employment. And they sum up the position by expressing this not very helpful opinion:—"We think that postal *employés* are justified in resting their claims to remuneration on the responsible and exacting character of the duties performed and on the social position they fill as servants of the State. The State, for its part, does right in taking an independent course, guided by principles of its own, irrespective of what others may do; neither following an example nor pretending to set one." If this was

the opinion of the Committee, one cannot help asking why they undertook an inquiry, the one object of which was the comparison they deprecate. It would have been fairer to the Postmaster-General to have declined to act. They then lay down that "the adequacy of the terms now obtaining may be tested by the numbers and character of those who offer, by the capacity they show on trial, and finally by their contentment"; and they proceed:—"Applying these tests we find that there is, on the whole, no lack of suitable candidates out of whom the best are selected by examination. Further, there is no complaint as to capacity, but there is widespread discontent. A revision of the Tweedmouth settlement is therefore demanded." And the Committee, thereupon—because Post Office *employés* say they would like higher wages, and for no other reason—proceed to make a variety of recommendations, which, if practicable and if fully carried out, would, it is said, cost the taxpayers about a million a year.

It is hardly surprising that the Postmaster-General should hesitate to carry out recommendations made on so slight a basis. The Government asked for specific information, which the Committee has refused to give them. Apart from this information, the opinion of the five gentlemen to whom the inquiry was confided is certainly not so conclusive as to warrant "immediate" action. Yet, because the Postmaster-General requires time to consider to what extent the recommendations of the Committee are practicable, or useful, Parliamentary pressure in its most extreme form is brought to bear upon members of the House of Commons, and through them on the Government; and additional pay is to be wrung from the taxpayers, not because any case for additional pay has been shown, but because it is hoped to terrorize members of Parliament on the eve of a general election.

What is the remedy for a state of things which is obviously a blot upon any reasonable system of administration? It is not easy to say. If Civil servants choose to use the rights of citizenship for the advantage of their own pockets, it is very difficult to reach them by any form of Corrupt Practices Act. And how can a poor candidate, who feels strongly on great public questions and wishes to give effect to his views in Parliament, be greatly blamed for lending a favourable ear to any section of his constituents who speak fairly and may hold his fate in their hands? If he is virtuous, can he rely on like virtue in his opponent? How difficult, again, for any Government to resist the appeals of its supporters, and to run the risk of losing seats, perhaps even of defeat in the House, through a Spartan adherence to principles which will count for nothing directly in the way of votes! There is, indeed, one simple and effectual way of cutting the knot—to disfranchise all Civil servants on the active list. But, apart from other objections, no Government is likely to be bold enough to adopt this course. Moreover, the remedy would not be a complete one. The parallel case of municipal *employés* who are also municipal voters would not be met by a mere Parliamentary disfranchisement. Is there any other means of securing that the remuneration of public servants should be settled on the merits of each case, and not by a reckless use of voting power?

During the recent debate on the Post Office Estimates a suggestion was made which seems worthy of serious consideration. It was to refer all questions of the sort under discussion to a quasi-judicial body, which should hear evidence and make awards. The suggestion is, from some points of view, a startling one. Why should not the Government, like any other employer of labour, make what bargain it likes with its *employés*? As a matter of fact, this hypothetical freedom of contract is, where large classes of workers are concerned, being gradually restricted even in the case of private employers. Boards of conciliation and arbitration for the settlement of disputes concerning wages are gradually gaining ground. The principle of a current rate of wage, settled no doubt remotely, but not immediately, by supply and demand, is now recognized in every contract made by a Government department or important local authority—contractors being put under terms to pay the wages current in their trade. Trade unions and employers practically settle rates by negotiation, and often by some species of arbitration; and it is not in practice open to the employer to go into the market and buy labour at the cheapest rate to which at the moment competition may have reduced it. But there is a special reason why fixed rules should apply to the Government service; and the same considerations apply more or less to the service of other public bodies. There are tests of efficiency and a permanence of employment which do not obtain in private undertakings. A man or woman who has, after passing the necessary examinations of fitness, entered the service, though in theory holding office at the will of the head of the department, in practice holds on good behaviour. So long as an *employé* on the establishment of a department is not guilty of misconduct, and performs his work with tolerable efficiency, he runs no risk of disturbance. He will not be dismissed merely to make way for another man who, the employer thinks, would suit his purpose better; he will not be dismissed on account of any temporary slackness of work. Further, there are fixed rates of increase in pay, definite grades of work, definite chances of promotion. So long as complete control over the *personnel* of the service is left to the head of the department responsible to Parliament, it is of very little consequence whether the scales of pay are settled by the Government (which, in the ultimate result, means the Treasury), or by a tribunal which occupies an impartial position as between the Government (the employer) and the employed. No doubt all expenditure to be borne by the taxes must be presented to Parliament on the responsibility of the Government of the day. But the awards of the suggested tribunal would be adopted as the awards of any other body having authority to arbitrate between the Government and third persons, and would practically be beyond challenge in the House of Commons. The whole question would be removed from the purview of the House, and members and candidates would be troubled no more.

The main question to be considered by such a tribunal in each case would be that which was referred to the recent Committee on Post Office Wages, and was not answered—namely, whether the remuneration offered, having regard to the conditions of employment and to the rates current in other occupations, was adequate. And the tribunal might well be of the character of the Railway Commission, a tribunal on which legal knowledge and business experience should each find a place. No question of individual grievance would, of course, be within the province of the tribunal; only questions affecting classes of *employés* and the permanent remuneration of their work; and the Minister would remain absolutely free in the direction of work and in the promotion or dismissal of individuals, as at present. What is to be desired is that Government servants and municipal servants should, like all other *employés*, be paid fairly for their work; what is objectionable is, that public servants should extort better terms, not by proving a case on its merits, but by the use of rights of citizenship which are conferred upon them, not for their personal advantage, but for the benefit of the State. 12.9.04.

12.9.04

A large question of very serious public importance is raised by the communication which we print elsewhere, from a well-informed Correspondent, on "The Wages of Public Servants." The State, through its various departments, and particularly through the Post Office, is the largest public employer of wage-earning labour in the United Kingdom, and the State in this relation is the instrument and expression of the will of the House of Commons. The House of Commons, again, is, in its turn, the instrument and expression of the will of the electorate. Hence, as nearly every public servant in receipt of wages is an elector, it follows that, if the wage-earning and voting *employés* of the State choose to combine and to make the advocacy of their views and interests by a candidate the condition of their support at the poll, they can bring an amount of pressure to bear upon the House of Commons which it may be very difficult for the State, as the guardian of the public interest in general, to resist. The case of the dockyard

constituencies is familiar to every student of Parliamentary debates. But the influence of dockyard voters affects only two or three constituencies, and, though often of questionable quality as far as it goes, it does not go very far. The voting influence of Post Office *employés* is, on the other hand, much more widely diffused. There is scarcely a constituency in the kingdom that is not more or less affected by it; in some it is sufficiently powerful to decide the issue of a contest, and in nearly all cases it can bring an amount of pressure to bear on the sitting member, irrespective of his political complexion, which, to say the least, is not conducive to the public welfare, nor to the independence of the House of Commons. It will be seen from our Correspondent's letter that in this direction it has already gone very far indeed, so far, in fact, as to raise issues of grave moment to the welfare and good order of the State. Nor is the mischief confined to State employment proper. It extends to municipal employment as well. It is, perhaps, an evil not entirely separable from the nature of democratic representation. Democracy, as SIR HENRY MAINE used to insist, is political power divided into very small fragments. To combine those fragments for the pursuit of a common end, whether of class or of party, is one of the first lessons that democracy learns, and one of the last that it unlearns. A man who takes the wage of a public body and has a voice in its constitution and policy is pretty sure to use that voice to promote his own interest or that of his class. He soon finds that he can best do this by combining with others whose interests are identical with his own. It takes him a long time to learn, even if he ever does learn, that, so far as his class interest conflicts with the general welfare, he is doing his best to undermine the chief ground on which its best advocates have recommended democratic government—namely, that its tendency is, as they thought, to put the general welfare above that of any class.

A melancholy and even ominous illustration of this process of democratic degeneration is furnished by the story which our Correspondent has to tell of the latest phase of the postal wages agitation. This agitation, as our readers are aware, is now of long standing; but it has entered on a new phase, with the publication of the Report of a Committee appointed last year by the present CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER, when he was Postmaster-General, "to inquire into the scale of pay "received by postmen, sorters, and telegraphists, "and to report whether, having regard to the con-"ditions of their employment and to the rates "current in other occupations, their remunera-"tion is adequate." The reference here is explicit, and it is plainly an essential part of it that the Committee should seek to determine whether the remuneration of the public servants in question is adequate or not by "having regard "to the conditions of their employment and "to the rates current in other occupations." It is, of course, an arguable proposition that the comparison here suggested between Post Office employment and other occupations is not relevant to the issue, and that the rate of wages earned by Post Office *employés* ought to be determined on its own merits, without regard to any such comparison. But this view, however arguable in itself, is one which the Committee were manifestly debarred by the terms of reference from taking. They were not asked to ascertain if the *employés* in question were discontented, because that was a matter of common knowledge, and, in fact, the reason for their appointment. The specific question they were asked was the question to which, as our Correspondent says, the taxpayer really wants an answer—namely, Are postal servants fairly paid, having regard to the pay for corresponding work in the open labour market? This question the Committee have neither answered nor attempted to answer. Passing by the terms of reference altogether, the Report declares that "it is difficult to make any valid comparison "between a National Postal Service and any form "of private industrial enterprise, the entire "conditions being so different." Be it so. *C'est une idée comme une autre*, and, coming from the members of the Committee, it is an idea which might deserve respectful consideration in itself. But, as an answer to the specific question addressed to the Committee, it is, in our judgment, in the literal sense of the word, impertinent. However, having rejected the criterion propounded to them by the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Committee proceeded to apply a criterion of their own. "It appears to us that the "adequacy of the terms now obtain-"ing may be tested by the numbers and "character of those who offer; by the capacity "they show on trial; and, finally, by their "contentment. Applying these tests, we find "that there is, on the whole, no lack of suitable "candidates, out of whom the best are selected by "examination. . . . Further, there is no "complaint as to capacity. But there is wide-"spread discontent. A revision of the TWEED-"MOUTH settlement is therefore demanded." Thereupon, as our Correspondent bluntly puts it, "because Post Office *employés* say they would "like higher wages, and for no other reason, the "Committee proceed to make a variety of recom-"mendations, which, if practicable and if fully "carried out, would, it is said, cost the taxpayers "about a million a year."

