



— THE —

LONDON POSTAL SERVICE

OF TO-DAY.

BY

R. C. TOMBS,
CONTROLLER.



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*Price One Shilling.*  
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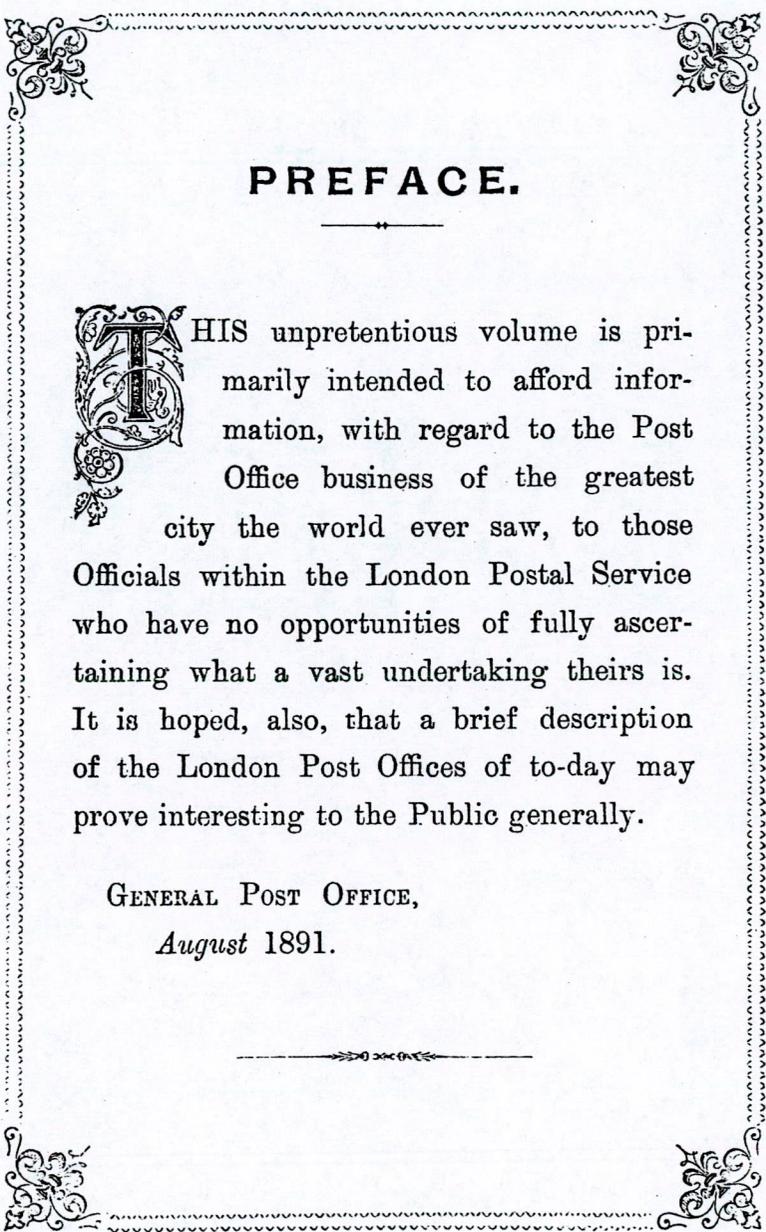
FIVE YEARS HAS FILLED THE OFFICE

OF POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

August 1891.

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PREFACE.

THIS unpretentious volume is primarily intended to afford information, with regard to the Post Office business of the greatest city the world ever saw, to those Officials within the London Postal Service who have no opportunities of fully ascertaining what a vast undertaking theirs is. It is hoped, also, that a brief description of the London Post Offices of to-day may prove interesting to the Public generally.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

August 1891.

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CHAPTER I

FORMATION

The London Postal Service of the present day was formed out of three great departments, known for many years as - (1.) The Circulation Department, which consisted of the sorting and despatching work of St. Martin's-le-Grand, and the delivery in the city district; (2.) The Metropolitan District, which embraced all parts of London except the city district; (3.) The Travelling Post Office system of the country. In addition to these three services the Parcel Post system of the Metropolis, established in 1883, now forms part of it.

STAFF

The Postmaster General (The Right Hon. H.C. Raikes) recently stated in public that he is the commander of an army numbering 100,000 officials. The London Postal Service employs about one-sixth of this army of workers. As the Jubilee of the Uniform Penny Postage system was celebrated last year, it will be learnt with interest in connexion therewith, and as indicative of progressive development, that the staff employed in the Circulation Department and Metropolitan area, which in 1840 numbered about 1,540, had in 1890 risen to 17,500. The regular and irregular staff of the London Postal Service, male and female, now consists of nearly 18,000 persons. This is, of course, exclusive of the Head Quarters Staff employed in the Secretary's Office, Receiver and Accountant General's Office, Savings Bank Department, Central Telegraph Office, &c. Reckoning that, on the average, each person has three others depending on him, the people whose living is provided by the London Postal Service must number 75,000, or equivalent to the population of the busy and flourishing town of Northampton.

The female staff employed on counter and telegraph duties numbers 560. On the average 20 females retire annually, 12 leave to be married, 4 on account of ill-health, and 3 to better their position. It seems that none of them ever marry members of the male postal staff. The death rate of the female staff is less than .5 per cent. per annum.

INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

A serious epidemic made memorable the end of the year 1889 and the commencement of 1890 amongst the officers of the London Postal Service, many of whom began to be affected with Russian influenza immediately after Christmas, the strain all grades had gone through at that season having rendered them particularly liable to the complaint. The number of absentees kept rising day by day thus : December 27th, 540; December 30th, 635; December 31st, 753. On the 1st January there were 924 absentees, on the 4th, 1,426, and an addition for the next three days at the rate of 200 a day. For four days the absentees numbered above 2,000, or more than 15 per cent. of the entire force. On the 13th. January a subsidence of the attack commenced, and by the 24th. the absentees had declined to 924, the same number as on the 1st January, and to a normal number on the 17th February.

The temperature taken outside the General Post Office during the period was -

Time	Dec.27th.	Jan.1st.	Jan.9th.	Jan.24th.	Feb.6th.	Feb.17th.
6.0 a.m.	42°	34°	44°	40°	38°	43°
6.0 p.m.	44°	38°	51°	51°	44°	49°

The total number of officers absent from sickness of all kinds during January 1889 was 2,391, and during January 1890, 5,221. The postmen were the most seriously affected, 725 men, or about 13 per cent. of the whole force of London carriers, having been away daily on the average. The telegraph messengers were absent in a much lower proportion, about 7 per cent. only, thus showing that adults were more affected than the young. Two fatal cases occurred among the staff, one being that of a counterwoman, aged 39, and the other that of a postman, aged 22. It was thought at one time that infection might have been conveyed by the foreign mails, but this was not borne out by facts.

The general characteristics of the influenza seem to have been the same everywhere : sickness, dizziness, severe pains in the back and limbs, with headache, were usually complained of. There was also great weakness, cases occurring of men fainting in the sorting office, and falling down in the street while employed on letter delivery. The seizure was often very sudden. A thick fog (on 1st January) and a severe frost (from the 6th to the 9th January) prevailed at the time the epidemic was at its height. The influenza this year has been more serious in its effects than the epidemic of last year. Three officials have fallen victims to it.

HEALTH STATIONS

It will, perhaps, be in place to mention here that a scheme for the employment at the seaside towns of Brighton, Eastbourne, Hastings, Margate, and Ramsgate, of London sorters and telegraph messengers, in need of change of air, has been adopted, and, thanks to the kind co-operation of the Post Office Surveyor of the district and the local Postmasters, has proved an unqualified success. Last year 90 messengers and 36 sorters were enabled to pleasantly combine business with change of air and scene, for periods varying from three to six weeks. Sorters and messengers alike benefited greatly, and expressions of warm appreciation testify to the advantages afforded by the plan.

The Postal and Telegraph Christian Association make arrangements for the accommodation of the boys at temperance hotels.

LIFT ACCIDENTS

The mail bags are conveyed between the different floors of the General Post Office, by means of endless chain lifts worked by steam. The staff make use of the lifts. Every precaution is taken to render the lifts as safe as possible, and serious accidents have been remarkably few, but have not been altogether escaped. A few years ago one of the attendants, a man with 24 years' experience of the machines, in going from the ground floor to the basement fell off the tray just before it got to the bottom, and, before the lift could be stopped, the descending tray crushed his head, and he was killed instantly. A fellow attendant, who made a gallant attempt to rescue him, was slightly injured.

A very serious accident occurred recently, but happily without a fatal result. An engineer's labourer was engaged in the basement examining a tray during an interval when the lift was not working. An attendant set the lift working prematurely, and before the unfortunate labourer, who was kneeling beneath the bottom tray, could escape, it passed over him, breaking his left leg in two places, his right arm, and several of his ribs, besides bruising him severely about the face and body. The poor fellow, more dead than alive, was soon extricated and taken to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and through the skill of the surgeons his life was saved. He was not in the service of the Post Office, but was employed by a firm who contract to keep the lifts in repair. The Department however, treated him as generously as if he had been one of its own servants by paying him his usual wages during the whole of the time he was unable to work, and finding him employment as soon as he was able to undertake it.

SURGICAL AID

The sorting force employed in the Chief Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, have raised a Subscription Fund in connection with the Surgical Aid Society. For every guinea subscribed four letters of recommendation are allowed by the Society. Contributions as low as twopence per annum are received, in order that the humblest Post Office servant may not, on account of expense, be excluded from surgical aid. Last year 130 letters were distributed amongst the subscribers, for which they obtained 83 appliances - trusses, elastic stockings, belts, and surgical boots being the articles most in request.

RULES

It is necessary for the guidance of the various classes of officers employed that Books of Rules should be furnished in addition to the Rules for Postal and Telegraph work which are issued for general use throughout the kingdom. The books so prepared

contain technical instructions applicable to all classes of officers, and no one in the service can plead ignorance of what his duties are or of how to perform them. This is a great advance on olden times, for then the presiding officers when appealed to on abstruse points of procedure usually, with some gruffness, told the unlucky inquirers to consult their Order Book, an official syllabus extending over many years.

LATE ATTENDANCE

The explanations given in excuse for late attendances on early morning duty are sometimes amusing. Here is an instance :- " My late attendance during the past year was owing to the failing of my clock and my getting back into bed again, a habit I found had grown on me to such an extent that I knew I should have to take some serious steps to prevent. In consequence I got married about two months ago and have not been late since." The assumption is that the poor wife had to act as timekeeper.

A clerk who some years ago left the Postal Service, and has risen to fame in the City, gave as his excuse for being late one morning that " Contrary to my usual custom I took a second glass of very mild ale with my supper which caused me to oversleep myself." Another instance was :- " I beg to state the reason I attended one year without irregularity. This is due to my wife's assistance, being the first year I was married. My wife being able then to hear the alarm which greatly assisted me. But now she does not hear it; I am therefore left to my own ability."

Other excuses contain not unfrequently tales of suffering on the part of the officer's relatives, curtailment of rest and sleep through watching those near and dear, leading to the alarm being powerless to awaken the tired-out watchers..

EXTRA DUTY

Extra Duty is not so much sought after now as it was years ago when salaries and wages were lower, although the rate of pay for overtime is much higher than formerly.

There is still in the Department a gentleman hale and hearty after forty-five years of service, notwithstanding that in his younger days he thought little of performing an early morning duty at the General Post Office (5 to 9 a.m.), snatching a hasty breakfast, running every step of the way to a West End Post Office to perform a day's duty there, repeating the run so as to get to 5 p.m. duty at " The General " working on till 8 p.m., and then settling himself down to assist in working off a Foreign Mail in the night. This, spiced with a little Sunday duty, went on all the year round. So impatient was this gentleman of anything that interfered with his extra duty that he blinded himself to the infirmities of nature and would rarely lay up even in the most severe illness. Such devotion to duty is rarely met with now-a-days, neither are there men so strong as to be able to keep on year after year in performing a double or treble day's work. There is another gentleman who did a great deal of extra duty in his early days, and that without payment, whose career as a postal officer commenced as early as 1839 (the year before the introduction of the Penny Post) and has just terminated. This worthy gentleman, although a living embodiment of postal antiquity, still retains the appearance of juvenility, and what is most remarkable is that during his long career in the service of his Sovereign he was never absent from duty for a single day on account of sickness.

CORONERS' JURIES

Through failure to claim exemption from serving on coroners' juries, about 40 officers are summoned to serve annually. Exemption is usually allowed, but 10 per cent. of those summoned have had to serve as jurors. All my readers should, therefore, take care to examine the jury list which is exhibited at the principal door of every church, chapel, or other place of public worship, on the first three Sundays in September. If they find their names thereon they should attend the petty sessions, or court, at the time appointed for the revision of the list, and claim exemption.

SPECIAL CONSTABLES

In 1888, when disturbances were going on in the streets of London, 168 officers of the Post Office were sworn in as special constables to assist in maintaining public order, but their active services were never requisitioned, and no heads were broken by the batons which were supplied to them.



CHAPTER II

POSTAL AREA

The building operations in London are so extensive that new houses are annually added to the postal zone equal in number to the houses contained in Oxford and Cambridge.

The area included in the London Postal System, which extends from Mill Hill and Whetstone in one direction to South Norwood and Sydenham in another; from Chiswick to North Woolwich; from Wimbledon to Greenwich; and from Hanwell to Woodford, is about 250 square miles; and the population is estimated at 5,000,000. As there are about 35 miles of new streets made and 15,000 new houses built, in every year, new centres have from time to time to be arranged for letter delivery.

There is great difficulty experienced in defining postal boundaries. The public do not readily fall in with the postal lines, preferring to adopt addresses which they think most fashionable. Thus a very large area is covered by the courtesy address of "Kensington"; Hammersmith and parts of Notting Hill and Kensal Town being so regarded. Then it is difficult to determine where Kentish Town ends and the suburb of Highgate commences, or where Camden Town finishes and Hampstead begins.

Probably the worst district of the kind are those of Lee, Lewisham, and Blackheath; Lee and Lewisham being dropped as much as possible and Blackheath adopted as the postal address. Complications take place in despatching the letters to such places. An Irish postman in his perplexity said that "What's Lewisham is Lay, and what's Lay is Lewisham."

DISTRIBUTING OFFICES

In this year of grace 1891 there are in the Metropolitan area eight principal distributing offices for letters and parcels, and six separate depots for parcels, together with ninety-three secondary sorting and postmen's offices for the collection into, and delivery from, of letters and parcels. These 107 centres have all been selected with particular regard to general public convenience. The superficial area of all the offices combined is 16 acres.

The letters and newspapers passing through the Inland Branch of the General Post Office reach the almost incredible total of eight hundred millions per annum. They pass in and out of the Office with marvellous rapidity, in some cases the whole process, from time of receipt to time of despatch occupying less than 30 minutes.

FIRES

The department has not entirely escaped from fires, but no conflagration attended with serious consequences has occurred for some years. There was a fire at the G.P.O. East, at the time of the trial experiments of the electric light some few years since. The boilers used were those in connection with the steam power for working lifts, the consequence being that the boiler fires had to be kept alight night and day. There was only one flue, and in consequence of its great heat, occasioned by night and day use, it could not be properly swept. The result was that a beam close to it became ignited, which, after smouldering for some time, set fire to the floorwork, and a blaze broke forth. Fortunately it occurred at a time when there was a force on duty, and the firemen employed on the premises, with the ready help of some of the officers of the staff, very soon succeeded in extinguishing the fire. From time to time baskets have become accidentally set on fire without much damage being done. Some cotton waste used for cleaning the metal date stamps, and for other purposes of the kind, spontaneously ignited at a sorting office. At a large fire in the City, which occurred in February 1890, the Aldermanbury Branch Office suffered damage from water used for playing on the burning buildings, some of which found its way through a skylight broken by the fire.

Every Crown Post Office is provided with proper appliances for extinguishing fires. Buckets always filled with water, extincteurs, and hand-grenades are kept ready for use; and hydrants with long lengths of hose are provided. At the larger offices volunteer fire brigades are formed, and the members are well drilled in the use of the appliances. At the General Post Office two firemen of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade are on duty

night and day. Smoking is strictly prohibited in all Post Offices.

LETTERS DELIVERED

The important part played by the London Post Offices may be dimly judged when it is known that the total number of letters, &c. now delivered in the Metropolis per year is 770,000,000 (or about 30 per cent. of the total for the United Kingdom), averaging about 154,000 per postman in the year, or about 494 per man per day. Owing to the building of houses in high blocks the delivery of letters is rapidly becoming a very different process from what it was some years since. It is no infrequent thing now for a postman to have to deliver from the basement to the top of a huge building, pass over the roof, and then work from top to bottom.

The Post Office has to deliver to newspaper publishing offices in London 12,000,000 letters yearly. Mis-delivery or late delivery at these offices means in some cases that the Department will be " shown up ", but on the whole the testimony from the newspaper proprietors is that they are remarkably well served, if such blowing of the official trumpet may be here permitted.

The complaints made by the public of late delivery of letters, &c. in a year numbered 220 only. Of these cases, 57 were found on investigation to be either of a very trivial nature or altogether unfounded, 31 were due to season pressure, 13 to the disturbance of the normal services consequent on the establishments of a new Postal Sub-District, and 8 to the late arrival of foreign and other mails in London. In 89 other cases the wants of the services in the districts concerned had been recognised and were being met. The remaining 22 were caused by the inexperience or negligence of the delivering postmen.

A letter containing a 5£. note was found, 12 years after posting, behind the panel of a Railway Post Office, where it had become accidentally secreted. The note when found was in a mutilated condition, but the number could be deciphered, and a new note in place of it was supplied by the Bank of England. This was handed to the lady sender who was not a little elated thereat. She did not ask for interest on the money.

Latterly, in order to improve the local deliveries in London, a system of what is technically termed " Bye-bag Service " has been brought into operation. For instance, a bag is made up at Highgate for the adjoining Sub-District of Hampstead. Letters posted in Highgate before 7.0 p.m. are delivered in Hampstead between 9 and 10 p.m., and a reply can be received at Highgate at 8 o'clock on the following morning, instead of as formerly at 1 p.m., when the letters had to circulate through the N. & N.W. Head District Offices. About 900 bags of the kind are now made up daily, and they are the means of accelerating by several hours the delivery of 5,000,000 letters annually.

Of the letters, &c. delivered in the sub-districts of Stoke Newington and Tottenham 64 per cent. originate in the London District.

Letters posted in one Sub-District of London for delivery in another Sub-District under ordinary circumstances, when they have to pass through their Head District Office to another Head District Office, reach the addressee in about four hours. Sometimes it may be less, sometimes more, according as the posting happens to be just in time or just too late for a collection, to the distance to be traversed to the office of delivery, and the situation of the address on the postman's " walk ".

POSTES RESTANTES

The delivery of letters and parcels from Postes Restantes in London, formerly restricted to the General Post Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand and the Post Office at Charing Cross, but now carried on also at each Head District Office in London, is a great accommodation to strangers and travellers who have no permanent abode in London, some 65,000 letters and parcels being delivered from the Postes Restantes annually.



LETTERS COLLECTED

It may well be wondered where all the letters come from. The mind almost refuses to realise the quantity. The letters, &c. collected throughout London in one year now number 850,000,000 (or more than one third of the total number posted in the United Kingdom). This is at the rate of about 170 per head of population. It is a point of interest as to what becomes of these letters. Of letters posted in London 40 per cent. are for delivery in London, 50 per cent. for the provinces, and 10 per cent. for abroad.

Of local letters, that is, letters posted in a town for delivery in the same town, 33 per cent. of the total number for the Kingdom are delivered in the Metropolis.

POSTING RECEPTACLES

The average number of letters and other postal articles collected daily from each Branch Office is 4,260, from each Receiving House 1,245, and from each of the scarlet painted Pillar and Wall Boxes 538. Collections are made from 6 to 16 times a day according to locality. In all 2,500,000 letters posted daily, are collected from 107 District and Branch Offices, 818 Receiving Houses, and 1,990 Pillar and Wall Boxes. The Pillar and Wall Letter Boxes would hold 1,940,000 postal articles at one time. Inside or outside nearly every railway station in London and suburbs a Post Office Letter Box has been placed for the convenience of travellers. The public, not contented with the proper postal boxes provided for the reception of letters, find strange places in which to deposit their correspondence intended for transmission by Post. A disused pump, which formerly stood near Charing Cross, on being removed was found to contain many letters. Disused pillars placed in the Post Office yard for a short time prior to being broken up often had letters placed in them, and the boxes, therefore, are never left in the yard now.

The street letter boxes have comparative immunity from being tampered with. The chief offences are committed by boys who occasionally drop lighted matches into the boxes, block the key-holes with nails or pieces of wire or wood, and put mud through the apertures. Very little damage, however, is done on the whole, as the public act in no small degree as guardians of the Post Office boxes, and the police and postmen are very vigilant.

The difference between business and social letters posted in the Metropolitan district varies greatly. Thus in the City of London the proportion of business letters is 83 per cent., whilst in the Oxford Street district the proportion is reversed, the business letters forming only 20 per cent. of the whole number posted. In the Whitechapel district the proportion is about equal.

The Eastern District is the largest in London, with, therefore, the greatest distances to be traversed by the delivering and collecting Postmen. On the other hand, it is inhabited to a much greater extent than any other district by persons of the poorest and least educated classes, who do not contribute anything like the same proportion of letters to the area covered. Thus in the South-Eastern Town District, there are 411,902 letters weekly per square mile, while in the Eastern Town District there are but 190,842. A much greater disparity is brought out by contrasting E. and W., where the numbers stand as follows : E., No. of letters per square mile, 190,840; W., No. of letters per square mile, 1,076,072.

POSTMEN

The postmen employed in delivering and collecting letters, &c. number 5,820.

During the last few years many new Crown Offices for postmen have been erected. They are of large size, well ventilated, well lighted, with retiring rooms for the postmen, and ample and satisfactory lavatory accommodation.

As a rule, postmen have two of the blue uniform suits with scarlet facings per annum. It is well known that the military uniform possesses great fascinating influences over

cooks and other domestic servants. So, in a lesser degree, does that of the London postmen. This was humorously evidenced recently by the receipt at one of the London District Offices of a packet addressed - " For the handsomest post man in the Post Office. Must have blue eyes and fair curly hair."

The packet contained a servant maid's white apron with lace edges, the significance of which it is hard to devine. The London postman, in common with the policeman, is looked upon by the public as a kind of walking directory. He is constantly being button-holed on his rounds by wayfarers to direct them to a certain street or road, or to inform them at what number in the street such and such a person lives, and he is quite expected to be able to answer any such question that may be put to him. On one occasion two postmen hailing from Liverpool and Manchester respectively were in London on official business, and as it was the first time they had been to the Metropolis they were anxious to see as much as possible in their spare time. They were obliged to inquire their way to the different places; but as they were wearing postmen's uniform, which is of similar style in town and country, most of the persons to whom they addressed themselves thought they were joking, and did not care to enlighten them. If they ventured to " ask a policeman " he thought they were having a little joke with him, and his only reply was a knowing smile; so that from one cause or the other they had the greatest difficulty in finding their way about in the Metropolis. The postmen see a great deal of life of one sort and another when on their rounds, but it is seldom that the sights trouble them very much. A postman, however, when going to his duty early one May morning found the dead body of a child. The discovery so seriously affected him that he was taken ill and died two or three days afterwards from the shock.

DOG BITES

Although the London postmen are better off than their brethren in Bessarabia - where recently a post-cart was attacked by wolves, the postmen and horses devoured, and the postbags torn to pieces - yet they have their perils to encounter. In 1888, 38 postmen in London were bitten by dogs, and in the aggregate the men had to be absent from duty for 245 days. In a half - year during the period that the muzzling order was in operation only eight men were bitten. Happily no deaths have resulted from dog bites.

RIVER POSTMAN

There is, perhaps, no sight more familiar in the streets of London than that of the postmen on their rounds, but there is one member of the class who is rarely seen on land - he is the " river postman ", who pursues his calling on London's " silent highway ". He it is who delivers letters to ships lying in the Thames. His uniform is that of half postman and half waterman. At 8 in the morning he embarks in his boat at the Custom House quay, and slowly and cautiously rows along through the shipping and among the small craft which crowd the river, on his way down to the Pool, delivering and collecting letters as he goes. The river postman is not only a good waterman but also is, fortunately, an expert swimmer, for he occasionally gets a sudden immersion in the river owing to his boat colliding with another or running foul of a ship's cable in a fog. The river postmanship has been in one family for several generations, the grandfather of the present postman having been employed in that capacity in the reign of George III. He possessed a silver badge weighing 18 ozs., dated 1765, and also a pass signed by the king allowing him free ingress to all ports in the United Kingdom. The father of the present postman was presented with a new boat on the accession of William IV., and the boat was named after the king.

As may be supposed, the difficulties usually experienced by the river postman were increased during the six weeks of hard frost which prevailed at the end of last year and the beginning of this year. Large icefloes rendered navigation impossible, and the postman could not use his own boat for a fortnight, but had to get about as best he could from landing-place to landing-place. The men from the Channel Islands vessels had to meet the postman as the postman could not reach them, and they adopted the expedient of getting across the ice to the shore by means of ladders.

The postmen whose duty takes them into the docks and near the river Thames run considerable risks. They often experience great difficulties in delivering and collecting letters when frost or dense fog prevails, and meet with serious injuries from falling down.