This is bad enough, but it is not the worst. It appears that towards the end of the Session members of Parliament received a sort of stand-and-deliver circular, requiring them to make it clear to the POSTMASTER-GENERAL that he must forthwith give full effect to the recommendations of the Wages Committee. That they resisted this ill-mannered pressure, as our Correspondent justly calls it, is very much to their credit; but the pressure is of a nature which, if unchecked, is almost certain sooner or later to produce an effect which could not fail to be mischievous, even if the demands of the *employés* were much more reasonable than the Committee have been able to show. It is, at any rate, clear, as MR. HENNIKER HEATON very properly insisted, in a letter which we printed a few days ago, that the Government are in no way bound to carry out the recommendations of the BRADFORD Committee. Indeed, we would go further, and say that they would give a disastrous encouragement to one of the worst forms of democratic agitation if they did carry it out. To raise the wages of public servants for no just cause shown, and without regard to the rate of pay for corresponding work in the open labour market, is to open the door to one of the worst, because one of the most insidious and most pervading, forms of political corruption. But, as our Correspondent regretfully admits, it is much more easy to point to the evil than to suggest a remedy. Disfranchisement of all public servants would cure the evil, no doubt; but it is a remedy scarcely consistent with democratic institutions. The thing is, as our Correspondent puts it, to settle the remuneration of public servants on the merits of each case, and not by a reckless use of voting power. Private employers have often found it advantageous to refer disputes about wages to a *quasi*-judicial body of arbitrators so constituted as to command the confidence of both parties. Is there any reason why the State and other public employers of labour should not seek to establish similar tribunals for similar

purposes? This suggestion, our Correspondent reminds us, was made in the course of the debate on the Post Office Estimates last Session. The problem is a difficult one, but it is surely not insoluble. At present the Treasury is for practical purposes the real court of appeal, and perhaps it is too much in the position of an employer to command the full confidence of the employed. But it need not transcend the resources of statesmanship to devise some practicable and acceptable machinery, whereby the public servant may be relieved from the temptation of bringing undue pressure to bear on the politician, and the politician from the temptation of yielding to such pressure. That is the problem to be solved, and it is, as our Correspondent shows, a very grave and a very urgent one, on the wise solution of which much of the future, and all the repute, of democratic institutions may well be found to depend in the long run.

12.9.04

23.6.03.

At Bow-street, yesterday, before Sir A. de Rutzen, who sat specially, Walter John Richards, 54, chief clerk in the postal branch of Somerset-house, Henry John and Percy Tidd Richards, his sons, Anthony Buck Creeke, a solicitor, of Leadenhall-street, and Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk in the Works Department of the Admiralty, were charged on remand with stealing and receiving official stamps. Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted on behalf of the Inland Revenue; Mr. Lincoln Reed appeared for Creeke, Mr. Harry Wilson for Waterhouse, and Mr. Pheasant for Walter and Henry Richards. Mr. Muir said the prisoner Walter Richards had been arrested since the last hearing. He was until quite recently a principal clerk at Somerset-house. Together with a Mr. Dewey, he had the actual custody and control of vast quantities of postage and official stamps. They each had a key, and without the concurrent use of these two keys the stamps could not be obtained from the safe in which they were kept. Walter Richards and Mr. Dewey were the persons who were trusted to see that no improper use was made of these stamps. It was plain that the person who had to decide upon the taking out of the safe of certain sheets of Office of Works stamps for the purpose of cancellation was the prisoner, Walter Richards, possibly with the concurrence of Mr. Dewey. On January 23 he seemed to have decided that four sheets, consisting of ½d., 5d., and 10d. "O. W. Official" stamps should be cancelled, and those were the very stamps from which were made up the sets which were sold, amongst others, to Stanley Gibbons (Ltd.), for the enormous price of £84 for three sets. In the ordinary course of the official duty at Somerset-house a warrant had to be made out for the cancelling of the stamps, and the warrant in which it had been intended that they should be included was issued on January 30. No such stamps, however, were included in that warrant, and it was obvious that Walter Richards and Mr. Dewey kept them. None of the stamps which Mr. Dewey had were ever put upon the market, and he did not make anything by the possession of them. With regard to Richards the facts were very different. As early as January 28 his son Henry was offering some of the stamps to Mr. Moore, a dealer, and two days later he sold some to Mr. Field, another dealer. On January 30, Mr. Healy, a stamp merchant, had offered to him by Mr. Moore some of those official Government over-printed stamps, and knowing something of the regulations which prevented the sale of them in quantities he, like an honest man, wrote to Somerset-house before he purchased them, asking whether he was at liberty to do so. That letter was handed to Richards, who was the trusted person to deal with such matters. He showed it to Creeke, and Creeke, who was in possession of some of these official stamps stolen by his friend and associate, Walter Richards, and who knew that the sale of them was prohibited, went to Mr. Healy, with whom he had no personal acquaintance, and endeavoured to persuade him to buy the stamps. To Mr. Healy's credit, he declined to deal with Creeke at all. It was after that that Creeke sold them to Stanley Gibbons (Ltd.). Richards was sent with a Mr. Stene Street to Mr. Healy for the purpose of making inquiries with regard to his letter and to ascertain the source from which the stamps were being obtained. He at once proceeded to continue the course of treachery to his employers which he had begun, by showing Mr. Healy's letter to Creeke. Mr. Healy complained indignantly that his letter, which he expected would have been treated as confidential, should have been shown to Creeke. That was on a Saturday. Upon leaving Mr. Healy's office, Richards asked Mr. Stene Street, contrary to his duty, not to report the facts which Mr. Healy had complained about concerning his letter, but Mr. Street declined to do anything of the kind. Richards then requested him to wait until Monday, when he would get something in writing from Creeke. On the Monday, when the report was made, Richards was armed with a letter from Creeke stating that he (Richards) had not betrayed anything to him. On February 16 his son Henry called upon Mr. Moore, a stamp dealer, and told him there was a row about the stamps going on at Somerset-house. He was a cycle maker at Wandsworth and had nothing to do with Somerset-house. He also told Mr. Moore he was to have a visit from the police that day, and as a fact Serjeant Ward did call upon him. The result of that officer's inquiries was reported to Walter Richards, who was supposed to be assisting the authorities at Somerset-house, and within 12 hours it was known to Henry Richards, and he was complaining to Mr. Moore about his having given his description to the police. It was perfectly obvious that Walter Richards not only stole the stamps, but betrayed the confidence reposed in him by playing into the hands of the thieves and receivers who were acting in concert with him. The authorities, therefore, felt that it was their duty to the public to include him in the charge. Evidence was then called. Charles John Phillips, managing director to Stanley Gibbons (Ltd.), said that in January last he purchased four sets of three "O. W. Official" stamps from Creeke for £84, and a few days later a similar lot for the same money. He had also bought other Office of Works stamps from him and from Percy Richards. In cross-examination, he said he had received no information as to the regulations regarding the use of these stamps, and at the time he bought them he had no idea that they had been dishonestly obtained. There were various theories in the trade as to how these official stamps could be secured. He had bought Army official stamps from Army officers, and he understood that they substituted ordinary stamps for them. The value to dealers of Army official stamps was only about double the face value. The prisoners were again remanded on the same bail.

This below is the case in full

The Case begins with the following

At Bow-street, yesterday, before Sir A. de Rutzen, who sat specially, Henry John Richards, a cycle dealer, of Wandsworth-common; Anthony Buck Creeke, a solicitor, of Leadenhall-street, and Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk in the Works Department of the Admiralty, were charged, on remand, with being concerned in stealing and receiving Government stamps. Percy Tidd Richards, described as a clerk, a brother of the first prisoner, was now brought up in custody charged with receiving some of the stamps. He is at present awaiting trial on a charge of forging a bill of exchange. Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted on behalf of the Inland Revenue; Mr. Harry Wilson defended Waterhouse; and Mr. Lincoln Reed represented Creeke and Henry Richards. William Henry Hiscox, manager to Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, stamp dealers, of the Strand, said that on May 5 he purchased some unused Office of Works official stamps, of the face value of £1 4s. 5d., from the prisoner Percy Richards for £17. Mr. Muir.—Did you ask any questions as to the source from which they were obtained? The witness.—No, I did not. Is that the usual custom of Stanley Gibbons?—I thought they could be obtained by substituting others for them. Do you suggest that I could substitute my watch for yours and do it honestly? Mr. Reed raised an objection to counsel's cross-examining his own witness. Mr. Muir.—He is incriminating himself by saying that he bought these stamps without asking first where they came from. The witness added that Percy Richards also told him that he could obtain some Board of Education stamps. In cross-examination, he said there were many unused official stamps in the market, and it would be an easy matter for collectors to obtain them from dealers. The officially marked stamps were used by the various Government departments in the ordinary course of correspondence, and they were obtained, he believed, by the clerks' substituting ordinary stamps for them. In that way there would be no loss to any one. The enhanced value was created by the philatelic rage. An ordinary halfpenny stamp surcharged "O.W. Official" (Office of Works) was catalogued at £3 by Messrs. Stanley Gibbons. Mr. Muir.—In view of that, do you suggest that the substitution of an ordinary stamp for an Office of Works official is legitimate? The witness.—To a certain extent. If that is so, why should a halfpenny stamp be worth £3?—The number printed and the number which would get out in that way would be small. Why should these stamps ever be used if one can get £3 for a halfpenny?—If that was done to any great extent the price would be much smaller. Frank Godden, assistant-manager to Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, deposed that on May 16 he purchased some unused Office of Works stamps of the face value of £1 2s. 6d. from Percy Richards for £10. On that occasion the prisoner told him that an inquiry was being instituted in the Government departments with reference to the official stamps being on the market, and said that as a result there would be no more of them for sale. The witness asked him how he obtained possession of the official stamps, and he replied that there were quantities of them sent to the surveyors of the different departments. Frank Moore, a stamp dealer, of Villiers-street, Strand, said he had bought official stamps from the prisoner Henry Richards on one or two occasions. For a set of three "O. W. Official," of the denominations of 10d., 5d., and ½d. respectively, he paid him £10. The witness also introduced him to Mr. Field, of the Royal-arcade, Bond-street, to whom he sold several official and other stamps surcharged "specimen" for £20. On another occasion Henry Richards showed him some stamps which were

wrongly coloured and others which were misperforated; but he did not purchase them. The prisoner also asked him if he would buy "O. W. Officials" with the "O" left out, and some "I. R. Officials" minus the "I. R.," but he declined to make an offer, as customers for them were very difficult to find. Soon after the witness had given his description to the police the prisoner called upon him and asked why he had done so, adding:—"I am safe enough, because I am a cycle maker and not a stamp dealer, but you must not give me away." The witness told him he would not until he was forced to tell. On a subsequent date Henry Richards told the witness that the police would never get to the bottom of the business, as there were too many in it. In further examination, the witness said he bought from Waterhouse on January 16 last one or two 1s. stamps, 80 6d., 182 1d., and 120 2d. unused stamps, all surcharged "Govt. Parcels," for £7 9s. 6d. He also bought from him a whole sheet of "Govt. Parcels" 1d. stamps at the rate of 2d. each, and 120 2d. stamps at 4d. each. Since then Waterhouse had called at his shop, and the witness told him the police were after him. He replied:—"My conscience is quite clear on the matter, because I am so miserably paid." Cross-examined, he said he would pledge his oath that it was with Waterhouse that he had these latter dealings. The prisoners were again remanded on bail. 16.6.03.

Proceedings of 20th June 1903 come next.

7.7.03.