A postman, when returning from his duties at Rotherhithe, saw a man struggling in the water. Exhausted as he was by his day's labour, and suffering from rheumatic fever, he plunged in, and, at the risk of his own life, saved the unfortunate man. The case was brought before the Royal Humane Society, and their testimonial, inscribed on vellum, was awarded to the brave postman. It was accompanied by a postal order for 1£.

POSTMAN. ROBBED

Hatton Garden, the centre of the diamond trade in London, was, in December 1889, the scene of a daring and successful robbery of a postman's letter bag. The theft was the result of a carefully planned conspiracy to get possession of the Hatton Garden portion of the Cape Mail. Fortunately, however, in this respect the thieves were disappointed. The postman, who had been on the "round" for some years, entered 10, Hatton Garden, and ascended to an upper floor for the purpose of leaving letters. As there was no letter-box he knocked on the door, and, while he was in the act of stooping to push letters underneath it, a sudden rush was made by some one from the staircase leading to the upper floor. The unfortunate postman was attacked, half strangled, drugged, as he believes, and hurled into an office, the door of which was instantly locked on him. On recovering, the postman kicked for a moment or two at the door in order to attract attention, but finding this was unavailing he dragged a chair to the door, beat out the thick glass, and, getting through the opening, rushed downstairs and proclaimed that he had been drugged and robbed. The thieves, however, had disappeared, and so had the postman's bag and its contents. The bag contained about 60 registered packages. Among them there was said to be a package containing a necklace which was worth about 5,000£. A great many of the letters came from Paris. It is always possible, of course, for any one to find out when the Cape Mail is due, but no one outside the Department knows when it will be delivered, the delivery varying from time to time, being sometimes in the morning, and sometimes in the evening. No clue to the robbery has been obtained even yet.

SERVICE TO BALMORAL

London postmen now have the honour of travelling in charge of the Queen's pouches when Her Majesty is at Balmoral, a duty heretofore devolving on Queen's Messengers.

PLUCKY DEED

In August last, as some small boys were "larking" near the Temple Stairs, one of them fell into the water. The boy was unable to swim, and twice went under. There were three or four men looking on, but none of them showed any intention of attempting a rescue. Just at this moment a Post Office employé drove up. He saw the crowd, and saw also a pair of small hands above the water. He sprang down from the mail-cart, told the driver to report to his superior officer what he was about, and promptly jumped into the water, just in time to catch hold of the boy and bring him to shore. "It was a very plucky thing to do," said General Graham, who saw the rescue effected, "to jump in like that, with such heavy boots on too." This hero is W. Mills, a porter in the Inland Branch of the General Post Office. For his gallantry he received the Bronze Medal of the Royal Humane Society.



CIRCULARS

Advertising by means of circulars sent through the Post is now carried on to an almost incredible extent. To prevent disappointment through circulars being re-directed to people who are away from home or who changed their residences, it is found that some advertisers occasionally write, in addition to the address, such terms as " or occupier"; " If addressee be away, for goodness sake don't send this on"; " If the receiver be dead or absent, pray do not send this on to him". The last phrase was on a quantity of circulars received from Germany. As illustrative of the use of the Postal system for advertising purposes, it is noteworthy that a million and a quarter of circulars were posted by one firm in two months, the postage paid being nearly 2,500£. A City firm posted 180,000 letters in one day. Weekly periodicals, which hold competitions from time to time, have wholesale deliveries not infrequently. The publisher of one paper of the kind received 34 cwt. of letters in one week, and another 24,000 Post cards in a day.

Frequent demands are made for the Department to relax its regulations under which certain documents sent as circulars have to be surcharged in consequence of infringement of Post Office laws. It rarely happens that any one blames the Department for not enforcing the regulations which by so many people are considered to be too stringent. A contrary case of the kind did, however, occur recently, when a circular prepaid at the 1d. rate was contained in a cover which did not permit of the easy withdrawal of contents. The London firm receiving it complained that the article should have been prepaid as a letter, and when it was explained to them that the document escaped surcharge through oversight they accepted the explanation, but at the same time desired the Department to surcharge the circular 1d., which they paid, and so satisfied their consciences.

PUBLIC POST OFFICES

The public business, such as the sale of stamps, &c., is conducted at 107 Crown Offices and 818 Letter Receiving Houses. Stamps can be purchased by the public from about 3,000 shopkeepers licensed as vendors by the Inland Revenue authorities.

The shopkeepers who undertake the duties of letter receivers for the Post Office are engaged in business of varying character. About 300 are grocers, 170 stationers, 100 chemists, 100 bakers, and 15 drapers. In 1839, the year before the introduction of the Penny Post, there were only 70 letter receivers in the London districts.

There is no necessity for the officers employed at the public counters of the Department to press their wares on the public, as the Post Office has no competitors. A clerk, however, in the Foreign Department, who had to take his turn at " the window ", on Australian and other heavy mail nights, was, at the time of issue of postage stamps of a new design, heard by those working near him to be praising the stamps, and asking persons to buy some of them because " they were new and beautiful ".

BURGLARIES

In March 1888, the Smithfield Branch Post Office was burglariously entered on a Saturday night. Apparently, access to the office had been obtained from adjoining premises. It is supposed that the thieves made their way up the staircase of an adjoining house, over roofs of two houses, through the trapdoor, down the staircase leading to the branch office, and finally through a hole cut in the floor, got into the basement and so reached the counter room. According to all appearances the thieves did their work deliberately, and stayed in the office from Saturday night to Sunday night, as they had made a raid upon food in the lockers in the basement and had lighted a fire. The rooms over the branch office were unoccupied. The thieves removed a safe from under the counter, placed it in the Chief Officer's enclosure, broke it open, and rifled the contents. Cash and stamps to the value of about 180£ were stolen. The interior of the public office can be viewed by the police, but to allay any suspicion on their part a dummy safe had been made up and placed under the counter in the position from which the real safe had been removed. The thieves when effecting their escape made a most perilous

descent down the side of a house abutting on the Metropolitan Railway.

A second daring burglary occurred in October of the same year, the Aldgate Branch Office having been selected as the scene of operations, and Saturday night chosen. From the manner in which the burglary was effected there was little doubt that it was committed by the men who broke into the Smithfield Branch Office. The approach was made from an empty house in an adjacent street, and access obtained through the trapdoor on the roof. Two stairs were forced away near the ground floor, and the public office then reached from the basement. The safe which was broken open was under the counter. The interior of the office, including the part of the counter under which the safe stood, is fully visible from the outside, the woodwork in front of the office having been kept low for the purpose, and it is marvellous that the thieves were not detected, as a poor woman had just been murdered by " Jack the Ripper " within two hundred yards, and the footpath in front of the Post Office was thronged with excited people. The upper floors of the office were not occupied. The thieves got off with cash and stamps to the value of 328£.

Later in the year another daring burglary was committed at the South Kensington Branch Post Office, the same tactics as before being adopted, that is, the safe had been taken from under the counter and moved into a room out of sight where it was broken open. Fortunately, the burglars had selected a safe which contained a small sub-stock, and they only abstracted stamps to the value of about 6£. They were disturbed, and decamped in haste, as they left their tools behind them, an overcoat, tobacco pouch, pipe, and a scarf. But it is surprising how they could have removed the heavy safe, weighing about 1½ cwt., from the public office without having been observed, as the position from which the safe was removed was immediately in front of a large window through which the police and passers-by could command a full view of the office. The public office is not closed until 11 p.m.; a collection is made from the office front at midnight, and again at 3.0 a.m.; and the postmen are on duty at 5.30 a.m. in the Sorting Office, which is only divided by a thin wall from the Branch Office. The district police made every endeavour to capture the burglars, but without success.

The Westbourne Grove and Peckham Offices were " burgled " in a precisely similar manner soon after. In the latter case the police were on the spot within five minutes of the time of the escape of the depredators, but they could not capture them. In all the robberies effected, a small safe only was broken open, and the larger safes left intact, the reason being they could not readily be removed to a spot out of observation, and that their power of resistance was greater than that of the small safes. The moral drawn from this was that the small safes should be dispensed with, and that there should be one large safe at each office. All the Branch Offices have now been barricaded, caretakers appointed, vigilance visits paid, and so now the burglars, fearing " man-traps and spring guns ", are shy of making further attempts.

SWINDLERS

Rogues often attempt to play the little game of " ringing the changes " at post offices in London. The modus operandi differs. For instance, a man asked for a Postal Order for 2s., tendered half-a-sovereign, and afterwards 1d. for commission. The counterman laid the change, four 2s. pieces, in front of him and turned to serve others, when the change ringer stated that only three 2s. pieces, then lying on the counter, were given to him. The counterman refused to give him another 2s. piece, being prepared for something of the kind, and having taken the precaution to lay the half sovereign apart from other cash in case it should be said that a sovereign had been tendered, on account of having recognised in the man the same person who had obtained 2s. 6d. from him by the same method previously.

Attempts are often made to palm off counterfeit money on the counter officers. In February 1890 a man was very busy in that direction with more or less success. At one office he asked for 1£ worth of penny stamps, placing ten 2s. pieces on the counter, which the counter officer found to be counterfeit and challenged the man, who made off, leaving the 2s. pieces behind him. At another office the same man asked for 30s. worth of penny stamps. The counter officer got the stamps out, put them on the counter near her own hand, and held her hand out for the money. The man took out a lot of large

silver and pretended to count it, and then said, " I have not enough by 2s., and will be back in a minute ". He then hurriedly left the office and did not return. " No sale no loss " in this case.

He was more successful at a third office, as having asked for 50s. worth of penny stamps the counterman took the money, which was thrown on to the counter in half - crowns, and gave out the stamps. The rogue left the office quickly. It was not discovered that the money was bad until about an hour after the transaction, and some of it had been given away in change.

Another plan tried by two men was : one would present two 10s. postal orders for payment, and on receiving a sovereign would leave the office. Having by this bona fide transaction established confidence he would return in a few moments and say, " Oh, I thought there was something else I wanted, I'll take three stamps, " and would put down a sovereign. On the change, 19s.9d., being given to him with the stamps he would say, " Did I give you a sovereign ? I thought it was a shilling; give me back the sovereign, " and I will give you 20s. worth of silver for it as I do not want so much change ". The sovereign would generally be handed back to him, and without giving up the 20s. worth of silver he would then produce 1£.10s. (in gold) and 10s. in silver, and ask for two 1£ Postal Orders, and " how much does the commission come to, and when does the " Mail leave for Australia ?" At this point his confederate would come into the shop, and in a very hurried manner make a remark about the weather, and " I want a registered " envelope, please, quick." In the excitement of the moment the first man would obtain possession of the Orders and leave the office, having defrauded the counter officer of the sovereign for which he had promised to give the silver in exchange.

After visiting offices in nearly every part of London with varying success these two men were arrested, and while under remand were identified as being implicated in a murderous assault upon the Postmistress of East Barnet. They were convicted and sentenced to 10 years penal servitude.

The intelligence and vigilance displayed by counter officers frequently leads to the detection of cases of theft by servants when attempting to cash Postal and Money Orders, and stamps, contained in letters delivered at the addresses of their employers, and intercepted by them. But for this the Department would most probably be charged with the loss of the letters. No less than six cases of the kind were detected at one Branch Office within a short time last year.

EMPTY PURSES

The Pillar Letter Boxes are very frequently made receptacles for empty purses by the Artful Dodgers of the period who thus rid themselves of what might prove awkward evidence against them. Four empty purses were brought in from Pillar Boxes in the Western District in one day, making up thirty within six weeks.



TELEGRAMS

The telegrams dealt with, i.e., collected and delivered in the London Districts, apart altogether from the Central Telegraph Office and its tributaries, are 27,000,000 annually, or 41 per cent. of all the telegrams delivered in the kingdom. Of these, some 20,000,000 are dealt with at head and branch offices, and 7,000,000 at receiving houses. Tube offices take 10,500,000, and wire offices, 16,500,000. Of the head and branch office traffic, 13,000,000 telegrams are dealt with at offices where a male staff is employed, and 14,000,000 at offices where females are engaged.

There are 11 head, 99 branch, and 330 receiving telegraph offices in the metropolis. The instruments in use are, Morse Sounder 309, Morse Printer 95, double plate sounder 83, and single needle 82.

STAFF

The telegraphists, male and female, number 800. The telegraph messengers number about 2,500. The messengers are drawn from various classes of society, the occupation of the fathers running thus : mechanics, builders, post office servants, police, coachmen, labourers, railway servants, gardeners, boot makers, clerks, publicans, barbers, omnibus conductors.

The daily average number of telegrams for delivery by each boy messenger is twenty, varying from 36 in the City District to 11 in the Norwood District.

NORTH POLE

Mr. F. E. Baines, C.B., Assistant Secretary and Inspector General of Mails, when, ten or twelve years ago, making a tour of inspection of the London District Telegraph Offices during the term of his surveyor generalship of telegraphs, called at the Notting Hill Branch Office, and in the course of inquiries asked what was the limit of the telegraph delivery. He was astonished when the telegraphist in charge answered, with a serious countenance, " the North Pole ". Seeing the look of extreme surprise on Mr. Baines' face, the telegraphist hastened to explain that he did not mean the northern extremity of the earth but a well known public house called the " North Pole ", near Wormwood Scrubs.

SINGULAR ACCIDENT

The telegraph messengers are exposed to dangers. A messenger, to avoid a cab and to keep himself on a narrow footway at Paddington Station, caught hold of a wire. The wire happened to be one used in connexion with the electric light, and the boy received such a shock that he had to be taken to the hospital, where he was under treatment for three or four days. A cabman who helped to free the lad from the wire also received so severe a shock from the electric current through the boy's body that he also had to be treated at the hospital.

A MESSENGER'S MISTAKE

The title by which the thick post cards have been known for a long time, viz., "stout", led some little time since to a curious mistake. A gentleman in the Department, who is a total abstainer, directed a boy messenger to fetch him half a packet of stout post cards. Judge of the horror, or may we say the amusement, of our temperate friend when the boy, whose mind would appear to have been dwelling on a different matter, returned with a large " Toby " jug containing half a pint of stout.

INLAND SAMPLE POST

The revival of the Inland Pattern and Sample Post has given great satisfaction to the trading community in London, as evidenced by the fact that about 1,504,000 pattern and sample packets are posted annually in the Metropolis, and contain articles of a most varied and miscellaneous character, such as follows :- viz., alpaca, cloth, corduroy,

cotton prints, cretonne, feathers, flannel, fringe, gloves, lace, linen, muslin, plush, ribbons, whalebone, wool, almonds, barley, biscuits, cocoa, coffee, corn, currants, dates, figs, flour, grain, hay, hemp, meal, mustard, nutmegs, oats, oilcakes, pepper, raisins, rice, spice, sugar, sweets, tapioca, tea, yeast, sperm candles, string, toilet soap.

Out of the total of 1,504,000 no fewer than 840,711 were posted in numbers of more than 100 at a time; 125,418 packets containing spice have been posted by one firm alone.



MAIL CART SERVICE

The conveyance of the letter and parcel mails between the various districts of London and to and from the several railway termini is performed by means of vehicles of different descriptions, thus ; - 4 four-horse coaches for carrying parcels to and from provincial towns; 2 three-horse coaches; 23 pair-horse coaches; 119 pair-horse vans; 304 single-horse vans; 84 carts. The distance travelled by these vehicles in one year amounts to nearly 1,800,000 miles. About 380 regular and 95 casual drivers are employed, and 1,100 horses are used. If the whole of the vehicles and horses employed in the London Postal Service were drawn up in a line, with a yard or two between them, the procession would extend from the General Post Office to the Marble Arch. The total weight of mail matter which all these vehicles could carry at one time, if they were filled to the utmost of their capacity, is 440 tons. Formidable as are these statistics they do not represent the total postal vehicular traffic of the Metropolis, as 350 hand carts are used for the delivery and collection of parcels. Notwithstanding the extensive provision thus made for the conveyance of the mails in London, it is found necessary to largely supplement it at the Christmas season by the hire of private vehicles. Last Christmas 120 vehicles and 80 hand carts belonging to private persons were engaged by the Department in addition to a large number of cabs were hired. Tricycles, with specially arranged bodies, were used for a time for the Suburban Parcel Post system, but journeys of from 8 to 10 miles out and in, with a load of 1 cwt. of parcels, through frost and rain proved too fatiguing for the riders, particularly when the roads were heavy in the winter, and the tricycles had to be abandoned.

The procession of mail vehicles which took place in July 1887 was a revival of an ancient ceremonial.

The rendezvous was Finsbury Square, and thence the procession took its way via Chiswell Street, Barbican, and Aldersgate Street, to St. Martin's-le-Grand, there to receive an additional contingent of four-horse mail coaches. At a few minutes past one o'clock the entire procession moved away from the General Post Office amid the cheers of many thousands of spectators and the entire Post Office Staff, who crowded to the windows to see the cortege away.

The procession started in the following order : -

Mounted Police
 Four-in-Hand Coach
 Ten Pair-horse Letter Vans
 Four Pair-horse Letter Vans, new type
 Ten Single-horse Letter Vans
 Ten Single-horse Letter Carts
 Two Landaus
 Large Parcel Road Van, drawn by four horses
 A Royal Telegraph Van
 Two Pair-horse Parcel Vans
 Three Single-horse Parcel Vans
 Three Foreign and Colonial Parcel Vans
 Twelve Collecting Parcel Vans
 Large Parcel Van, two Horses, containing
 a Detachment of St. John's Ambulance
 Association
 The Tandem Double Tricycle

Four Single Tricycles, ridden by Postmen
 Two Landaus
 Four-in-Hand Royal Mail Coach
 London and Brighton Four-horse Mail Coach
 Three Pair-horse Suburban Letter Vans
 Nine Single-horse Suburban Mail Vans
 containing Telegraph Messengers
 Fire Engine, containing Post Office Volunteer
 Fire Brigade
 Two Char-a-Bancs, drawn by four horses
 each, containing Officials
 Post Office Volunteer Regimental Waggon
 Three Pair-horse Suburban Letter Vans
 Three Single-horse Suburban Letter Vans
 Ten Pair-horse Collecting and Delivery Vans
 A Landau
 Four-in-Hand Coach
 Mounted Police

The procession made a particularly brilliant appearance as it defiled down Cheapside, which was lined with people, as was indeed the entire route, the roadway being kept by police, mounted and on foot. The route followed was along Cornhill, Leadenhall Street, Aldersgate, Whitechapel Road, Mile-end Road, Grove Road, and so to Victoria Park.

The Park was crowded with people, the large grass space in the eastern portion being kept clear for the parade. The vehicles and men having proceeded along the main drive, debouched on to the reserve ground, and formed up in a circle, making a particularly fine effect as they passed the Postmaster-General, who took up his position at the centre of the circle. The drive past was accompanied by the music of the Volunteer Band. Afterwards the Postmaster-General briefly addressed the Contractors in a few complimentary words, and the men on the ground were supplied with refreshments. The procession set out on the return journey shortly after two o'clock.

G.P.O. PIGEONS

It is probably supposed by many passers-by that the flock of pigeons nearly always to be seen in the yard of the General Post Office, and which roost under the portico in St. Martin's-le-Grand, perform State service as carriers of messages. Such is not the case; but no doubt if necessity arose pigeons would be pressed into the Post Office service, as in Berlin, where there is a Carrier Pigeon Postal Establishment, and so be made to give a quid pro quo for the oats and beans dropped from the horses' nose-bags, on which they thrive as non-workers near a hive of the greatest industry.

PNEUMATIC TUBE

It may not be generally known that some years since a pneumatic tube was laid down between the General Post Office and the Euston Railway Terminus. This tube was used for the conveyance of mail bags between the two points. Several blockages however occurred, with the result that the mails were in several cases seriously delayed, and the use of the tube was therefore abandoned. If it could have been depended upon for safe transmission it would have been of great convenience to the Department, as the mail bags performed the journey in from 4 to 5 minutes, whereas by cart conveyance the time occupied is from 18 to 20 minutes. The tube is still in the bowels of the earth, and a company

tried to get the Post Office to co-operate with them in re-opening it for the purpose of running through it an electric railway. Nothing came, however, of the project.

PECULIARLY ADDRESSED LETTERS

As may be supposed, a great many letters sent by post are very imperfectly addressed, and puzzle the sorters greatly. The letters with the worst addresses find their way at the General Post Office to what is technically termed the "Blind Division". The experts, however, who deal with the letters have by no means lost their eyesight, but are quick of eye, acute in deciphering addresses, and possess a good knowledge of the out-of-the-way places in the kingdom. They have for reference 32 ponderous tomes containing 150,000 entries. These books have been compiled with great care, and are the result of many years patient gathering together of particulars of remote and little known places.

The addresses on letters passing through the Post are occasionally of a most amusing character. The following are some of the latest specimens :-

General postmaster

nr. Drinking Fountain

Aldersgate Street E.C.

Feran & Son

Obanvidok (Holborn Viaduct)

Richard Rogan

Ship In Hunger (Chipping Ongar)

Essex

Sur Genarell

Panselee our Queens

Privet Pus Keeper

Bucom Palus

F. Th.Secrtery of

War Chelsey Osbittle

London Queen

Vctorve

E.C. Chambers

Seaman H.M.S. Danae

Sarlaryhon Cape Carst

(Sierra Leone Carcel
Cape Coast Castle) or elce where

Many curious letters reach the headquarters of the London Postal Service from time to time. The following specimen is rather interesting : -

Jonathan Thomas

at Mrs Brown

90 lamas street

Jan.21st/91.

Sir

I let you know that that i am stopin here since yesterday and i thinking to stop here for a long time if i be alive

I Having a grate pain with indigestion and neiaralga since many years

I am yurs faithfully

Jonathan Thomas

late white hart

It was ascertained that the communication had reference to an annuity contract, and was therefore intended for another Controller.

WEIGHT OF MAILS

The mails despatched from London to the provinces by railway weigh 28,000 tons, and

those received in London 18,000 tons annually. Having regard to the vast number of letter bags which are made up yearly the Department is comparatively free from serious mis-sendings. The whole of the Southampton mail was once mis-sent to Sunderland, the correspondence having been enclosed in a Sunderland bag.

ANXIETIES OF DIRECTORS

By those unconnected with the Post Office Department it may be thought that because all the machinery appears to work so smoothly those who act as its conductors have no anxiety. Such is not the case, however, and many are no doubt devoutly thankful when for a short spell they get into the country away from the worries, excitement, and bustle of Post Office life of the present day.

The writer feels this especially when he finds himself at a secluded spot in Gloucestershire, in a district which is well and satisfactorily served by one old Postman, but which is far larger in area than the City of London, where 640,000 letters, &c. are delivered daily by 450 Postmen. The ancient messenger who delivers the letters has a helmpate who assists him in his capacity as Sub-Postmaster of the village. When the old fellow is away from home he thinks the Postal business suffers, and on being told that it took ten minutes for his better-half to give a certificate for a parcel tendered, and that that was not good sort of management, gravely but ungallantly replied, " Well. " E know, zur, thur be two zarts o' good - good for zummat and good for nothin' - well, " my old ooman, her be one of the good for nuthin' zart ". The old Post messenger is very decisive in all his actions. He has a natural repugnance to intoxicating liquors, and on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, he having discovered that a barrel of beer had been introduced for the refreshment of the wedding guests, took the opportunity over night of turning on the tap, and his " female folk " found when morning came that the beer had all run away. If his example were followed by a few (a very few it is pleasing to be able to say) of his confreres in London the discipline officers would have fewer cares and responsibilities.

It is not all in authority, however, who allow official cares to wear them out, and many can go through their 40 or 50 years of service. It is said that a late London Postmaster was asked by an Inquiry Commissioner what his age might be. The Postmaster, having a notion that the question probably had some reference to his being compulsorily retired, replied : - " My age is 68. My father lived till he was 95, and my mother till she was 94, both being in good health, and in possession of their faculties till the last. I hope to be similarly blessed." The Postmaster scored in that instance, and was allowed to go quietly on in the direction of completing 50 years of service.



FOREIGN MAILS

The rapid passages which we have now become accustomed to, especially on the Atlantic lines, where the Cunard, Inman, and other steamship companies are in very active competition, contrasts favourably with the speed of the swiftest boats of even twenty years ago. Whether the coming ocean vessels will have electricity as motive power, and supersede the steamers as effectually as those vessels did the old sailing ships, remains to be seen. Even now, as a result of the great speed attained by the Atlantic liners, it is possible for letters despatched from New York to be delivered in London within a week. This feat was accomplished for the first time in October last. The Inman steamer "City of New York" and the White Star liner "Teutonic" passed Sandy Hook at 7.35 am and 7.51 am respectively on Wednesday the 15th. October. Mails were carried by each vessel, those on board the "City of New York" numbering 392 sacks, and those on the "Teutonic" 31 sacks. The bulk of the mails was sent by the Inman steamer, as she was considered to be the faster vessel, while only correspondence specially addressed was forwarded by the "Teutonic". The White Star liner, however, made the quicker passage, and arrived off Roches Point at 12.45 p.m. on the 21st, or 1 hour 47 minutes in advance of her rival.