At Bow-street, yesterday, before Sir A. de Rutzen, who sat specially, Walter John Richards, a principal clerk in the office of the Controller of Stamps, Somerset House, Henry John Richards, cycle maker, and Percy Tidd Richards, his sons, Anthony Buck Creeke, solicitor, and Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk in the Works Department of the Admiralty, were charged, on remand, with stealing and receiving a number of official stamps. Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted on behalf of the Inland Revenue; Mr. Frampton appeared for Waterhouse. Mr. Llewellyn Williams for Walter Richards, Mr. Lincoln Reed for Creeke, and Mr. Pheasant for Henry Richards. Formal evidence was given to show that Waterhouse had in January last told one of his fellow clerks that he had sold some Brazilian stamps to a stamp dealer in Villiers-street, Strand, for 1s. 6d. Mr. Muir said he called that evidence because cross-examination had been directed with a view to showing that there was a case of mistaken identity with regard to Waterhouse and that he was not the man spoken to as having visited a stamp dealer in Villiers-street. John Moore Mallett, a registrar in the Works Department of the Admiralty, said Waterhouse had been employed in that department since December, 1901, at a salary of 27s. a week. A stock of "Government parcels" stamps was kept in that room for official use only. The key of the drawer in which they were locked was kept in an open box and was left there during the night. On February 10 an envelope containing 404 penny, 357 twopenny, and 67 sixpenny "Government parcels" stamps was missed, at about the same time that Waterhouse sold a large quantity to Mr. Moore, a dealer in Villiers-street. Cross-examined, the witness said he was not aware of any regulations prohibiting the use of official stamps for private correspondence, but it would be wrong for any of the clerks to use an official stamp and substitute an ordinary one for it. Francis Albert Schutte, a mechanical engineer, of Claygate, deposed to seeing Henry Richards in February last in the shop of Mr. Moore, a stamp dealer, of Villiers-street, while he was in there purchasing some stamps. Edwin Healy, a stamp dealer, of Wormwood-street, City, was then recalled for cross-examination. (It was in consequence of the letter he wrote to Somerset House, asking if he might purchase some official stamps which had been offered to him, that these inquiries were made.) Replying to Mr. Lincoln Reed, he said he first sent his manager to Somerset House to inquire if he might purchase official stamps, and he received the verbal reply that there was nothing to prevent him from buying them. After that he bought eight official stamps for 10s., and was now negotiating with a gentleman with a view to selling six of them for about £15. A few days after that he bought an entire sheet of 240 penny "Government parcels" stamps from Mr. Moore for £6 5s. He then thought there had been an irregularity somewhere, and he wrote to the Inland Revenue authorities, telling them of his deal. No offer of a reward had been held out to him, but he had asked to be allowed to retain those stamps which he had bought and some others which had been offered to him in return for any assistance which he might have been able to render in tracing the source of these stamps. The prisoners were again remanded on the same bail.

14.7.03.

At Bow-street, yesterday, before Sir A. de Rutzen, Walter John Richards, principal clerk in the Controller of Stamps' office, Somerset-house; Henry John and Percy Tidd Richards, his sons; Anthony B. Creeke, solicitor, and Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk in the Works Department of the Admiralty, were charged on remand with stealing and receiving official stamps. Mr. Muir prosecuted for the Inland Revenue; Mr. Lincoln Reed appeared for Creeke; Mr. Llewellyn Richards for Walter Richards; Mr. Frampton for Waterhouse; and Mr. Pheasant for Henry Richards. Ernest Henry Doucett, a principal clerk in the accounts department of the office of Controller of Stamps, said that towards the end of last year Walter Richards made a suggestion that they should take away from the office a few Office of Works' official stamps. The witness fell in with the suggestion. On January 23 four sheets of "O.W. Official" stamps, one each of ½d. red, ½d. green, 5d. and 10d., were taken from the safe for the purpose of cancellation. Richards had the power to decide which stamps should be cancelled, and he could have carried out the whole of the cancellation without the witness's knowing anything about it. When he and Richards took out these official stamps ordinary ones were substituted, so that the money totals would agree. They divided the official stamps between them. The witness handed Richards in cash the face value of the stamps he received. They both agreed to lock their stamps away. Nothing was said about putting them on the market. The witness took from his portion a block of four stamps from each of the four half-sheets, and locked the others away. Those which he retained he put into his collection of official stamps. On May 23, the witness was at his home at Epsom on leave when Walter Richards called upon him. He told him of his son's (Percy) arrest on another charge, and said that a cheque for £10 drawn by Stanley Gibbons, stamp dealer, had been found on him. The cheque, he added, had been given in exchange for some of the stamps which he took home, and which he alleged had been stolen by his son from the box in which he locked them. On May 26 Richards again called upon him. He said he had been asked for an explanation with regard to these stamps, and added that the "fat was in the fire." He also mentioned that he expected to be arrested when he got home, and told the witness that very likely the same fate would be awaiting him that evening. The witness afterwards gave up the whole of the stamps he had received, and he and Richards reported the facts of the case to the Controller. The witness once received from Mr. Gore, the Assistant Controller, 40 1s. "Govt. Parcels" stamps, giving him 1d. postage stamps in substitution for them. He afterwards exchanged these with Walter Richards for two 10s. and one £1 "I.R. Official" stamps. Richards told him those three stamps had been returned for cancellation, but he had kept them and cancelled some 6d. ones of the same total value. No inquiry was ever made, for the total value in the books agreed with the stock. In examination the witness said he did not think he was guilty of theft when he agreed with Walter Richards to take these stamps. He knew of no official regulation forbidding the substitution of ordinary stamps for official ones. He understood that either of the late Controllers, Mr. Purcell and Mr. Cosens, would have given anyone in Somerset-house an official stamp for the asking. Some years ago the witness gave evidence in a case against a surveyor of the taxes, who was charged with substituting ordinary stamps for official ones. The case went to the Assizes, but the judge directed the jury that there was no felonious intent, and the prisoner was acquitted. When the present matter was under investigation, witness and Walter Richards attended before the Board of Inland Revenue, and Sir Henry Primrose told them that value had been given for value and that, although they had been guilty of an error of judgment, no fraud had been committed. They were each reduced from the position of principal clerk to senior clerk, and £60 a year was deducted from their salary. The witness was still being employed at Somerset-house. Mr. Reed.—And Walter Richards is here charged with felony. Further cross-examined.—He had not been offered any reward for giving evidence in this case. Re-examined.—The chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue also told them that it would depend upon how much they had made out of the stamps as to what their salary should be in future. Evidence was then given that in May last Creeke sold three pairs of Inland Revenue stamps of the face value of 5s., 10s., and £1, respectively, for £28; and one set of three "O.W. Official" stamps of the respective denominations of ½d., 5d., and 10d. for £8 10s., to stamp dealers in the Strand. Other formal evidence was given, and the prisoners were again remanded.

16.7.03.

At Bow-street, yesterday, before Sir A. de Rutzen, who sat specially, Walter John Richards, a principal clerk in the office of the Controller of Stamps, Somerset-house, Henry John and Percy Tidd Richards, his sons, Anthony Buck Creeke, a solicitor, and Alfred Waterhouse, an Admiralty clerk, were charged on remand with stealing and receiving official stamps. Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted on behalf of the Inland Revenue; Mr. Lincoln Reed appeared for Creeke; Mr. W. Stewart for Walter Richards, and Mr. W. Frampton for Waterhouse. Sir Henry William Primrose, the chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, was the first witness called. He said that in the early part of this year the Board's attention was directed to the sale of unused Government stamps, and an inquiry was ordered with a view to tracing the vendor. On May 25, in consequence of a report received by the Board as to the arrest of Percy Richards on another charge, the witness asked Walter Richards for an explanation of certain entries of official stamps in his books. On May 27 a report was received from Mr. Cleave, the Controller of Stamps, and the witness interviewed Walter Richards and Mr. Doucet, another principal clerk. They both assured him that they had no intention of disposing of any of the official stamps which they had purchased. Doucet said he still had his in his possession, but Richards said his had been stolen, he believed, from his box by his son Percy. The witness accepted those statements, and he told both men that they had been guilty of a serious breach of trust. They were both reduced in position to the next grade lower than that which they held, and £60 a year was deducted from their salaries. Some time later, however, further information was received from the police affecting Walter

Richards only; and as a consequence the Board decided to prosecute him. A copy of the regulations applying to the use of stamps after being issued by Walter Richards was then put in. The regulations showed that overprinted Government stamps were for official use only, and warned Government officials against issuing them to the public. The witness continued that in some exceptional cases official stamps had been sold at face value to persons known to the Board. In cross-examination by Mr. Stewart, Sir Henry said he did not consider the controller had exceeded the limits of his discretion in purchasing the few official stamps mentioned by him last week without first consulting the Board of Inland Revenue. It was understood that he had the authority of the Board to issue Government stamps to the higher officials who applied to him for them. For the sake of saying some number, he should think that, if the controller required more than half a dozen of each kind of stamp, it would be his duty to ask for further instructions. This was not a sort of perquisite of the controllers. The abstraction of 400 official stamps as alleged against Walter Richards would tend to defeat the purpose of overprinting the stamps and would give one an opportunity of making large illicit profits out of Government property. It would not be because of the discrepancy in the Government stock, because the stamps could be replaced at 3d. per 1,000. The view he took in May last that Walter Richards's conduct amounted more to a breach of trust than a felony had undergone a change since the additional facts had come to his knowledge. He did not think Doust committed a felony in buying the 400 stamps he had spoken of. Witness first formed the opinion that Walter Richards had committed a felony when Henry Richards and Creeke were arrested on June 9, but he did not act upon his judgment until the 20th. Mr. Reed then questioned the witness as to whether Walter Richards was not included in the case, because it was found that without him in the dock it would be impossible to sustain the charge of receiving which had already been preferred against Creeke. Mr. Muir, however, raised an objection, and the question was not pressed. Sir Henry continued that in April of last year he purchased 24 halfpenny stamps from Somerset-house on his own authority as chairman of the Board. Four of them he gave to his son and the other 20 he still had in his possession. Although he did not want the whole of them, he bought the 24 because a shilling was the smallest coin he had in his pocket at the time. If he had given any consideration to the matter, he should not have taken so many; certainly not if he had known the enormous price they fetched among collectors. He now knew that the philatelic value of those 24 stamps which he bought for 1s. was £96, but he did not know it at the time. If he were to sell the 20 stamps he now had his hitherto innocent act would amount to a felony. George Stubbs, an analyst in the Government laboratory, produced a sheet of paper on which were pasted portions of what appeared to be 15 torn "I.R. Official" stamps of the face values of £1, 10s., and 5s. He said that as to 13 of them they had been made up of portions of at least 26 stamps. In each of the 13 instances the official stamp had been torn immediately beneath the surcharge where the word "specimen" would have been printed on specimen stamps. Looking at the portion of a sheet of specimen stamps produced, he found that a small piece of a stamp attached to the sheet exactly corresponded to one of the missing pieces in an alleged torn stamp pasted on the sheet of paper. The prisoners were further remanded.

Report 30 July. pris.^rs committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court & bailed on their own recognizances

12. 9. 03 (*Before the* RECORDER.)

Mr. ANTHONY BUCK CREEKE, 42, solicitor, on bail, was indicted for having in his possession on June 9 without lawful excuse certain stamps which had been mutilated—namely, three 10s. stamps—and also for mutilating certain stamps; and Mr. WALTER JOHN RICHARDS, on bail, was indicted for aiding and abetting him.

The defendants pleaded "Not guilty."

Mr. C. F. Gill, K.C., and Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted on behalf of the Inland Revenue Department; Mr. Lincoln Reed defended Creeke; and Mr. W. Llewelyn Williams defended Richards.