The mails were sent on from Queenstown by the 1.40 p.m. mail train, and reached London with the Irish mail at 6.50 a.m. on Wednesday the 22nd, in time for the correspondence to be distributed by the second delivery in the City and other town districts of London, and for the closed mails for the Continent to be forwarded by the first day mails. The mails conveyed by the "City of New York" were landed at Queenstown at 2.30 p.m., and every effort was made to overtake the "Teutonic's" mail by the employment of a special train to Dublin, a special boat to Holyhead, and a special train thence to Euston. By these means the mail reached London only 2 hours 18 minutes after that conveyed by the "Teutonic", and the letters, &c. fell into the next or third delivery throughout London, and the continental mails were forwarded by the second day mails at about 10.30 am. If this mail had been forwarded from Queenstown by the ordinary arrangements it would not have reached London until late in the day on Wednesday, and consequently letters, &c. would not have been in the hands of business men before 4 or 5 o'clock. A great gain in delivery was thus effected by the special means adopted by the steamship and railway companies interested.

The remarkable celerity with which the mails were carried will be more apparent when contrasted with the service by the North German liner "Verra", a first-class steamer, which left New York on the day before the other vessels, but did not reach Southampton until midday on the Wednesday, by which time the correspondence by the "Teutonic" and "City of New York" had been delivered in London.

An exceptionally quick exchange of correspondence between New York and London was effected on the Southampton route during the month of March 1889. The mails which left New York on Wednesday, the 13th of that month, reached London at 6 o'clock on the morning of Thursday the 21st, and the correspondence was included partly in the first and partly in the second delivery. Many letters were replied to by bankers and merchants in the City in time to be forwarded by the outgoing steamer "Trave", which left Southampton on the afternoon of that day and arrived at New York on the morning of Friday the 29th. It was possible, therefore, for the sender of a letter in New York, who posted his letter before 10.30 a.m. on the 13th, to have received his reply from London on the 29th. of the month, a period of exactly 16 days.

The record of a late despatch of foreign mails was, a quarter of a century since, regarded with pious horror by the Deputy Controllers, and many a glittering coin changed ownership between a certain Deputy Controller, who prided himself on never detaining the continental mail train, and "Old Steeve", the driver of a van to London Bridge terminus, the station of departure at that time. Truly Stephen earned his little vails, and imparted vitality, by means of his heavy whip, to the wretched animals (worn out old carriage horses) the mail cart contractor of that day was allowed to use.

The work has increased so much since those days that a corps of sorters is now fully occupied every night in a sorting carriage on the journey from London to Dover in sort-

ing letters, &c., which reach the Post Office too late to be included in the Foreign bags closed at headquarters.

The mis-sending of a foreign mail, which is very serious in its consequences, is not of frequent occurrence. Recently the registered letters for Wellington, New Zealand, were mis-sent in the registered letter bag for Yokohama. The despatching officer fortunately bethought himself of the mistake, and the error was put right at Brindisi by the officer travelling in charge of the Mail.

After a reduction in postage takes place it is usually found that, for a long time, people prepay their letters at the old rate. For instance, at the recent reduction of the rate to the Australian colonies to 2½d. per ½ oz., letters prepaid at the rate of 5d. were noticed for months afterwards. The Department takes especial care to fully advertise all changes of the kind, both in town and rural districts, but, strange to say, the residents in town are as backward in making themselves acquainted with the reduced rates as persons who live in remote rural districts. It cannot be that they are foolish, like the young lady, residing in the west of London, who was said by the "Globe" to have placed a 2½d. stamp instead of a 1d. stamp on a letter for Belgrave Square, giving as a reason that she had run out of her thick note paper and was obliged to use foreign paper and envelope.

Amusing incidents sometimes occur even in the dull business of sorting and despatching letters. One of the clerks of olden times, in accordance with the practice of "calling out" when the circulation of a letter was not known, amused his fellow workers by vociferating, "Barbadoes, without a county".

In days long gone by, after the despatch of the Continental Mails in the morning, the clerks could not leave the office on account of having to await the arrival of inward Mails. In the interval of thirty or forty minutes the clerks dispersed, some to lie down in the kitchen on the benches which for the nonce formed plank beds, but to those who had to be at their posts punctually at 5 a.m. they seemed veritable couches of down. Others more industrious went to the Colonial room to acquire a knowledge of the Colonial work, till scarcely one remained. The the call "French Mail", in the stentorian voice of the old messenger "Bunn", would resound through the office, and the chief officer would look about for his clerks. He would be seen rushing wildly to and fro, ejaculating as he went, "Where in the world have they got to? they are like a lot of (adjective) mice, they get into such holes and corners". The old chief officer, notwithstanding his outer crust of acerbity, was a good-hearted fellow, and rather enjoyed those clerk hunts, as it allowed him an opportunity of giving off some of his superfluous steam in the way of not choicely selected adjectives of superlative degree.



THE TRAVELLING POST OFFICE

The fatal apparatus accident which occurred at Watford in August last, and the consideration now being given to the means whereby the delivery and receipt of Mail Bags from and into trains running at express speed can be effected with less risk to human life, brings to mind this most useful adjunct of the Mail Service of the United Kingdom. But for the facilities it affords in enabling the Mails to be caught up by the trains as they sweep along at full speed the circulation of letters and newspapers would be very much less speedy. The Travelling Post Offices under the control of the London Postal Service run in the aggregate about 3,000,000 miles annually over the principal railway systems of Great Britain. About 1,800,000 miles, or three-fifths of the total distance transversed by the Mail Carriages, are run on the London and North Western Line, including the Caledonian Railway, about 270,000 miles on the Midland and North Eastern Lines, and nearly 300,000 miles on the Great Western Railway. The total number of letters, etc. dealt with in the Travelling Post Offices annually is about 210,000,000, besides about 4,000,000 parcels. The total number of apparatus stations in England, Scotland, and Wales is 220, and there are 355 Standards and 372 nets erected at these stations for the despatch and receipt of Mails. There are 44 carriages to which the apparatus nets are fixed. The number of exchanges of Mails daily from the station standards into the carriage nets is 516, and from the carriage to the stationery net it is 530. The total number of Mail Bags included in these exchanges is about 2,000. It rarely happens that a bag is missed or dropped. On an average about 110,000 letters, etc. a day are exchanged by the apparatus at a normal period, of which about 85,000, or nearly four-fifths, are sorted in the Mail carriages the remainder being sent direct in bags from one town to another through the medium of the Travelling Post Offices.

LONDON EXPRESS SERVICE

The Post Office Express Delivery of Letters and parcels, which was commenced recently, is now in operation at 150 District, Branch, and Receiving Post Offices in London; and at 750 Auxiliary Express Post Offices. Letters and parcels posted at the Auxiliary Offices are expressed from the moment of first reaching the Postmen's Office into which they are collected in ordinary course of post. As a rule the boys manage to find their way about tolerably well. The following are a few cases of long journeys performed, viz., from Leadenhall Street to Isleworth (12 miles) with a return service to Pall Mall; from Hampstead to Upper Norwood (12 miles); from Fleet Street to Gunnersbury (8 miles); and from Leadenhall Street to Putney (8 miles). Very many express letters are sent to medical men in Harley Street, Grosvenor Street, and other medical centres, and to solicitors, bankers and stockbrokers; but, as a class, editors of evening newspapers receive by far the largest number. Three-fourths of the services originate in the City, the Western and the Western Central Districts. The six Post Offices at which the most express business is transacted are : Threadneedle Street, Fleet Street, Cannon Street, Vere Street, St. Martins-le-Grand, and Leadenhall Street. The express articles handed in for delivery are more numerous between 10 a.m. and noon and between 6 and 7 p.m. than at other times of the day.

Among the many new departures taken by the Post Office of late years is a system, inaugurated in 1888, under which Private Letter Boxes for use during the night can be rented at London Post Offices, 10 in number, where a night staff is on duty, and where there is a delivery of letters to callers during the day. This arrangement was made to enable the public to obtain, as far as practicable, during the night letters which in the ordinary course of Post would not be delivered until the morning. Letters intended for such private box delivery at night have to be enclosed by the senders in red envelopes clearly marked in the upper left-hand corner " Special Private Box Night Delivery ". The system languished from the first, and is not now in a flourishing state.

MAIL BAGS

About 6,000 new mail bags are brought into use annually at a cost of 6,000£. Great difficulty is experienced in keeping the bags together, persons in and about the department using them to form soft seats, mats, to cover up fittings, to exclude draughts, or

to keep off the rain. Years ago the mails for many foreign countries and colonies were enclosed in leather bags which were very expensive. These bags were provided by the English Government, and it is needless to say that very many of them never found their way back to England. It was no unusual thing in the West Indian Islands to see the natives running about in leather breeches stencilled " London to Havana ", " London to Demerara ".

Mr. Mellersh, the late genial Sub-Controller of the Inland Branch, was wont to relate how on one occasion when he was out shooting at Constantinople, at the time of the Crimean War, he was accompanied by a smart keeper, clad in a green coat and white leather breeches. A bird having been shot the keeper ran forward to pick it up, and in stooping displayed on his nether garment the words " Admiral Boxer ", this being the name of the officer of the British Fleet to whose care the mails were forwarded.



THE PARCEL POST

The number of parcels delivered in London annually is 8,000,000, the rate of delivery per head of the population being $1 \frac{3}{5}$. They form 18 per cent. of all the parcels distributed in the United Kingdom. Of parcels collected in London 21 per cent. are for delivery in London itself.

The enumeration of London parcels for the Christmas week shows : posted 625,000, delivered 340,000, passing through 600,000, or 1,565,000 in all. This is three times the normal number. On the 23rd December 185,000 parcels were posted, that being the greatest number consigned to the parcel post on any one day since its establishment.

The men are strictly enjoined to exercise the greatest care in dealing with parcels, and to prevent, so far as lies in their power, any articles being soiled, torn, broken, or otherwise damaged. Throwing or pitching is prohibited, and treading upon parcels has to be avoided. Hat boxes, milliners' boxes, umbrellas, and fragile articles of all sorts, are kept apart from other parcels as far as possible, and carefully packed in baskets, protectors, or barrels, but never in bags. Heavy parcels are placed at the bottom of the baskets, or, if very large, in a separate receptacle.

Night mail parcel services by road are in operation between London and Oxford, Brighton, Ipswich, Chatham, Tunbridge Wells, Watford, and Hertford. The Chief services are carried on by means of four-in-hand coaches. The departures from London take place at 11.0 p.m., and the up coaches arrive in London at 5.0 a.m., in time for the parcels to be included in the first distribution. On the down journey about 21,000 parcels are conveyed weekly and on the up journey 10,000. Letter mails are forwarded by the parcel coaches, and an improved and accelerated cross post circulation has been thus afforded to towns on and off the main roads. At some towns the coaches afford a much later hour of posting letters for London than the train services.

These important additions to the road services have had the effect of bringing up the London parcels carried by road to 3,796,000 per annum, or over 75 per cent. of the total number kept off the railways in the United Kingdom, the full postage on which is retained by the Department.

The running of the parcel coaches is much affected by the autumn and winter mists and fogs, and by frosts, snowstorms and floods. When a thick fog sets in, the drivers are obliged to drive slowly and cautiously, and the guards often have to assist by walking in front with a lamp and leading the horses. Several casualties have occurred in the fog. A short time ago the Oxford coach was driven into a gutter near Maidenhead, and was overturned. Soon afterwards the Ipswich coach followed suit through the driver being unable to see his way, and driving off the road into a ditch, where the coach fell over on its side against the hedgerow. Fortunately the driver and guard escaped unhurt on each occasion, and the coaches sustained but very little damage. The parcel mails were, however, considerably delayed.

The Oxford Coach was overturned a second time. This occurred while proceeding down Punt Hill, near Maidenhead. The night was exceedingly dark and foggy. The guard went to the assistance of the coachman as soon as he could, and helped him to get out of the ditch into which he had been thrown. One horse was in the ditch, and was extricated with difficulty. The coach reached Oxford at 9.30 p.m. instead of at 8.30 a.m., but as the day was Sunday, no delay in delivery of parcels occurred.

The number of parcels collected from private houses by parcel vans en route, notwithstanding that " Call Cards " are given to the public by the Post Office, is at the rate of about 12,000 a year only.

High water mark in posting parcels in London was reached in April last, when 287,522 parcels were posted in one week, this being the highest number ever posted, except at Christmas.

Writing of the road the mind turns to sport. The knights of the gun will like to know

that 30,000 parcels of grouse now find their way to the metropolis annually by the agency of the Parcel Post.

The plan adopted by the department in running by road to Brighton and other places coaches wherein parcels are sorted en route has given an idea to at least one individual as to what can be done on the road, for a tradesman in the north of London has purchased an old Parcel Post Delivery Van, and fitted it up as a travelling oil shop, so that he can take wares of every description to his customers' very doors, and so save them the trouble of coming to him.