In opening the case Mr. GILL said that the defendants were indicted under an Act of Parliament called the Stamp Duties Management Act, passed in 1891, which created certain offences in regard to the fraudulent dealing with postage stamps or stamps of any kind. The question was, what inference was to be drawn from the facts which would be presented before the jury on the part of the prosecution. The defendant Walter John Richards had been for many years in the service of the Inland Revenue Department, and had been promoted from time to time until in August, 1902, he was raised to what was a very important position for a clerk to attain in the Inland Revenue—he was selected to be principal clerk of the postal branch at Somerset House, for which he would be paid a salary of £540 a year. It was a responsible position. He would in that capacity, in connexion with another official, have the custody of the stock of stamps kept at Somerset House. The stock of stamps of all kinds kept there represented a face value of many millions, and every possible precaution was taken to protect the stamps from being fraudulently dealt with, and they were kept double locked. The defendant Richards also had in his sole charge what was known as the issue stock—the stock of stamps kept for issue. That issue stock would be replenished from time to time as required. The particular kind of stamps involved in this case were what were called overprinted official stamps. Those were stamps which were to be used by public departments for business which required the sending of letters through the Post Office, and the stamps were overprinted either with "I.R. Official" or "O.W. Official," meaning Office of Works or Royal Household, or whatever particular department they were to be issued to. They were stamps which were not sold or used for ordinary purposes. The stamps which would come into the possession of Richards and be dealt with by him would, as the jury might suppose, occasionally be damaged, by being accidentally torn or in other ways, and it might be undesirable, therefore, that they should be issued. Richards had a discretion with regard to whether there should be an issue of the stamps which were damaged. He had to account for those damaged stamps—as he had for all stamps coming into his possession—and the way they would be accounted for would be that an application would be made to cancel them. The application would be made on a form and a warrant would be issued for their cancellation. If he had stamps damaged or torn they would be gummed on pieces of paper. The number of the damaged stamps and their denomination and value would be arrived at, and an application would be made on a form and a warrant would be issued for their cancellation, and so he would receive a discharge which would relieve him from accounting for those particular stamps. There was another way in which stamps were dealt with so that they were called demonetized and rendered valueless, and that was by being overprinted with the word "Specimen." It was necessary sometimes that persons whose duty it was to deal with the question of genuine stamps should have a set of specimens of the different kinds of stamps. For the purpose of supplying sets of specimens an application was made on a form, and a warrant authorizing the overprinting on those stamps with the word "Specimen" would be issued. These stamps when they were overprinted would come into the possession of Richards, and they would not be issued to a Government department, but would be issued to the particular official requiring a set in order to test, if necessary, the genuineness of stamps. One of the reasons for issuing stamps to public departments was in order to ascertain what amount of work was done by the Post Office gratuitously for the different public departments—a matter important to be arrived at for estimating public expenditure; and the system of issuing and checking them enabled those in authority to ascertain what the expenditure was. These official stamps could not get into the possession of members of the public by any legitimate means. The system adopted was as perfect as could be devised for the purpose of preventing anything of the kind; but no system had ever yet been invented which could not at times be defeated. The prosecution proposed to show how, as they alleged, the defendant, who had so recently come into the position of trust, and the other defendant set themselves to defeat those precautions and to possess themselves of these official stamps which they were not entitled to have. The defendant Creeke had special knowledge with regard to the postage stamps of Great Britain, and he had special knowledge also of Somerset House. He had published a book in conjunction with some one else on the postage stamps of Great Britain. In his capacity of an author he had applied to the authorities to afford him facilities to acquire information with regard to stamps; and every possible consideration was shown to him and he was given all the information which was possible on the subject. He was allowed access to Somerset House from time to time. Counsel proceeded at length to deal with the correspondence on this point and with the sale of stamps by Creeke. On June 9 Creeke was arrested on a warrant. He asked what the warrant was for. The officer said "For receiving official stamps." Creeke.—"You mean Office of Works stamps?" The officer replied, "Yes, and you will probably be further charged with stealing other stamps." Some further conversation took place, and, counsel having entered into many details, evidence was called; but the case for the prosecution was not concluded when the Court rose.

14. 9. 03. (*Before the* RECORDER.)

The trial of Mr. ANTHONY BUCK CREEKE, 42, solicitor, and Mr. WALTER JOHN RICHARDS, both on bail, upon an indictment charging Creeke with having in his possession on June 9, without lawful excuse, certain stamps which had been mutilated—namely, three 10s. stamps—and with mutilating certain stamps, and charging Richards with aiding and abetting him, was resumed.

Mr. C. F. Gill, K.C., and Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted on behalf of the Inland Revenue; Mr. Lincoln Reed defended Creeke; and Mr. W. Llewelyn Williams defended Richards.

The evidence for the prosecution was continued.

Mr. Highmore, Solicitor to the Customs, gave evidence as to finding in a pocket-book which was stated to have been found on Creeke when he was arrested on June 9 the three mutilated 10s. stamps.

Mr. GILL said that that concluded the evidence for the prosecution.

Mr. LINCOLN REED said he had listened attentively to the evidence given by Mr. Highmore, and he had advised his client, Mr. Creeke, that in face of that testimony he must be mistaken in instructing him that the three mutilated stamps were not upon him at the time of his arrest. In these circumstances he felt that he should not be justified in advising Mr. Creeke to occupy the time of the Recorder and of the jury any longer in discussing the question whether they were found upon him at the time of his arrest, and he had advised him to withdraw his plea of not guilty and to plead "Guilty" to being in possession of those three mutilated portions of stamps.

The RECORDER said he thought Mr. Lincoln Reed had taken a very prudent course in so advising his client. He thought that his client had taken a very sensible and wise course in the matter.

Mr. LLEWELYN WILLIAMS intimated that, in view of the course Mr. Creeke had taken, and in view also of the character of the rest of the evidence, he had advised his client Mr. Richards to withdraw his plea of not guilty to aiding and abetting Mr. Creeke in having the three mutilated stamps in his possession.

The RECORDER said he thought that Mr. Williams had taken a very wise course.

Mr. WILLIAMS said he felt that the position of Richards was very different from that of Creeke.

The defendant Creeke then said that he was guilty on the one count of having the three mutilated stamps in his possession.

The defendant Richards said he was guilty of knowing that Creeke had the three mutilated stamps in his possession.

The RECORDER postponed judgment.

ALFRED WATERHOUSE, 24, clerk, on bail, was indicted for stealing, on January 6, while employed in the public service, certain over-printed official parcel stamps and for receiving them knowing them to have been stolen.

Mr. C. F. Gill, K.C., and Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted on the part of the Inland Revenue; Mr. W. Frampton and Mr. G. H. Couch were counsel for the defence.

The defendant was employed at the Admiralty as a junior accountant and clerk, his pay being originally 4s. 6d. a day, which was subsequently raised to 5s. 6d. The stamps referred to in the case were called Government parcel stamps. Government parcel stamps are not allowed to be sold to the public and are only used for official purposes for accounting. In January a man, who was alleged to be the defendant, called at the shop of a stamp dealer and sold some foreign stamps of small value. In the course of conversation he asked the dealer whether unused Government parcel stamps were of any value. The dealer replied that they were of value. The man said he had a strip of four and would bring them to the shop that evening. He brought them to the shop in the evening, and the dealer gave him 10s. for them. The man told the dealer that a friend of his was in a Government office and had a large number of parcels to post, and that he saved the stamps by substituting for them ordinary stamps which he purchased at a post-office. On several subsequent occasions the man sold similar stamps to the dealer. The defendant denied that he was the man. The contention for the defence was that the defendant was not the man and that it was a case of mistaken identity. It was also contended that the stamps which the man sold were not stolen.

The case was adjourned until Monday, the defendant being admitted to bail.

15.9.03 (*Before the* RECORDER.)

The trial of ALFRED WATERHOUSE, 24, clerk, on bail, upon an indictment charging him with stealing on January 6, while employed in the public service, certain over-printed official parcel stamps and with receiving the same knowing them to have been stolen, was resumed.

Mr. C. F. Gill, K.C., and Mr. R. D. Muir conducted the prosecution on behalf of the Inland Revenue; Mr. W. Frampton and Mr. G. H. Couch appeared for the defence.

The circumstances have been reported.

The defence was that the defendant was not the man who sold the stamps to Mr. Moore, and that it was a case of mistaken identity. It was also contended that the stamps had not been stolen.

The defendant was called as a witness, and denied the charge. He said that he did not know Mr. Moore's shop, and had never in his life been inside it. He had never at any time had any overprinted Government parcel stamps or any Government stamps in his possession except for the purposes of official business.

The defendant, in cross-examination by Mr. GILL, said he did not know where the parcel stamps were kept in the office. He did not bet until May or June.

Mr. GILL read a letter, dated April 25, written by the defendant on paper bearing the address of the Admiralty to a bookmaker, saying that he should be glad if he would forward him his terms for opening a weekly account and state what references he would want from him.

The defendant, in answer to further questions, said that he wrote a letter to the bookmaker stating that he had sent all his available cash to the Bank of England in respect to an application which he had made for Transvaal stock, but the stock had not been allotted to him, and the cheque which he sent had not been returned to him. He did not apply for Transvaal stock. That letter was merely an excuse why he should not pay at that particular moment.

Mr. FRAMPTON addressed the jury for the defence, contending that the defendant was not the man who sold the stamps and that the case was one of mistaken identity.

The jury, after deliberating for about three-quarters of an hour, found the defendant *Not guilty*.

The foreman said the jury wished to give expression to the opinion that the witness Moore ought to have been in the dock as a receiver.

There was another indictment charging the defendant with a similar offence, but Mr. GILL said that the prosecution did not propose to offer any evidence on it, and The jury found the defendant *Not guilty*, and he was discharged.

HENRY RICHARDS, 20, cycle-maker, on bail, and PERCY RICHARDS, 19, clerk, were indicted for receiving stamps knowing them to be stolen.

Mr. GILL said the prosecution did not propose to offer any evidence on these indictments. The defendants were the sons of Walter John Richards. They were not in the public service.

The jury found Henry Richards and Percy Richards *Not guilty*, and they were discharged.

ANTHONY BUCK CREEKE, 42, solicitor, and WALTER JOHN RICHARDS, who on Saturday withdrew their plea of "Not guilty" and pleaded "Guilty," Creeke to a count in an indictment charging him with having in his possession without lawful excuse three mutilated 10s. stamps, and Richards to aiding and abetting him in that, were brought up for judgment.

Mr. GILL said that when a communication was made to Somerset-house of the fact that Government stamps were being offered for sale, inquiries were commenced, and Walter John Richards, being a man in a position of confidence, was the person selected to make the inquiries. Inquiries were made, but with no result; and there could be little doubt that people were put on their guard because the dealings stopped. In May, Percy Richards was arrested on a totally different charge—one of forgery. On him was found a cheque for £10 drawn by Messrs. Stanley Gibbons and Co., stamp dealers. On inquiry it was found that Percy Richards had been selling Office of Works stamps to Messrs. Stanley Gibbons and Co. Walter Richards then gave information to the authorities that he and another clerk had taken four sheets of Office of Works stamps, 800 in all. The other clerk had retained his 400 in his possession. The total face value of the stamps sold by Creeke was nine guineas, and the amount they realized was £246.

The RECORDER.—The effect of these proceedings will be that Walter Richards will not only lose his official position, but his right to a pension also?

Mr. GILL said that was so.

The RECORDER said that was an element he should have to take into consideration. In regard to Creeke, he would in all probability be struck off the rolls as a solicitor.

Mr. LINCOLN REED addressed the Recorder on behalf of Creeke, and said there would have been no difficulty in showing that Creeke had no knowledge whatever of the circumstances in which the stamps were obtained. He got them from Henry Richards, who told him that he had obtained them from a high official, and Creeke had no reason to doubt that. He knew, from advertisements and otherwise, that for a considerable time official stamps were purchasable on the market, and he thought that Henry Richards had got them from some high official who had authority to give them to him. The total value of the 800 stamps was only 3d. In order to abstract them it was necessary that other stamps should be purchased to replace them. The result was that, although there was a breach of the regulations, no actual loss to the Government had arisen. On the contrary there was a gain, because valuable stamps had been substituted for those which had no value. The whole amount of money received by Creeke was £25. No one had been defrauded or lost anything. There was no moral turpitude in what had been done.

The RECORDER.—It has been stated that high Government officials have been taking these stamps. What do you say to that?

Mr. REED said it was admitted by Sir Henry Primrose, the chairman, and Mr. Cleeve, the Controller, that sets had been taken for various purposes and some given to friends. No one regarded it as any offence.

Mr. GILL said he could not accept that statement. The suggestion that there was any such practice was entirely without foundation. People in the position of Sir Henry Primrose might take specimens of the stamps. In fact, on one occasion Sir H. Primrose, having no smaller coin in his pocket, purchased a shilling's worth of halfpenny stamps—22 of which he retained in his own possession and two he sent to his son for his collection, one being on the envelope in which the letter was sent. An attempt was made to induce the Postmaster-General to let Creeke have some stamps, but the application was not entertained. With regard to high Government officials having specimens of the stamps, there was a great distinction between them and people like Richards taking hundreds of them. There was no pretence for saying there was any such practice at all.

Mr. REED said Mr. Cleeve had stated that he had a right by virtue of his office to take one stamp of every kind without consulting the Board. Last year he received authority to draw sets of Office of Works stamps for high officials—viz., the chairman, the Controller, a colleague of Walter Richards, and another gentleman—and he paid for them in cash. He (Mr. Reed) did not say that that was wrong or irregular. It was done by the direction of the highest authorities of Somerset House. Creeke was given an introduction to Sir John Purcell, the late controller, and with his assistance was given several sets of Inland Revenue stamps. Sir John Purcell was called as a witness for the defence at the Police-court and said that there was no reason why the stamps should not have been given to Creeke, and that the regulations at that time were not so strict as they were now. Sir John also said that the members of the Philatelic Society had on several occasions rendered him invaluable assistance in the detection of forged stamps.

Mr. LLEWELYN WILLIAMS addressed the Court on behalf of Walter John Richards, who, he said, after 35 years' service at Somerset House was promoted to the position he occupied when this matter arose. He would now lose both his position and his pension. He bore an irreproachable character.

The RECORDER said the circumstances of the case took it out of the category of the ordinary cases with which he had to deal. He thought it was possible that the two defendants might not have realized at one time the extreme gravity of the offence they were committing. In consequence of high officials' thinking they were entitled to some of those stamps, the defendants considered they could traffic in them. But the fact that high officials might take some for their own collections did not entitle the defendants to take large numbers for the purpose of trafficking in them. That was wholly different. Taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration, and the effect of it on the defendants' position, he sentenced Walter John Richards and Creeke each to six months' imprisonment in the second division.

Another newspaper report of R. v. Creeke & ors. 306

10.6.03. BOW-STREET.

Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk, of Great Percy-street, King's-cross; Henry John Richards, cycle maker, Russian-road, Nightingale-lane, Wandsworth Common; and Anthony Buck Creeke, solicitor, Wray-crescent, Tollington Park, were charged, before Sir Albert De Rutzen, with being concerned in stealing and receiving a number of stamps.—Mr. R. D. Muir, who prosecuted for the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, said the Prisoner Richards was the brother of a man named Percy Richards, who was recently charged with forging a bill of exchange. At the time of his arrest Percy Richards had in his possession a cheque for £10 from Stanley Gibbons and Co., stamp dealers. Inquiries were made, and it was found that Percy Richards had sold to Stanley Gibbons and Co. a number of old Office of Works stamps. These stamps were not issued to the public, and could only be obtained by committing a larceny. Notwithstanding this, it was known that many of them were on the market. The fact that they could not be honestly obtained seemed to have increased their value to an extraordinary degree, and some of the face value of a few pence had been sold for as much as £64. Most of the stamps must have been obtained at Somerset House, where they were issued for the use of the Departments. The Prisoner, Henry Richards, carried on the business of a cycle maker at Wandsworth, in the name of Parton. On January 30 last he sold some Office of Works stamps to a dealer named Field, of the Royal-arcade, Bond-street, for £20, although their face value was very small. On February 14 he offered Mr. Field some specimens of old Office of Works stamps, telling him that he had got the stamps from Somerset House officials he was in the habit of driving in his motor-cars. Mr. Field, who, said Counsel, had acted very properly in this matter, declined to have anything more to do with Richards, although he offered to sell him for £8 stamps for which he had originally asked £20. At the same time, Richards volunteered the information that he could obtain any kind of stamps from the Somerset House officials of his acquaintance. The second Prisoner, Creeke, was a solicitor, and, for many years, had had an extensive knowledge of stamps. Many years ago he was admitted to the archives of Somerset House, in order that he might have an official source of information for the purpose of writing a book upon the stamps of the British Islands. Although the book was long since completed, he was practically allowed to go in and out as he liked. There could be no question that he made the acquaintance, at Somerset House, of officials who had access to stamps which, outside, were worth as much as 1000 per cent. more than their face value. As a philatelist, and a member of the Philatelic Society, he was acquainted with the rules which prohibited the sale of this particular class of stamps. Some time ago he wrote from his office in Leadenhall-street to the authorities, asking them to allow him to see certain stamps, and said he knew their sale was prohibited. That letter was not answered. In February of this year, Creeke was in communication with another philatelist named Bignell, and asked him to sell for him a set of Office of Works stamps. Bignell asked him if they were "all right," and Creeke said they were. After this Bignell wrote a letter to Stanley Gibbons and Co., at Creeke's dictation, and eventually sold to them for £64 stamps of the face value of about 5s. Creeke was closely questioned by Stanley Gibbons and Co.'s representative, to whom he said the stamps were all right. Detective-sergeant Ward afterwards asked Creeke where he got the stamps in which he had been dealing; but although he was a solicitor, and knew that it was his duty to assist the police, he declined to give the officer any information except the statment that they were not procured from an official, and when he was arrested he was actually in the possession of stamps he must have known were stolen. The third man (Waterhouse) was arrested by Sergeant Ward without a warrant. He was a clerk in the Works Department at the Admiralty, a quantity of Government parcel stamps had been stolen from the room in which Waterhouse worked, and some of those which had been traced to the other Prisoners had probably been got from that source.—Formal evidence of arrest having been given, the Prisoners were remanded, Sir Albert De Rutzen offering to accept two sureties in £100, or one in £200 for each of them.

23.6.03. BOW-STREET.

Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk at the Admiralty; Anthony Buck Creeke, a solicitor; Henry John Richards, cycle maker; Percy Tidd Richards (his brother); and Walter John Richards (their father), were charged, on remand, before Sir Albert De Rutzen, with stealing and receiving official stamps.—Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted for the Inland Revenue; Mr. Lincoln Reed defended Creeke; Mr. E. W. Pheasant appeared for Henry John and Walter John Richards; and Mr. Harry Wilson for Waterhouse.—Mr. Muir said that Walter John Richards was not arrested until Saturday last, and it was necessary to explain the position he was in. He was until recently a principal clerk at Somerset House. In the course of inquiries made as to the source from which official stamps sold to dealers really came, it was ascertained that the great bulk came from Walter John Richards in circumstances which compelled the Board of Inland Revenue—although with the greatest possible reluctance and regret—to include him in the charge with the other Prisoners. As a principal clerk at Somerset House he had—together with a Mr. Dewey—the actual custody and control of vast quantities of postage and official stamps. He had one key of the safe in which they were kept, and Mr. Dewey had the other. Without the concurrent use of the two keys the stamps could not be taken from the safe in which they were kept. Walter Richards—possibly with the concurrence of Mr. Dewey—was the person who had to decide what stamps should be taken out. On January 23 last he decided that four sheets of stamps should be taken out for cancellation—namely, two sheets of halfpenny stamps (one red and one green), one sheet of fivepenny stamps, and one sheet of tenpenny stamps. These were the stamps which were sold among others to Messrs. Stanley Gibbons and Co. (Limited), who gave the enormous price of £64 for three sets. These stamps should have been included in a cancellation warrant made out at Somerset House on January 30, but in point of fact they were not so included. What took place was this: Walter Richards and Mr. Dewey kept the stamps referred to. He (Mr. Muir) would not say anything about Mr. Dewey at present, except that none of the stamps which came into his possession were ever put upon the market, and he never made a single penny out of them. With regard to Walter Richards, the facts were very different. As early as the 28th of January some of the stamps which should have been included in the warrant of the 30th of January were offered by Henry Richards (Walter Richards's son) to Mr. Moore, a dealer, and on the very day the warrant was signed a quantity were sold to Mr. Field, a dealer. On the same day, Mr. Healey, a stamp merchant, had some of these official stamps offered to him. Mr. Field knew that the regulations prevented the sale of these stamps in quantities. Therefore he, like an honest man, wrote to Somerset House to know if he might purchase any. That letter was handed to a trusted servant—Walter Richards—to deal with. He at once showed it to the Prisoner Creeke. Creeke was in the possession of Office of Works stamps stolen by his friend and associate Walter Richards, and although knowing, as he said he knew, that Somerset House absolutely prohibited their sale, he took them to Mr. Healey, and asked him to purchase them. He had no introduction to Mr. Healey, but he knew from the confidential letter sent to Somerset House that he was willing to purchase stamps if he could do so honestly. To his credit, be it said, Mr. Healey absolutely declined to deal with Creeke. Early in February Walter Richards, as a trusted official of the Inland Revenue, was sent to Mr. Healey for the purpose of ascertaining where the stamps offered to him came from. Instead of acting straightforwardly he continued the course of treachery he had pursued towards his employers. He went to Mr. Healey accompanied by Mr. Stonestreet, another official. Mr. Healey complained—as he was entitled to do—that a private and confidential letter written by him to the heads of the Inland Revenue should have been shown to Creeke. That happened on a Saturday, and as soon as the interview with Mr. Healey was over, Walter Richards tried to persuade Mr. Stonestreet, his colleague, not to report what Mr. Healey had said about this letter and Mr. Creeke. Mr. Stonestreet declined to do anything of the kind, but nothing was done until the Monday. Mr. Stonestreet then told Walter Richards that he intended to disclose what had taken place at the interview on Saturday. On that day, however, Walter Richards had gone to Somerset House armed with a letter from Creeke, stating that he (Richards) had not betrayed anything to him. In other directions Walter Richards pursued his treacherous conduct. The authorities, therefore, thought it was their duty to the public to include him in the charge. Evidence was given by Mr. David Field, stamp dealer, Royal Arcade, Old Bond-street; Mr. Phillips, Managing Director of Stanley Gibbons and Co., stamp dealers, Strand, and Mr. Edward Healey, stamp merchant, Wormwood-street, and the Prisoners were again remanded.