The Foreign and Colonial Parcel Post has proved a great success; over a million parcels are exchanged between the United Kingdom and other countries annually. It is a significant fact that the foreign outward parcel traffic has trebled itself since 1887, whereas the inward traffic has only increased twofold. The articles exchanged are very diversified. For instance, from Spain we get wines, minerals, fans, and tambourines, and we send to Spain, buttons, books, worsted, muslin, and laces. From Portugal, fans and silk scarves, and to that country, hats, dress material, books, cotton goods, stationery, and laces. From Roumania and Servia, cat gut, sacking, and minerals; to Roumania and Servia, hats, straw plait, and cotton laces. From Constantinople, cigar-ettes, clothing, and sweets; to Constantinople, fancy goods, drugs, woollens, clothing, stationery, and books.

An individual who has cause to be thankful that a Foreign Parcel service was undertaken by the Post Office is one of the passengers who was on board the Belgium Mail Steamer "Comtesse de Flandre" when she collided with the "Princess Henriette", and 15 of her crew and passengers were drowned, This fortunate passenger saved his life by means of an empty Parcel Post basket which happened to float near him when he rose to the surface from the submerged vessel.

The contents of all parcels for places abroad have to be declared on the outside of the covers. The description of contents given in the case of a parcel for Germany was "When in a parils". This was soon made out to mean "Wearing Apparel". A parcel of flowers was sent to this country by a florist at Nice, having for its address - "Hoping yourself and wife are all right, from your old pal, BOB ANDERSON". Probably the florist was not acquainted with the English language, and copied this from a letter thinking it was the address of his correspondent. The department was unable to find "Mr. Bob Anderson".

It was more successful, however, in another case of a flower parcel from France addressed to "Mons. Jacques, Yours truly". The name was known to be that of a florist in Covent Garden, and so it was possible for a delivery of the parcel to be effected.

When Customs duty is chargeable on parcels from abroad the Customs dues have to be paid by the addressee. Persons wishing to make presents to their friends in this country, often adopt the practice of sending their parcels to some relative or friend in order that he may pay the Customs fees, withdraw the original wrapper, replace the cigars, cigarettes, tobacco, or whatever the contents may be, in a fresh wrapper, and re-post the parcel, so that the persons for whom the presents are intended may not have to make any payment whatever.



POST OFFICE ORPHAN HOMES

Allusion to the Post Office Orphan Homes Institution cannot be omitted. It was founded in 1870, and since its formation has boarded, clothed, and educated 280 fatherless children, most of whom are now in respectable spheres of life. In many cases it has rescued even whole families from distress and destitution. There are no less than 125 orphan children of deceased members now on the funds of the institution who are being clothed, educated, well cared for and trained for the battle of life. The institution is open to the Sorting Force. A subscription of 5s. per annum constitutes membership. The institution is scarcely a charity, but rather a benefit society, the prospective benefits of which a member secures to his children by payment during his lifetime. The children on the funds are, as a rule, placed at private schools in the suburbs of London with certificated masters and mistresses, who are held under bond for the proper performance of the contract entered into. Each child on the funds is visited and examined quarterly by two members of the Committee of Management. The whole of the children are entertained twice a year, the cost being generously subscribed by the employés of the London Postal Service. In the summer they are taken into the country and regaled with dinner and tea; all kinds of sports are indulged in, and prizes awarded. At the beginning of each year the children and their mothers are made welcome at a tea, a musical entertainment is given, and a gigantic Christmas tree provided, from which each child receives a present.

The religious principles of the father are studied and provided for in every respect, therefore each child is trained in the belief of the deceased parent whatever his religious persuasion may have been. The children are placed at school at 5 years of age, and retained on the funds in the case of boys until they are 14, and girls till they are 15 years of age. They are allowed to visit their mothers or friends at specified holidays; in fact the children are in precisely the same position as they would have been if they had been placed at a private school by their own father during his lifetime.

The Postman who, while going to his duty one morning, discovered the dead body of a child, and who died from the shock, was a member of the institution, and the committee had the very great satisfaction of being able to relieve the bereaved mother of the care of three out of the five little ones left fatherless in so sad a manner. The three accepted children will be maintained at the rate of 25£. a year each from the date of acceptance. During his membership of the institute, the Postman had paid 10s. in the way of subscriptions. The cost of the maintenance of the children in the Home will be at least 500£. - not a bad way of effecting insurance.

In another case a Postman, when absent on annual leave, was one day taking part in the harvest operations then going on in the country. The unusual exertion caused him to rupture a vessel of the heart, and he died in the field without an hour's warning. Happily he also was a subscriber to the orphan homes, and three of his four children were provided for by the institute. Surely these are most striking illustrations of the benefits arising from membership of the Orphan Home Institution. To make provision for the widow and poor fatherless children is doing God's work, and men who will not pay 1d. a week to obtain for themselves the ever present consolation that in the event of their untimely death their children will not be left destitute, must be callous indeed to fail to recognise their duty in that direction. Such cases as those mentioned, and others which come under notice from time to time, call to them with trumpet tongues to arouse themselves from their lethargic slumber.

In this connection may be mentioned a case which illustrates the perils to which Postmen are exposed, and which emphasizes the necessity for them to make provision for those dependent on them. An auxiliary Postman, when making his midnight collection near the dock alleys in Rotherhithe on an intensely foggy night, came to some steps which he thought led to a bridge he had to cross, but which in reality led to the river. He fell into the water which was at high tide. He remained in considerable peril for a short time, but, providentially, two watermen heard the splash caused by his falling into the water and rescued him. Thus snatched from the jaws of death it would be imagined that the man would think seriously of those dependent upon him, but strange

to say he did not join the admirable institution.

A Postman attached to the Clapton Sub-District met with his death by having on a foggy night walked into the river Lea. He was a steady man with a good character, and it transpired at the inquest that the place was very dangerous. Unfortunately the Postman was not a contributor, and by his omission to pay about 1d. a week to this fund, his three orphan children could not be allowed the benefits of the Institution. The case evoked much sympathy; the Postmaster-General allowed the widow to receive her late husband's wages for some time, and a collection was made amongst the Postal staff, with the result that a sum of nearly 300£. was obtained for the poor woman. No better case could be cited to bring home to the minds of all Postmen in town and country the necessity of paying their 5s. a year, and so constituting themselves members of the Institution. It is grievous to think that although, under a change of rule, Auxiliary Postmen, 1600 in number, are now eligible, only 12 became Institution members in one year. During the year 1888, 12 Auxiliary Postmen died, leaving 41 children, of whom 12 were under 12 years of age. Not a single one of the deceased auxiliaries had subscribed to the fund.



CHRISTMAS AND OTHER SPECIAL
SEASONS

It may fairly be asserted that one of the minor wonders of the century is the diffusion through the agency of Her Majesty's Post Office of social greetings, cards, and presents at the Christmas season, numbering, with the ordinary correspondence, more in a few days than the missives in postal circulation throughout the whole of the first year after the introduction of the marvellous Penny Postage system, the Jubilee of which was so gloriously celebrated last year. What was accomplished in 1890 once more demonstrated that as the Postal service is one of the most powerful levers in the nation's progress at ordinary times, it can add vast enjoyment to the classes and masses by its quick and wide-spreading circulation on exceptional occasions. The busy and impressive scenes witnessed at the 1890 Christmas scene in the old General Post Office Building in St. Martin's-le-Grand, and the rapidly-developing Office for Parcels at Mount Pleasant, at the 200 District, Branch, and Sub Offices dotted over the Metropolis, and in the Travelling Post Offices running through the length and breadth of the country, were such that they could not well be dismissed, even temporarily, from the minds of those who in probable course would have to shape the arrangements for the season of 1890, and it may be said that the echoes of Christmas 1889 had scarcely died away ere preparations were commenced, and were going on all year, to put the Department in a position to undertake its great annual task, and to overcome all the difficulties inherent to it.

Primarily, attention had to be paid to the question of additional space. The Valentine has had its day; the Christmas card is still as popular as ever, but that, too, may in the near future cease to be a fashionable medium of conveying an expression of kindly feeling. Neither one nor the other, however, affected the question of space so much as the Christmas parcels. It must be expected that the parcel traffic will bring in its train year by year a greater task for the Post Office to accomplish. For parcel work to be satisfactorily and expeditiously got through, ample room in buildings and yards is a sine qua non.

The number of extra officers engaged was as follows : - Casual Men, 2,610; Telegraph Messengers, 558; Policemen, 716; Commissionaires, 166; the total being 4,050. It will readily be conceived what a boon temporary employment must have been to the casual men in the bitter weather which prevailed during the time they received pay from the Post Office. At the General Post Office 450 men were engaged who could give their whole time to the Department, and these men were kept going during the pressure from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Their assistance between the time of the morning force going off and its re-attendance for the evening duty was productive of the best results, and tended in no small degree to the letters being turned over and got rid of with regularity and rapidity.

Recently public opinion has directed itself to anomalies existing in regard to the charges for postal communication between this country and other parts of the empire, with the result that on the 1st January the postage on letters for nearly all British Colonies was reduced to 2½d. the half ounce. Especial prominence is therefore given to the particulars incidental to the Foreign Letter Mail intercommunications at the Christmas season. Notwithstanding that large posters were exhibited early in October on the Mail Vans and Carts, and at the principal Post Offices in London, warning the public as to Foreign posting dates, it was observed that a great many letters and parcels, evidently intended for delivery either at Christmas or the New Year, were posted too late to catch the proper Mails, causing, no doubt, much disappointment both to the senders and to the addressees. Very many puddings, pies, and other goodly fare of the kind would arrive at destination too late for consumption on Christmas Day. Scarcely had Christmas Day dawned before the " Post Early " notices, then no longer necessary, were removed from the Mail Vans and Carts, and those relating to " Reduction in Postage " on letters for India and the Colonies substituted, thus dismissing Christmas and directing the public mind to the important change then about to take place.

On an average 2,965 bags, containing 1,025,000 letters and other postal articles, are

despatched to the Continent weekly, but during the Christmas week the number of bags despatched was 3,216 and the number of letters 1,158,000.

The first outgoing Christmas Letter Mails were those for the Colony of New Zealand. The two fortnightly Mails affected took 186,534 letters, &c. between them, as against 171,185 despatched by the corresponding Mails last year, being an increase of about 9 per cent. The increase over two ordinary Mails was 35 per cent. The next principal Mails to be despatched were those for the Australian Colonies. The Mails sent by the All-Sea Route were not appreciably affected by the Christmas Cards, but by the Over-land Route, vis Brindisi, there was a considerable increase. The postal articles sent by the four weekly Australian Mails which took the Christmas and New Year's Cards rose from 609,234 last year to 671,791, being an increase of over 10 per cent. The increase over an ordinary period was 177,791 or 36 per cent. The heaviest Mail was carried by the P. and O. Company's steamer "Massilia", which took 622 Mail Bags, containing about 210,000 letters, &c., or nearly double the usual number. The Christmas and New Year's correspondence caused a very considerable addition to the Mails for India, China, and the East. The four Mails affected thereby consisted of 2,633 bags against 2,060 by four ordinary Mails, and 2,395 by the four corresponding Mails of last year. The total number of letters, &c. sent by the three Cape Mails which carried the bulk of the Christmas and New Year's Cards was 404,000, as against 270,000 sent by three ordinary Mails, being an increase of 134,000, or nearly 50 per cent. One Mail alone consisted of 280 bags, whereas 257 was the largest number sent by a single Mail at the last Christmas season. During the week ended the 13th December 1,455 bags in all were sent from London to the North American continent, being an increase of 259 on any previous record. The Christmas Mail for British Columbia was despatched from London on the 6th December, and took 2,350 letters, &c., as compared with 1,300 sent by an ordinary Mail.

Since the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway to Vancouver in June 1886 the transmission of the Mails for British Columbia has been greatly accelerated. The journey of 6,000 miles by sea and land is accomplished at the rate of 430 miles a day, so that the Christmas cards posted in London on the 6th December would be at their destination 4 or 5 days before the Christmas festival. It may be worthy of remark that the Christmas Mail for the Bermudas carried 3,000 letters as against about 2,000 the previous year, the comparatively large increase being no doubt attributable to a regiment of Her Majesty's Guards being stationed there. The Island of Madeira, the celebrated health resort, received nearly 2,000 additional letters by the Christmas Mail, a striking contrast to the very few missives of the kind which were sent to the fever stricken British Possessions on the west coast of Africa. About 8,000 more letters than usual were sent to the British naval and military stations, Gibraltar and Malta. As much public attention is now directed to the Congo Free State, the fact that to this vast region only about 260 letters are sent per ordinary Mail, and that the Christmas Mail took 329, and the New Year's Mail 340, may be interesting. Attention was recently called in the daily newspapers to the entry of the East African Company into the Universal Postal Union, and public curiosity was aroused by the fact that being mentioned that new postage stamps had been specially prepared for sale by the Company, to prepay correspondence from East Africa to other parts of the world. The letters from this country are sent to Monbasa and Lamu. By an ordinary Mail the letters, &c. for Mombasa number 240, but by the Mail of the 5th December, which fitted into the Christmas delivery, 550 letters, &c. were forwarded, and to Lamu 120 letters, &c. instead of the usual number of about 50. The inward Mails received from these places contained comparatively few letters, about 130 letters coming from Mombasa and 12 only from Lamu.