14.7.03. BOW-STREET.

Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk at the Admiralty; Anthony Buck Creeke, solicitor; Walter John Richards, until recently a chief clerk in the Stamp Department at Somerset House; and his sons, Percy Tidd Richards and Henry John Richards, were charged, on remand, before Sir Albert De Rutzen, with stealing and receiving a number of official stamps.—Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted for the Inland Revenue; Mr. Llewellyn Williams appeared for Walter Richards; Mr. Lincoln Reed for Creeke; Mr. Frampton for Waterhouse; and Mr. Pheasant for Henry Richards.—Ernest Henry Douet, a clerk in the Department of Stamps at Somerset House, said that towards the end of last year Walter Richards spoke to him about Office of Works official stamps, and said, "Why should we not have some of them to keep?" Witness said he would not have anything to do with it. The subject was discussed on several subsequent occasions, and at last Witness consented to do what Walter Richards had suggested. On January 23 Witness took from the stock one sheet each of halfpenny red, halfpenny green, and 5d. and 10d. official stamps, for the purpose of cancellation. Walter Richards had to decide what stamps should be cancelled; cancellation warrants were then issued, and a record of the transaction was entered in the department in which Witness was engaged. It was agreed that the stamps taken

out, especially for cancellation, should be preserved. In fact, they shared them, and, to make the accounts right, put in ordinary postal stamps of the same value. When they shared the stamps Witness said, "I shall keep them; they may be valuable one of these days." Walter Richards said, "I shall do the same." Witness gave Walter Richards cash for the ordinary stamps which had to be provided to take the place of the over-printed stamps which were supposed to be cancelled. Witness took from the stamps he had acquired four of each kind for his collection. The remainder he placed in a drawer in his safe at Somerset House. On the evening of May 23 Witness was at his house at Epsom, when Walter Richards called and said one of his sons had been arrested, and that upon him a cheque for £10 from Stanley Gibbons and Co. had been found. He said that cheque was for the Office of Works stamps which he had taken from Somerset House. He explained that he had locked them up on arriving home, and that his son Percy had stolen them. Witness said, "What are you going to do?" He replied, "I am going to brazen it out," or something like that. He said, in a reassuring way, "Don't say anything about it," and Witness agreed. The Witness went on to say that on the following day Walter Richards again called upon him at his house at Epsom. He said he had been asked for an explanation with regard to the stamps, and remarked, "The fat's in the fire." He said he was sorry to have to drag Witness into it, but as his son and family knew he had these stamps, he was bound to do so, or they would. Witness suggested that they should both make a clean breast of it to the Controller. Richards said, "I have told so many stories over this I don't know what to say. I expect to be arrested when I get home, and very likely the same fate is awaiting you." Witness told Richards that he had an appointment with the Controller (who lived near him) at half-past eight o'clock that evening. Richards said, "Don't tell the Controller to-night; wait until to-morrow morning." Witness agreed, and kept his word. Witness saw the Controller that evening as arranged, and then returned home. He could not sleep, and during the night he got up and destroyed the whole of his collection of official stamps. The following morning he and Richards saw the Controller at Somerset House. Richards told him the whole story, and by order of the Board Witness gave the Controller the official stamps he had locked up in his safe. Witness once had forty Government parcel stamps for 1s. each from Mr. Gore, the Assistant Controller, giving him 1d. postage stamps for them. Walter Richards gave him for the parcels stamps a 10s. Queen's Head, a 10s. King's Head, and a £1 King's Head Inland Revenue official stamps. Witness added these three stamps to his collection, and they were destroyed with the others in the way described. Witness had stated that the three stamps had been returned for cancellation, but instead of cancelling them he had cancelled 6d. stamps of the same value from the issue stock. Sometimes they had to make the books agree with the stock. There was no inquiry so long as the total value was correct. Witness said he had been in the service nearly 36 years. He wished now that he had not destroyed his collection of official stamps, which he started many years ago.—In the course of cross-examination, Witness said that he and Walter Richards went before the Board of Inland Revenue after the matter had been investigated. Sir Henry Primrose, the Chairman, said they had given value for value, and there had been no fraud committed, although the Board regarded their conduct as a gross breach of confidence. Witness said, "Breach of trust," and Sir Henry Primrose said, "I do not think you can go so far as that; it was an error of judgment." He acquitted them absolutely of any fraudulent intent. In order to mark their sense of his misconduct, the Board reduced him from principal clerk to senior clerk, and took £60 off his wages. Walter Richards was served in the same way. He had been allowed to go back to his duties, but Walter Richards had been charged with the other Defendants. Witness was acting under orders.—Evidence was given to the effect that in May last Creeke sold three pairs of Inland Revenue stamps, of the face value of 5s., 10s., and £1 respectively, for £28 to Mr. Frederick Robert Ginn, of the Strand, and one set of three Office of Works official stamps, of the respective denominations of ½d., 5d., and 10d. each, for £8 10s. to John William Jones, of the Strand.—The Accused were again remanded.

21.7.03. BOW-STREET.

Alfred Waterhouse, Admiralty clerk; Anthony Buck Creeke, solicitor; Henry John Richards, cycle maker; Percy Tidd Richards, clerk; and Walter John Richards, their father, were charged on remand, before Sir Albert De Rutzen, with stealing and receiving official stamps.—Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted for the Inland Revenue; Mr. Lincoln Reed appeared for Creeke, Mr. Llewellyn Williams for Walter Richards, Mr. Frampton for Waterhouse, and Mr. Pheasant for Henry Richards.—Thomas William Beckwith, a first-class clerk in the Postal Branch of the Department of the Controller of Stamps at Somerset House, gave evidence as to receiving, on January 30, for cancellation, a quantity of stamps, to which two sheets of halfpenny, one sheet of fivepenny, and one sheet of tenpenny were afterwards added.—George W. Cornelius, Senior Clerk of the Stamps and Store Department at Somerset House, said Walter Richards had leave of absence on May 30, and, before he left, his stock of stamps was examined, and the Accused produced a number stuck upon paper, and which, he said, had been accidentally torn. Without those torn stamps his stock would have been short.—Mr. Muir explained that, according to evidence he intended to adduce, someone had obtained over-dated specimen stamps. The portion bearing the word "specimen" had been torn off, and a portion of an ordinary postage stamp of the same stamp, size, and colour substituted. These two parts of two separate stamps had been pasted on to a piece of paper and made to appear as one "I.R. Official" torn stamp. All the stamps affixed to the piece of paper produced had been treated in that way and made to take the place of genuine "I.R. Official" which had been abstracted.—Mr. Ernest Cleave, Controller of Stamps and Stores, gave evidence which confirmed Counsel's explanation.—Mr. Lincoln Reed said his client's father, Mr. A. B. Creeke, was a solicitor at Burnley. As his initials were the same as his son's, he had been placed at some inconvenience. He wished it to be known that the Mr. Creeke charged in this case was Mr. A. B. Creeke, jun.—Mr. Cleave, cross-examined by Mr. Williams, said he was sure some of the stamps pasted on paper had certainly been "pieced."—Mr. Williams: Who do you suggest "pieced" these stamps?—Mr. Muir: I object; that is for a Jury to decide.—Mr. Lincoln Reed: We have not got to a Jury yet; in fact, we seem a very long way off.—Mr. Cleave was cross-examined at considerable length by the Accused, Percy Richards, and by Mr. Lincoln Reed, who asked:—What is the difference between the Controller who exchanges stamps and the principal clerk who does the same thing? Is it because he had 400 and you only three—three little ones?—Yes. If you obtained stamps to stick in an album for the benefit of future generations of Cleaves, it would not be an offence, but if the stamps were for sale it would be?—Yes. In reply to other questions, the Witness went on to say that he had obtained 24 halfpenny Office of Works stamps for Sir Henry Primrose's son. He did that at the request of Sir Henry.—Mr. Reed: But that was a breach of the regulations.—Witness: The authority that has power to make the regulations has power to make the exception.—Mr. Reed: I see—on the principle that the King can do no wrong. The Board makes regulations which Sir Henry breaks.—The further hearing of the case was adjourned.

30.7.03. BOW-STREET.

Alfred Waterhouse, Admiralty clerk; Anthony Buck Creeke, jun., solicitor; Henry John Richards, cycle manufacturer; Percy Tidd Richards, clerk; and Walter John Richards, their father, were charged, on remand, with stealing and receiving official stamps.—Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted for the Inland Revenue; Mr. Lincoln Reed appeared for Creeke; Mr. Walter Stewart for Walter Richards; Mr. Frampton for Waterhouse; and Mr. Pheasant for Henry Richards.—Joseph King, assistant to the Chief Superintendent of the Postal Department at Somerset House, said two or three months ago he gave Mr. Creeke nine Inland Revenue official King's head penny stamps in exchange for the same number of stamps of the same value bearing the Queen's head. Before making the exchange, he asked permission of Walter Richards, as chief of his branch. Richards said, "There is no harm in it."—Mr. Muir then read a statement made by Mr. Creeke to Detective-sergeant Ward, in which Accused said he wrote a book on English stamps, and at that time made the acquaintance of Walter Richards. He had kept up a casual acquaintance with him, and, about 18 months ago, asked him if he could get some Office of Works Official stamps for him. Walter Richards said he could not do it. Subsequently Henry Richards told him that he had got some Office of Works stamps which had been accumulated by a big official at the Office of Works. He (Creeke) bought four sets of these, and sold them to Messrs. Stanley Gibbons for £64, making a profit of £3 10s. or £4 a set. He afterwards obtained six more sets from Henry Richards, and sold them to dealers. When the bother arose at Somerset House, Henry Richards admitted to him that he had received the Office of Works stamps from his father, and said, "I suppose you guessed that." He (Creeke) said, "I accepted the first statement as correct." He did not even then connect his father with it. The officer asked Mr. Creeke if he had anything to say about Inland Revenue stamps. Mr. Creeke then said "The Inland Revenue stamps (I. R. Officials) which I sold to Ginn I got from Henry Richards. I believe I gave him £21 for them." Accused, in his statement, added that he had had five sets of Inland Revenue Official stamps, and sold them for £85.—This closed the case for the prosecution.—Mr. Stewart contended that there was nothing to show, on the part of Walter Richards, any felonous intent.—Mr. Lincoln Reed, on behalf of Mr. Creeke, submitted that there had been no felony, and therefore no felonous receiving.—Mr. Frampton contended that there was no evidence whatever against Waterhouse, and pointed out several discrepancies in the evidence given against him.—Sir John Purcell, the Controller of Stamps from 1883 to 1900, called by Mr. Lincoln Reed, said Mr. Creeke was introduced to him in 1885. From that time he had known him as a very prominent member of the Philatelic Society. It was quite possible that in 1885 he let Mr. Creeke have a set of Inland Revenue Official stamps—5s., 10s., and £1. At that date there was no difficulty in getting Inland Revenue Official stamps on payment of the face value, and witness let members of the Philatelic Society have many. He thought it would be as well to be on friendly terms with the members. Events proved that he had acted wisely, as the members had assisted him on several occasions. On one occasion they enabled him to detect a very grave forgery. About 1896, when Lord Milner was at Somerset House, an alteration was made with respect to the disposal of official stamps, the reins being drawn very much tighter.

[illegible] Creeke [illegible] never [illegible] Mr. Creeke [illegible] stamps he was [illegible] a receiver. In [illegible] 1897 Mr. Creeke [illegible] trating his book. Witness told him he could not get them out of stock, but he got some for him from a friend. Witness did not know that Mr. Creeke gave £30 for them. He certainly gave something, which Witness handed to the owner of the stamps. He did not think that the sale of these stamps, after they had gone out of stock, was a dishonest transaction. Mr. Creeke was a constant visitor at Somerset House, and sometimes bothered Witness when he was there by asking questions about stamps.—The Prisoners were committed for trial on all charges, the Magistrate saying they might go out on their own recognisances.

THE TRAFFIC IN OFFICIAL STAMPS

TO-DAY'S PROCEEDINGS: PLEAS OF GUILTY.

Globe. 12.9.03.

At the Central Criminal Court, to-day, before the Recorder, the trial was resumed of Walter John Richards, late principal clerk in the postal department at Somerset House, and Anthony Buck Creeke, 42, a City solicitor, in connection with the alleged fraudulent traffic in Government stamps.—Mr. C. F. Gill, K.C., and Mr. Muir prosecuted; Mr. Williams defended Richards; Mr. Lincoln Reed appeared for Creeke.