The five Mails for New Zealand, which were more or less affected by Christmas postings, took out 3,839 parcels, being an increase of 1,424 over an ordinary period. The heaviest Mail consisted of 1,016 parcels, or nearly three times as many as the usual number. The most important Parcel Mail despatched from this country is that for India. The Foreign and Colonial Parcel Post system was inaugurated with this Post, and it has always retained the first place in point of numbers. The parcels forwarded by the weekly mail to Bombay number 1,261. The Christmas Mail, which went out on the 26th November by the P. and O. steamer "Carthage", took 2,882 parcels, and the New Year's Mail despatched the following week 2,889 parcels. A still greater increase, however, took place in the

Mail despatched on the 10th December, which carried no less than 3,361 parcels, that being nearly three times the normal number. It was the heaviest Mail to India on record. There was a marked difference in the contents of the outward and inward colonial parcels. Those going out contained a great many Christmas cards, puddings, and other articles incidental to the season, but very few parcels of the kind were imported. Out of 1,142 parcels received from Bombay for the Christmas delivery in this country, only 29 contained Christmas cards.

As regards the Continental Parcel Traffic the increase was very marked. During the Christmas week the parcels numbered 20,230, that being an increase of 11,713 on a number of days at an ordinary period. The inward parcels rose from the usual weekly number of 4,970 to 11,800 for the Christmas week.

The fog, frost, and snow in the week preceding the Christmas season gave rise to the gloomiest apprehensions. The Mail Trains arrived from 1 to 3 hours behind time, and the services throughout London were dislocated. The drivers of the Mail Vans and Carts were in a benumbed condition. The horses were jaded and worn out owing to the slippery state of the streets and to the great strain caused by the heavy fall of snow; altogether it was difficult to look forward to the Christmas week with any degree of equanimity. The usual difficulties of the season were intensified from the fact that Monday, the 22nd December, when it was expected there would be considerable activity in the posting, was the blackest day of all the year, and private, and indeed business, posting was only carried on where absolutely unavoidable. The fog, the frost, and the snow combined had the effect of putting all the van arrangements out of gear. The horses, not recovered from the fatigue of the previous week, were not up to the mark to encounter the Christmas heavy work, and the contractors were at their wits' ends. So slippery were the roads that in the hilly districts of Highgate and Hampstead the Postmen had to meet the carts and carry the bags to the Sub-District Offices on their backs. The officers were tried by the fog. Indeed, one poor fellow suffering from bronchitis was so much affected by it that, after being seen by the Medical Officer, he was obliged to be taken home in a cab. The night Mail Trains from the several London termini were despatched very late.

Matters considerably brightened on Tuesday morning, the 23rd December, when the fog lifted, and the thoroughfares became passable. By about 3 o'clock in the day something like a restoration of ordinary working was achieved. The Christmas correspondence then poured into the Chief Office, there seeming no limit to the postings, and from that time it was a continuous struggle for the mastery. The work went on by night and day without intermission, and it was not until 7 o'clock on the morning of Christmas Day that the general sorting was finished. It was obvious that about nine out of every ten letters in circulation on the 24th December contained Christmas cards.

Vast as the preparations were, and large as was the extra force employed throughout London, not a single penny of the expenditure was thrown away.

The excess cards, letters, circulars, &c. dealt with in London during the season amounted to about 50,000,000, that is, about treble the normal numbers for one week, or nearly four letters at Christmas to one at an ordinary period.

The electric light, only recently installed, was used on the first and second floors at the General Post Office with excellent results, the atmosphere in the Sorting Offices having been rendered much purer than before, and the large force massed in the several offices enabled to work in far greater comfort than heretofore. The Superintending Officers and Staff were alike loud in its praises. The Sorters certainly performed their duty far better than they had done before, and that was attributed to the fact of the improved atmosphere. The benefit of the electric light was especially felt on the outside platforms and in the yards where the Mail Vans are loaded and unloaded. The brilliant light shed by the large arc lamps admitted of the labelling of the bags being easily read. It also materially assisted the work of marshalling vans and in preventing congestion of traffic. As a consequence, the Mails were placed in and taken out of the vans, even at the busiest times, with less confusion and with greater

celerity than on any former occasion.

The business transacted at the counters was far in excess of that of any previous year. Taking the three days immediately preceding Christmas Day, the number of transactions, excluding the sale of stamps, was 18 per cent. more than last year, and about 66 per cent. more than in ordinary. A similar comparison shows an increase of 60 per cent. over the usual sale of stamps. But even this large increase in transactions and sales does not fully indicate the extra work involved. The stamp sales were largely made up of very small purchases, and these involve as much work individually as large ones. Thousands of demands were made for single stamps, and the numbers of inquiries and requests to weigh letters was much higher proportionately than at ordinary times. At many offices on the busiest days the number of parcels handed in was seven or eight times as many as usual, and the number of Postal Orders and Registered Letters from four to five times as many. There was a constant stream of people at the counters from early morning till late evening, and many offices were crowded to the doors for hours together.

An incident of the season was that the Finsbury Park Branch Office was in imminent danger of being burnt down on the morning of the 24th December. The adjoining shop took fire and was soon burnt out. It was feared that the Branch Office would suffer the same fate, but happily this was averted by the efforts of the fire brigade.

At the Hammersmith temporary "Booth" - for parcel duty - gas, which was relied upon both for light and warmth, could not be obtained as the pipes could not be laid during the frost. The Office of Works, however, promptly supplied oil lamps and coal stoves, with which the Staff made shift.

At midnight, when the work was at its height in St. Martin's-le-Grand, there was an accident to one of the three lifts which are used in carrying the mails and correspondence from floor to floor. A man dropped a small bundle of bags on the tray of the lift, and this bundle became firmly jammed into the ironwork, the effect being that one of the chains snapped. Fortunately no one was injured, but the loss of the use of the lift at such a time was seriously felt.

It is evident that the public now place great confidence in the parcel arrangements of the Post Office, for although there is free-trade in parcel carrying, yet the increase in the Parcel Traffic of the Christmas season shows nearly as great an expansion as in the Letter Service. The troubles spoken of as caused by the adverse elements to the Letter Service affected the Parcel Service also, but in a more marked degree. The fog in the east end was so dense that the Mail Cart drivers could not see their horses' heads. The guard who accompanied the Indian and Australian Parcel Mails to the docks had the utmost difficulty in finding the ship.

The van arrangements were entirely upset by the late arrival of trains. Vans were kept waiting at stations for hours, and had in many cases to be driven off to perform other services. The same thing happened with the force. Men were up all night at the stations with little to do, and when they had gone home to rest, and the trains arrived, the platforms were crowded with baskets for a time with scarcely any one to touch them, and with few vans to carry them away.

The scene at the Mount Pleasant Parcel Office from the 23rd December was a most remarkable one. The very large premises and the temporary sheds erected for the occasion were literally choked with parcels of all shapes and sizes, the contents of which were of a most miscellaneous character. The baskets, bag protectors, barrels, and other receptacles were opened as rapidly as possible, but notwithstanding this there was scarcely room to move in any part of the building. At 5 p.m. on the 24th December so numerous were the parcels that it seemed as though it would be a matter of impossibility to clear the office for many days. As parcels disappeared others came in. On Christmas morning it was evident that the vast accumulation of parcels could not be cleared off by the tired and worn out men who had been on duty for 24 hours, and it became necessary to disperse the force, which was done at noon. When the order was given for all the men to break off and to resume their labours at midnight, there was

a cheer, showing that the men were animated with British pluck, and ready to recommence the struggle after a little rest. By noon on the 26th (Boxing Day) the accumulation was disposed of.

The men going off duty on the 24th at noon could not be allowed their 12 hours' rest, and had to resume duty at 7 p.m. Three of these persons, mere lads, who lived at long distances from the office, had improvised beds for themselves in the booths erected for refreshment purposes. They had no soft couches, but had made cribs of large parcel baskets which they had filled with straw from the floor, and mail bags had to serve as sheets, blankets, and counterpanes.

On the morning of Boxing Day the bread supply at the Mount Pleasant refreshment room was exhausted, and the neighbourhood was scoured to find a baker's shop open in order to get bread for breakfast. After a long search a German baker in Leather Lane was discovered in the act of drawing his bread from the oven, and his whole stock was secured.

The valentine has nearly had its day. Missives of this description in London have dropped from 3,000,000 in 1883 to 320,000 in 1891, and of the latter about 15,000 circulated by the Parcel Post system.

Easter cards are gaining in public favour. The number circulating within London bounds in 1890 was about 700,000 as against 520,000 in 1889. Christmas cards dealt with in London have, as already stated, reached the prodigious number of 50,000,000. And now the commemoration of another festival has to be watched in its effect on postal duties, that of Primrose Day. This year the delivery of Primrose parcels by Letter and Parcel Post was 55,000, or about double the number in 1886. Of these, over 3,000 were brought into London by the Brighton Parcel Coach. A facetious individual thought he could ensure early delivery of a Christmas card by appealing to the cupidity of the Postman, and thus prefaced the address of his letter :

Now, minion of the G.P.O.
Quickly to my friends please go,
And give this letter straight;
They answer all the Postman's knocks
And give to him a Christmas box,
So mind you are not late.

As 1890 was the Jubilee year of the Uniform Penny Postage system the event was celebrated by a Grand Conversazione and Exhibition at the Guildhall.

In the belief that this celebration, carried out under the kindly auspices of the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City of London, will be of historical interest to those connected with the great Post Office Service of the country, a short account with respect to the Postal Branch of the Exhibition will not be out of place here.

Full arrangements were made for exemplifying to the citizens of London the methods adopted in dealing with their letters in the Post, and of demonstrating to them the modes in which Money Order, Savings Bank, Postal Order, and other branches of business are carried on.

The pressure of business at the Guildhall Post Office, 1890, specially opened for the occasion ; the rapidity with which the sorting work had to be performed in the Postal Sorting Office ; and the crowds surging round the barriers, likened the Exhibition, from a Post Office point of view, to the busy scenes which are enacted at the General Post Office in St.Martin's-le-Grand on Christmas Eve.

Telegrams kept reaching the Chief Office from the Guildhall, such as : " Immense crowd here ; work very heavy, but going on satisfactorily. " " Run on Post Card, Money Order, and Savings Bank Business very great." " Another long table placed in passage for public to write upon."

Giving, in these remarks, the place of honour to the Guildhall Post Office, 1890, and not wishing thereby in any way to detract from the prestige of the neighbouring picturesque representation of Postal antiquity - the Post Office of 1790 - it is but echoing the opinions expressed by the visitors, private and official, to say that no part of the entertainment gave greater satisfaction or was more extensively patronised than the Jubilee Post Office. The Office was literally besieged from first to last, but the beleaguered Staff were enabled to keep up communication with the Head Quarters Staff in the Postal Sorting Office by means of a speaking tube, and thus to get their wants attended to. At the Office about 5,000 of the Jubilee Letter Cards were disposed of on the night of the *Conversazione*, the remainder having been sold at four other points in the building. When it was announced at 10 pm. that these cards were sold out, a run immediately took place on ordinary Post Cards. In all 20,508 were sold. Of these 19,300 were Inland Cards, and 1,208 such as are used for the Foreign Service. These cards were chiefly sold singly, and it can be imagined, therefore, how quick the Staff had to be in giving them out. As the visitors are said to have been 20,000, each person on the average must have bought one Post Card for the purpose of getting an impression of the special Guildhall Jubilee Obliterating and Post Marketing Stamp.

As the stock of Post Cards, Inland and Foreign, became exhausted, notwithstanding that all the Branch Post Offices in the neighbourhood were requisitioned for further supplies, a demand set in for Embossed Envelopes and Registered Letter Envelopes, of which 452 were sold. The excitement was further sustained by the numerous purchases of postage stamps, 1,140 at a half-penny, 1,920 at a penny, and, amongst others, one at 1£ and one at 5£ having been sold. The number of stamps vended reached a total of 3,845. Postal Orders were also in great demand. Of these 180 were taken; 134 of them representing amounts of 1s., 1s.6d., and 2s. Then 365 Money Orders were issued, the majority being for 1d. The Exhibition did good in the way of encouraging thrift, for actually 200 new Accounts were opened, and 134 Deposits effected. Evidently the visitors were in funds, for only two withdrawals were made.