Mr. Hymore, who in June, as solicitor to the Inland Revenue, had charge of the inquiry into the alleged misapplication of official stamps, said that he was present at Bow-street Police-court on June 9, the date of Creeke's arrest, and received from Sergt. Ward a wallet found in that prisoner's possession, which contained, among other things, three pieces of 10s. mutilated stamps. The importance of this discovery did not become apparent until July 14, when, after an examination had been made of a set of cancelled stamps by warrant in April, it was found that what purported to be genuine damaged stamps were made up of pieces of other stamps ingeniously gummed together.

On the conclusion of the case for the prosecution, acting on the advice of their counsel, Richards and Creeke withdrew their pleas, and pleaded guilty to the first count of the indictment.—Sentence was deferred till Monday.

Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk at the Admiralty, was next put on his trial to answer an indictment which charged him with having, while in the service of His Majesty, stolen certain Government stamps.

The case is proceeding.

15.9.03. (Before the RECORDER.)

THE TRAFFIC IN GOVERNMENT STAMPS—VERDICT AND SENTENCES.

The trial was resumed of Alfred Waterhouse, 24, clerk in the Admiralty, on an indictment charging him with the alleged theft of certain Government stamps while employed in the public service. Walter John Richards, principal clerk in the postal department of Somerset House, and Anthony Buck Creeke, 42, solicitor, acting on the advice of Counsel, have pleaded Guilty to one of the counts of an indictment preferred against them in connection with certain Government stamps.

Mr. C. F. Gill, K.C., and Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted; Mr. Frampton and Mr. Couch represented Waterhouse, who, in defence, went into the witness-box and gave an emphatic denial to the allegations against him. He declared that the witnesses with regard to his alleged visits to a stamp dealer in Villiers-street, Strand, who purchased certain sets of Government parcel stamps, were mistaken as to his identity. He did not know either of the Richards.

Mr. Frampton proposed to put questions to the Defendant as to whether there was not a system prevalent in Government offices of persons dealing with these stamps.

The Recorder ruled that this would be hearsay evidence, and he could not admit it. If Counsel could call witnesses to depose to those facts it would be evidence.

In cross-examination, the Witness was questioned on correspondence which he had had with a bookmaker to whom he owed money in respect to turf transactions.

Counsel argued in defence that the case was one of mistaken identity.

The Jury acquitted Waterhouse, adding a rider to the effect that in their opinion a dealer named Moore, who had purchased the stamps, ought to be put in the dock and charged with receiving.

Mr. Gill said he proposed to offer no evidence against the other two Prisoners Percy Tidd Richards and Henry John Richards in connection with alleged dealings with these stamps.

The Jury returned a formal verdict against each of these Prisoners.

Walter John Richards (the elder) and Anthony Buck Creeke, who pleaded Guilty on Saturday, were next put into the dock for sentence.

Mr. Gill, explaining the [illegible] in which the prosecution was [illegible] that when the stamps bought by the Witness Moore passed on to Mr. Healey, another stamp dealer, he communicated with Somerset House the fact that parcel stamps had been offered him for sale, and upon this inquiries were commenced by the authorities. Walter Richards, being a man in a position of great confidence and trust, was the person selected to conduct the inquiry. Time went on, but his inquiries brought no result. It was clear, said Mr. Gill, that the persons who were concerned with the traffic in these stamps had been put on their guard. In the month of May, however, the case assumed a different aspect, Percy Richards, who was a son of Walter Richards, being arrested on a charge of forgery. On being searched he was found to have in his possession a cheque for £10, drawn by a stamp dealer. Inquiry into the matter brought to light the fact that he had been dealing with Office of Works stamps, and that he had been paid sums ranging from £10 to £17. The authorities learning of this the father was questioned, and he then admitted what he, in conjunction with another clerk, had done in regard to stamps in April. He said that they had abstracted four sets of Office of Works' stamps, and that these had been substituted by stamps being cancelled which were ordinary postage stamps, false entries being made in the books to cover the abstraction. Sets of these stamps fetched sums of £17, £15, £22, and £10. Creeke had dealt also with these stamps. He had a special knowledge with respect to them, and special facilities for disposing of stamps. He had disposed of stamps of the "face" value of 15s. for no less a sum than £160. These matters, said Mr. Gill, had only been brought to light after the most exhaustive inquiries, and the greatest credit was due to Sergeant Ward, the officer who had had charge of the case.

The Recorder.—Is there any reason to believe that stamps have been abstracted from other departments besides the Admiralty?

Mr. Gill.—Yes, my Lord. Those taken from the Admiralty were obviously for the purpose of replacing stamps stolen elsewhere, and at a time when inquiry was pending, and there was danger of an audit taking place, when the stamps would have to be produced.

Mr. Lincoln Reed, on behalf of Creeke, urged that he had borne hitherto an excellent character. His relatives were solicitors who were well known and respected at Burnley. He had suffered much anxiety through these proceedings, which would entail his being struck off the rolls of solicitors. He had a wife and six young children depending upon him for support.

Mr. Williams urged, on behalf of Richards, that he had been in the public service 35 years, and had enjoyed always an irreproachable character. He was entitled to a pension, which he had now lost, together with a high position.

The Recorder, in passing sentence, said that it was possible that neither of the Defendant's realised at first the gravity of the offences he was committing. The suggestion that certain high officials had taken stamps for private collection, did not justify Richards in having purloined considerable numbers of the stamps for the purposes of making money out of them. He took into consideration the serious consequences which had befallen the Accused by reason of their present position, and ordered each Prisoner to be imprisoned for six months in the Second Division.

POLICE INTELLIGENCE.

29.6.03.

BOW-STREET.

Alfred Waterhouse, a clerk at the Admiralty; Anthony Buck Creeke, a solicitor; Henry John Richards, cycle maker; Percy Tidd Richards (his brother); and Walter John Richards (their father), were charged, on remand, before Sir Albert de Rutsen, with stealing and receiving official stamps.—Mr. R. D. Muir prosecuted for the Inland Revenue; Mr. Frampton appeared for Waterhouse; Mr. Llewellyn Williams for Walter Richards; Mr. Pheasant for Henry Richards; and Mr. Lincoln Reed for Creeke.—Harold J. White, a solicitor, practising at Whitehall-place, gave evidence as to having purchased six I.R. official stamps from Creeke on February 13 last for £42. The stamps were for 5s., 10s., and £1 of each kind.—In reply to Mr. Reed, the Witness said he had known Creeke for many years as a stamp collector. He understood that Creeke himself told the Inland Revenue authorities that he had sold these particular stamps to him. He (Witness) had bought official stamps on many occasions from dealers and at auctions, but he did not know how they got on the market. Some time since he bought a 10d. King's Head Office of Works stamp at Ipswich, and since then he had been told that those particular stamps were not issued until a month ago. Detective-sergeant Ward had told him that it might prove to be a forgery.—Mr. Reed: Sergeant Ward appears to have a very fertile mind.—Mr. Muir: You may take it from me that the stamp is a forgery.—Mr. Reed asked if the source of the forgery was known. He understood that a large number of these stamps were forged in France.—Mr. Muir said he could give no information on that point. All that was known was that someone had obtained an ordinary penny stamp and printed "O.W. official" upon it.—Several Bank clerks gave evidence as to cashing cheques given by dealers for stamps now alleged to have been stolen, and the Prisoners were again remanded.

STOLEN STAMPS CASE.

19.6.03.

CHARGE AGAINST GOVERNMENT CLERKS FURTHER HEARD.

Again on Saturday the men accused of stealing and receiving official stamps appeared at Bow-st. Police-court, Sir A. de Rutzen sitting specially to hear the case. They are Walter John Richards, principal clerk in the postal branch of Somerset House; Henry John and Percy Tidd Richards, his sons; Anthony Buck Creeke, solicitor; and Alfred Waterhouse, clerk in the Works Department of the Admiralty.

Harold J. White, a solicitor practising at Whitehall-place, said that on 12 Feb. he bought six stamps, two each of 5s., 10s., and £1 surcharged "I.R. Official" from the prisoner Creeke for £42.

A Supposed Forged Stamp.

In cross-examination, the witness said he bought a 10d. King's Head Office of Works stamp from a dealer at Ipswich, and since then he had been told that those particular stamps were not issued until a month ago. Sergeant Ward had told him that the 10d. "O. W. Official" stamp which he bought for £5 might turn out to be a forgery.

Mr. Reed (for Creeke): Sergeant Ward appears to have a very fertile mind.

Mr. Muir (for the Inland Revenue): You may take it from me that the stamp is a forgery.

Mr. Reed asked if the source of the forgery was known, remarking that a great number of these stamps were alleged to have been forged in France.

Mr. Muir said he could not say that. All that was known was that someone had obtained an ordinary penny stamp and printed "O. W. Official" upon it.

All the men were again remanded on the same bail.

THE OFFICIAL STAMPS CASE.

19.8.03.

CHARGE AGAINST A DETECTIVE.

At Bow-street Police-court, before Sir Albert De Rutzen, Detective-sergeant Ward, of New Scotland-yard, was yesterday summoned for forging and uttering, knowing the same to be forged, a telegram purporting to be sent by Anthony Buck Creeke, jun., to Walter John Richards. The Complainant, Mr. Creeke, a solicitor, is one of the five Defendants who stand committed for trial on charges of stealing and receiving Government stamps.—Mr. Giveen appeared in support of the summons, and Mr. Muir defended.

Mr. Muir said that before the case was proceeded with it would be necessary to decide whether it was to be dealt with summarily or sent for trial.

Mr. Giveen said he was quite content that it should be dealt with summarily, and, in reply to the Magistrate, Sergeant Ward also elected that this course should be adopted.

Mr. Giveen said the prosecution was under Section 11 of the Post Office Protection Act, and it arose out of the charges which had already been before the Court in connection with the alleged theft of official stamps. The Complainant was arrested on the 9th of June, and afterwards it occurred to the prosecution that they wished to arrest a man named Richards. Richards knew of Creeke's arrest, and was in Court on the 15th of June, but apparently the officer in charge of the case thought it would be an astute thing to send a forged telegram to Richards, purporting to come from Creeke. On the 20th of June, therefore, he sent the following telegram addressed to Richards at his house in Balham:—"Meet me at my office 10.30. Important.—Creeke." As it happened, Richards had left his house before the telegram arrived, and he was arrested outside. On July 29 Sergeant Ward gave evidence, and in cross-examination he admitted that he had forged the telegram, and called it "a police trick." It was in these circumstances that Mr. Creeke complained of the forgery of his name, the Section under which the summons was issued making it an offence whether the sender had any intention to defraud or not. He (Mr. Giveen) asked the Magistrate to convict, and not to say that this was a matter in which the prerogative of a detective could override the law, because it did seem to be an improper proceeding in a case like this.

The Complainant said he was a solicitor practising in Leadenhall-street. On June 21 he went to Walter Richards's house, and there saw the telegram which purported to come from him. He had not sent it, nor given any authority for it to be sent.

At Bow-street, yesterday, before Sir A. de Rutzen, who sat specially, Detective-Sergeant Ward, of New Scotland-yard, was summoned at the instance of Anthony Buck Creeke, jun., solicitor, of Leadenhall-street, for having, on June 20 last, forged and uttered a telegram purporting to be signed by the said Creeke and sent to one Walter John Richards. The summons was framed under 47 and 48 Vict., cap. 76, section 11. Mr. Giveen prosecuted; Mr. R. D. Muir defended. The defendant elected to be dealt with summarily. Mr. Giveen said the case arose out of a prosecution against five men who were at present awaiting their trial on charges of stealing and receiving official stamps from Somerset House. The present complainant was arrested in connexion with that case on June 9; and it afterwards occurred to the prosecution to include with the defendants a Mr. Walter Richards, who was a principal clerk at Somerset House. Richards knew of Creeke's arrest, and was in Court on the occasion of his first appearance before the magistrate. Apparently Sergeant Ward, who was in charge of that case, thought it would be an astute thing if, for the purpose of effecting the arrest of Richards, he sent him a forged telegram in the following terms:—"Meet me at my office 10 30. Important.—Creeke." Richards left his house before that telegram reached him, and was immediately arrested by an officer who was waiting outside. The origin of that telegram remained a mystery until July 29, when Sergeant Ward was cross-examined in the witness-box. He then admitted that he had sent that telegram, explaining his action by saying that it was a police trick. The section under which this summons was framed made it a misdemeanour for any person to forge the name of another to a telegram, even where there was no intent to defraud. The magistrate had the power to impose a fine of £50, or he could send the case for trial, where the defendant would be liable to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 12 months. Counsel added that, to his mind, the forging of the name of a man who was awaiting trial was a most improper thing to do, and no end of mischief might have been caused. He asked the magistrate to convict, and to say that this was not a matter in which the prerogative of a detective could override the law. If it was a murder there might be some excuse, but in this case it seemed an outrageous proceeding. The law had always been that the police were not allowed to obtain a mean advantage over people who were presumed to be innocent. Evidence as to the sending of the telegram having been given, the complainant was called. He said he first saw the telegram in his name at Walter Richards's house on June 21, the day after it was alleged to have been sent. He believed he was the only person in London bearing the name of Creeke. In cross-examination he said the sending of the telegram had caused him a great deal of inconvenience, but he had not been harmed in any way. He disputed some of the points in the evidence which Sergeant Ward gave in the course of the stamp case, and he wished to discredit that evidence by bringing this prosecution and by other means. Walter Richards formally proved that the complainant was the only person of the name of Creeke known to him. Sergeant Ward then went into the witness-box, and said he had been in the Metropolitan Police force 16 years and had a clean sheet. On June 19 he received a warrant for the arrest of Walter Richards, and he watched his house in Rusham-road, Balham, all that evening. He did not go in because he was not sure that Richards was there, and he did not want to arrest him in the house. The witness had written the telegram in question and given it to some one to despatch on the following morning if Richards was not arrested before then. His object was to get Richards out of his house before arresting him, so that he could obtain certain keys and documents which he had in his possession. He believed that he had a right to use any strategy to assist him in effecting the arrest of a person. Questioned by Mr. Giveen as to whether he still thought it proper to forge a man's name to a telegram, he said he did not admit that it was a forgery. Mr. Muir, addressing the Court for the defence, said that a more trumpery prosecution, and a prosecution from a more improper motive, never was instituted. A man desired to dispute the evidence of another man upon a vital point, and, with a view to prejudicing the credit which would be given to that evidence, started a criminal prosecution in respect of a telegram which, by his own showing, had not harmed a single soul in the smallest possible degree. If the magistrate thought there was anything in the point that this was a technical offence, section 16 of the Summary Jurisdiction Act, 1879, exactly covered it. The object of that section was to prevent a person who had, or who thought he had, discovered a technical breach of the law from abusing the process of the Court. A more gross attempt to abuse the process of that Court was never made. Apart from that section, the sergeant had a *bona fide* claim of right; and that was a sufficent answer to any criminal prosecution. Further, he submitted that this was not a forged telegram. The accepted definition of forgery was the fraudulent alteration or making of writing to the prejudice of another man's right, and in this case there was no prejudice of anybody's right. Mr. Giveen, in reply, said he could not imagine anything more to the detriment of the common law right of every British subject than what might well have been caused by this telegram. As to the suggestion of a *bona fide* claim of right, was a detective officer of 16 years' experience to be allowed to override the statute because in his ignorance he thought he could send a forged telegram? Sir Albert de Rutzen said he had no doubt in his own mind about the case, but he should reserve what he had to say until he had had an opportunity of looking into one or two facts. 19.8.03.

Mr. Muir.—Do you think it [illegible] Sergeant Ward's evidence by bringing this prosecution?—Witness: I wish to discredit his evidence by this and other means.

Sergeant Ward, called by Mr. Muir, said he had been in the force 16 years, and had a clean sheet. On June 19 he received a warrant for the arrest of Richards, and he watched his house in Russian-road, Ballsen, all the evening. The object of the telegram was to get Richards out of the house, in order that he might be arrested. Witness believed he had a right to use any strategy to assist him in effecting the arrest of an alleged felon.

Mr. Muir said a more trumpery prosecution, and a prosecution from a more improper motive, never was instituted in that or any other court of justice. A man desired to dispute the evidence of another man upon a vital point, and, with a view to prejudicing the credit which would be given to that evidence, he started a criminal prosecution with respect to a telegram which by his own showing had not harmed a single soul in the smallest possible degree. In the circumstances, if the Magistrate thought there was anything in the point that this was a technical offence, Section 16 of the Summary Jurisdiction Act of 1879 exactly covered it. The object of that Section was to prevent a person who had or thought he had discovered a technical breach of the law from abusing the process of the Court. He did not think he need say anything to satisfy the Magistrate that a more gross attempt, not only to abuse the process of that Court, but to prejudice the course of justice in another Court, was ever made. But apart from that Section, there were substantial grounds for saying that the Magistrate had no jurisdiction to convict in such a case, a *bonâ fide* claim of right being a sufficient answer to any criminal prosecution. Such claim need not be founded on what was the law, so long as it was *bonâ fide*. Sergeant Ward had said that he believed he had a right to send the telegram, and if he really believed that, that was a *bonâ fide* claim of right. Therefore there was no jurisdiction to convict at all. Further than that, upon the merits of the point of law—because merits other than on the point of law there were none—he submitted that it was quite clear that this was not a forged telegram. The accepted common law definition of forgery was the fraudulent alteration or making of writing to the prejudice of another man's right, and in this case there was no prejudice of anybody's right. Therefore there were three answers to the charge:—(1) That it was not a forged telegram, because it was not a forgery at common law; (2) that there was a *bonâ fide* claim of right which ousted summary jurisdiction; and (3) that if the Magistrate thought a technical offence had been committed, it came within Section 16 of the Act of 1879.

Mr. Giveen, replying upon the points of law raised, said he could imagine nothing more to the detriment of the common law right of every British subject than what might well have been caused by this telegram. As to the point about a *bonâ fide* claim of right, it was, he said, difficult to take it seriously. Because a police officer of 16 years' experience said that in his ignorance he thought he could send a forged telegram, was that to be allowed to override the Statute?

Sir Albert De Rutzen.—I have no doubt about the case, but I am going to reserve what I have to say until to-morrow morning, just to look into one or two facts.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE POSTAL ORDER SYSTEM.

7.5.05.

We have received the following from the General Post Office:—

The Postmaster-General has pleasure in announcing that he has made arrangements for the introducton of considerable improvements in the postal order system.

The number of denominations will be increased from 14 to 40—one for each complete sixpence from 6d. to 20s. Not more than one order will therefore in future be required to make up any sum not exceeding £1. The poundage will be on the same scale as at present—namely, ½d. under 2s., 1d. from 2s. to 10s. 6d., 1½d. from 11s. to 20s.

The form of order will be simplified; and a numbered counterfoil will be attached, on which particulars of the order can be entered, and which is intended to be retained by the sender for reference.

Some of the new denominations of order will be on sale at post offices on July 1 next, and the issue of the whole series is expected to be complete by January 1.

These additional facilities for the transmission of small sums of money will be accompanied by modifications in the practice followed as regards the purchase of postage stamps from the public at post offices—a practice which has been found to be liable to serious abuses.

On and after January 1 next such purchases will be subject to the following regulations.

(1) Every person tendering stamps for sale will be required to fill up a form stating the value of the stamps, together with his name and address.

(2) Payment will be made by means of a money order sent by post to the address of the vendor.

(3) The commission charged to the public on purchases of stamps will be raised from 2½ per cent. to 5 per cent, which will cover the cost of postage and commission on the money order.

(4) No smaller amount than one pound's worth of stamps will be purchased from any one person.

AN OLD CONTROVERSY.

To the EDITOR *of the* PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SIR,—The paragraph in your issue of the 6th inst., *re* the postage-stamp jubilee, is not history, but the wildest romance, to those familiar with postal matters—a tissue of baseless, crassly ignorant assertions. James Chalmers is "proved by diligent investigation" of genuine historical documents (not fiction) to have first tried his hand at making postage-stamps in November, 1837, the postal reformer having proposed their use in his pamphlet published the previous February. The worthy Dundee bookseller, who was probably not the only far-seeing man similarly employed, fixes the date himself in more than one document still in existence and easy of consultation: and it is but fair to suppose that he, writing fifty years ago of his own recent work, is the best authority. There could have been no demand for stamps in 1834, when uniformity of rate was undreamed of, and the receiver, not the sender, of a letter paid the postage. As well assert that railway tickets (likewise tokens of prepayment) were made when stage-coaches only were running. Neither token would have been legal tender, and no one out of a lunatic asylum would have wasted time in manufacturing the thing. If "Herr Siegmund Friedl in Ober-Döbling, near Vienna," poor man! is cherishing a supposed 1834 postage-stamp in his collection—well, he is not the first dweller in the land of hallucinations; and antiquities younger than their alleged date are far from uncommon. The preposterous claim set up for James Chalmers that honourable citizen would, if living, be the first to repudiate. It was publicly made when Rowland Hill (who survived his great reform nearly forty years) had been but three months in his grave. Comment on this fact, above all when we remember the scandalous state of our law of libel, is superfluous. When, in August, 1839, the Treasury advertized for designs for the proposed stamp, forty-nine competitors sent in "essays." Of these the works of nineteen were considered to have points worth re-examination. The suggestions of the remaining thirty were rejected outright. Among these last were the stamps of James Chalmers. Of the fatal objections to them it will suffice to mention one. Being type-set, forgery thereof would have been easy. Thus exeunt J. Chalmers and his designs. How then it can be proved that "the honour of its (the postage stamp's) invention belongs to" the Dundonian bookseller, it is, even for the most credulous mortal, very hard to perceive. At any rate, if James Chalmers is to be extolled as the inventor, let not the equally strong claims to glorification of the other forty-seven unsuccessful competitors be forgotten.—Yours, &c.,

E. C. FELLOWS.

[We cannot insert any other letters on this subject.—ED. *P.M.G.*]

26.5.90

The controversy of Chalmers versus Rowland Hill is as warm and promises to be as permament as that of Bacon versus Shakspere. Both Mr. Chalmers and Sir Rowland Hill have passed out of the region of controversy themselves, but Mr. Patrick Chalmers, son of the farmer, claims for his deceased father that he, and not Sir Rowland Hill, invented the adhesive postage stamp. In his latest manifesto, dated April, 1888, Mr. Chalmers tells us that the Encyclopædia Britannica and the New Dictionary of National Biography have, after special investigation, and fixing the date of invention as August, 1834, put it on record that up to that period, so far as the experience of Sir Rowland Hill went "adhesive stamps had not been dreamt of." Mr. Chalmers does not mean us to infer that his father owed his idea to a dream; but he distinctly claims that the idea originated with him, and quotes a formidable array of authorities, of which those just named are only the latest, and perhaps the most important, as sanctioning the claim. In America eighteen Philatelic Societies have officially recognised Mr. Chalmers and the inevitable "Chalmers Society" has been formed; while continental philatelists recognise James Chalmers as their patron saint.

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