The catalogue of business is not yet exhausted, for it has to be added that 38 Letters and Post Cards were registered. Receipts were refused in some cases by the senders of the registered articles. Three Licences were issued, 12 Parcels posted, and, what was not anticipated, 400 Letters and Cards were received for delivery from the *Poste Restante*. A Reply Card, addressed to the Guildhall Post Office, came to hand, inscribed "Have come many miles; cannot get in. Please post reply half of Card, and oblige - Disappointed." To end the account, there were 422 Telegraph Messages sent and 37 delivered. That was exclusive of 207 Official Messages. Between 8 p.m. and midnight on the 16th, 135 private Telegrams passed over the wires. In addition to all the actual business transactions enumerated, the Staff had to answer very numerous questions, and even to serve people, who could not get near the counter, over the heads of others.

They did their best to please the public by impressing the Jubilee Stamp on catalogues, envelopes, address cards, pieces of paper, Telegraph forms - a penny per impression, for the benefit of the Rowland Hill Fund, was frequently offered. In this connexion a humorous incident occurred. A young gentleman begged that he might have, for his accompanying lady to keep, an impression of the stamp, and on handing in a paper for the impression, he was horrified to find that he had presented his unpaid tailor's bill. He retired somewhat abashed. A young lady was extremely anxious to get an impression of the stamp on two pocket handkerchiefs. She was obliged.

Overwhelmed as the Staff was, one old lady having affixed a 10d. stamp to a card, returned to the counter, saying that she had lost the card, and asked that the card drawer might be gone through with a view to its being found. Another asked that a Telegram might be written out for her.

As the Postal Sorting Office great interest was manifested in the Stamping, Sortation, and Despatching of Letters. Not only was this the case as regards the general public, but our Sorters and Postmen took great delight in explaining the several processes

to their wives and children. The Postmen's coats with their red collars and the uniforms of the Mail Cart Drivers, were more in evidence at this section of the Exhibition than elsewhere. The records indicate that Letters, &c., to the number of 190,000 in all, were stamped, sorted, and despatched from the Postal Sorting Office in the three days. Of these, 40,000 were actually written and posted in the Guildhall itself. From a special observation which was kept it was found that 10,000 letters and cards thus written were posted in the four Jubilee boxes in two hours. Persons who could not gain admission to the Hall sent messages in to inquire in what City boxes they could post so as to secure an impression of the Guildhall Stamp. A person asked one of the officials where he could post the Jubilee Card he had in his hand. When asked to where it was addressed, he replied, "Oh! Sir, I quite forgot that." He had written his communication on the obverse side of the card and omitted to address it. The card was then addressed on the reverse side, and no doubt reached its destination in due course. Several letters were noticed in the Postal Sorting Office which had been through the post in the year 1840, and bore the 1d. gummed and cut stamp of that time. Penny stamps as now in use had been placed upon the letters, and they were committed to the Post for delivery at the old address, thus to form a connexion between 1840 and 1890 by means of the respective dated stamps of the two periods. A tradesman in Cheapside posted in the Guildhall Pillar Letter Boxes 250 open envelopes addressed to himself. They bore $\frac{1}{2}$ d. postage labels. No doubt the object was, by getting the Guildhall Jubilee Stamp upon them, to render them valuable for the purpose of sale to Stamp Collectors.

A visitor, fired with enthusiasm at the Postal Jubilee, or with a view to future profit, purchased Postage Stamps of each denomination and stuck them on envelopes addressed to himself at the West End. Even the 5£ stamp was not omitted. Fortunately the Letters were noticed on being taken out of the Guildhall Letter Boxes, and they were sent to the Postmaster of the District for special delivery. Another visitor was very persistent in a demand for a sight of the first London Post Office which, he stoutly maintained, was a bag said to have been the only receptacle for the posting of letters in Westminster during the reign of King Charles I. He had read in the "Daily Telegraph" that such a bag was in existence. There was great difficulty in making him believe that it was not on show in the exhibition.

It may be mentioned that a Jubilee Card posted in the Western Central District with a piece of blotting-paper round it to keep it clean reached its destination at Derby with the blotting-paper still round it, and was thus delivered. On the sender reaching Derby he asked whether the card had been received, and was told "No;" but on instituting inquiry it turned out that the card, enclosed in the blotting-paper, was delivered into the box with letters, which was not looked into until the sender's inquiry was made. A considerable number of Jubilee Cards were addressed to places abroad, principally to France and Germany. About a dozen were addressed to Australia.

The old Post Office of 1790 came in for a good share of the visitors' appreciation and surprise. Their interest was increased when it was found that the old and curious notices exhibited were original. Many assumed that the notices were, like the erection itself, only prepared for the occasion. The sight of the two Post Offices - 1790 and 1890 - side by side attracted much attention and gave a point to Postal progress. In the Art Galleries the Mail Bag Apparatus excited absorbing interest and astonishment amongst the public. Visitors seemed most anxious to thoroughly master the details of the arrangements, and many and various were the questions asked respecting them. The models of Travelling Post Office carriages and the apparatus attached thereto were worked many hundreds of times, so great was the interest taken in these exhibits, and so anxious were the visitors to know how Mail Bags could be taken in and put out of a train going at the rate of 50 miles an hour.

The Book of Curious Addresses, which was exhibited in the Art Gallery, proved to be a source of great interest. It contains a certain penny postage label, bearing an address on its reverse side, which had once safely circulated through the Post. The effect of the exhibition of this stamp was that persons tried the experiment by post - ing addressed Postage Stamps at the Exhibition and elsewhere.

Out side the building the " Wonder " Coach attracted much attention. It was supposed by not a few that a service of Coaches had been re-established between London and Edinburgh.

The Uniform Penny Postage Jubilee was further celebrated by a Grand Conversazione at South Kensington Museum, under the most gracious patronage of Her Majesty the Queen, and their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh were present.

In this great function the London Postal Service bore its part, but the work of preparation was of a somewhat difficult character, as the fittings to be used for the illustration of postal work had to be brought from the Wimbledon Post Office (just then about to be opened) to South Kensington by road, a distance of about 7 miles. The fitting up of the Sorting Office had to be done under most adverse circumstances. The time allowed to do the work in was very limited, and great care had to be exercised in carrying the large sorting tables and the long and cumbrous counter through the Museum, crowded as it is with glass cases and extremely fragile articles.

Outside the Museum it might have been supposed that the General Post Office had been temporarily removed to the west end, for the Postmen flitting to and fro, the Mail Vans and Carts with lighted lamps, the Mail Coaches typical of bye-gone time, and the Parcel Coaches starting for Brighton, for Ipswich, and for Oxford, lent a realistic character to the scene, and suggested the idea that perhaps 50 years hence it would be necessary to have in the immediate vicinity of the Museum a Post Office equal in size to the old building at St. Martin's-le-Grand. The teams turned out on the occasion by Messrs. Birch, Webster, and McNamara & Co. were greatly admired. As regards the interior of the building, the Postal Sorting Office was the first object of interest which came under the notice of the Royal visitors in the line of procession. It was situated in the Architectural Court, and measured 27 feet by 22 feet. In this small space the letters, &c., which were faced, stamped, sorted and despatched, consisted of collections from 13 receiving houses, 32 pillar boxes, and 3 wall boxes outside the Museum. There were seven posting boxes within the Museum walls, and during the Conersazione visitors used them freely ; indeed there could have been few persons present who did not consider their mailing arrangements one of the features of the evening. Altogether 23,200 of the Jubilee envelopes specially prepared for sale on the Conversazione day only, were posted in the Museum and dealt with at the Postal Sorting Office, besides 5,700 ordinary letters, and 6,700 ordinary post cards. Many persons retained the Jubilee envelopes, and posted the inside correspondence cards which in many instances were not prepaid, and had consequently to be surcharged 2d. each ; the charges raised in this way amounting to over 5£. Other of the correspondence cards bore halfpenny instead of penny stamps, and some had stamps of excessive value affixed to them on the front or back. Many letters previously posted and bearing ancient dates, several of the year 1839, were, as at Guildhall, posted again to obtain the impression of the special South Kensington Jubilee Stamps. Some of the Guildhall Jubilee cards were used again in this way. Many rare stamps, both adhesive and embossed were brought for the same purpose. Amongst them were six of the old black stamps, and two of the original Mulready envelopes. In the Postal Sorting Office, and under a full-sized model of a splendid pulpit, a Post by pneumatic tube was carried on, and in connection with it a Poste Restante was established.

Ordinary communications sent through the tube were charged at the rate of 1d. each. For replies (the questions being chiefly on postal subjects) by tube letter, 3d. each was charged. The Public Post and Telegraph Office at the Guildhall Conversazione had for its guardians the grim giants Gog and Magog, but at the South Kensington Museum the young ladies who presided at the postal counter in the Architectural Court had above them a statue of a more noble kind, that of David. This office received a larger share of patronage than any other part of the Exhibition, and for a time locomotion near it was almost impossible. Each visitor on the average bought two envelopes or post cards, and that probably for the purpose of getting impressions of the special South Kensington Jubilee obliterating and post marking stamp, as the envelopes were procurable throughout the day at all London Post Offices. Indeed, it is evident that the impression of the stamp was considered a desideratum, for nearly 20,000 more Jubilee envelopes were posted in the Museum than were actually sold in it. Considerable interest was taken in the curious Address Books, and the splendid show of for -

eign postage stamps. Some of the designs in which the postage stamps had been arranged were much admired by the visitors. Several country Postmen were noticed taking particular interest in everything that was to be seen and heard. One man, who had been in the service of the Department 38 years, travelled all the way from Cornwall to be present, and others came from far off places, such as Morpeth and Durham, bringing their wives with them.

Perhaps the most strange visitors were several babies in arms who were being carried about the Museum. The fond parents hoped that at the Centenary of the Uniform Penny Postage System their children would be able to say that they were present at its Jubilee. The success of the *Conversazione*, which depended in no small degree on the attractive exhibits, leads to the suggestion that the time has arrived to commence the establishment of a permanent Post Office Museum.

The Jubilee envelopes in connexion with this *Conversazione* at South Kensington, of the face value of 1d., were sold at the rate of 1s. each. At the Head District Branch, and Receiving Offices in London, 148,830 were disposed of, producing a gross amount of 7,441£.10s. Of this amount the noble sum of 6,821£.7s.6d went to swell the revenue of the Rowland Hill Benevolent Fund.



CHAPTER XII
INSTITUTES.

The Institutes and Night Classes were originated to counteract the pernicious influences to which the boy servants of the Department are exposed. They are in no way under official control, and are carried on by the Postmasters and their officers as a labour of love. The first Institute was formed at Paddington about 14 years ago ; this was succeeded three years afterwards by another in the Western Central District, and the six others were established at various subsequent dates. When these efforts were commenced the Institutes were formed only as a means of giving opportunities for reading and recreation under suitable circumstances after the labours of the day were over, and to this end a room at each office, or in each district, was set apart and provided with newspapers, periodicals and games for the use of the members. As the work developed evening classes were started, and experience has shown that this is the part of the scheme which is most valued and produces the best results.

The Paddington Institute has recently entered upon a new phase of its existence. It was formerly conducted in a room in the basement of the Paddington District Office, but some ladies and gentlemen in the neighbourhood have interested themselves in the boys, and have taken much larger premises near the Edgware Road Station. All the Telegraph messengers in the Paddington District and in the Western District are eligible for membership. The Institute is worked under the auspices of the Postal and Telegraph Christian Association.

Out of 1,628 boys eligible for membership about half avail themselves of the advantages which the Institutes offer.

Educational work is now forming the strongest point of the Institutes, and the principal subjects of instruction are handwriting, reading, arithmetic, geography, drawing, grammar, and English composition. The beneficial results of the teaching may be seen from the fact that out of the members of the classes who were subjected to examination by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, 13/16ths succeeded in passing in the standards in which they were presented, and that the Inspectors reported in favourable terms upon the discipline maintained by the teachers and the behaviour and intelligence of the lads. Generally speaking, the teachers of the classes endeavour to direct their pupils' attention to those subjects of education in which they have to be examined as candidates for higher or adult appointments. They also train the youths with a view to their becoming more useful and efficient servants of the Department. Without such means of keeping up and improving their education after leaving school, many a lad would probably forget much of what they had learned, and the effect of this would of course be detrimental to himself and disadvantages to the Department. Besides the secular educational classes, other classes are held for the study of the Scriptures, and are taught by benevolent ladies and gentlemen. These have been productive of very much good.

Sir Arthur Blackwood, as is well known, takes the deepest interest in the Institutes, and is their President-in-Chief. His words at one of the Annual Meetings so well describe the need for the Institutes that they will be read with interest.

He said : " Our boys form a very important part of this generation. They will be men soon, and be OUR future men. That is becoming more and more the case in the Post Office service, for, as you know, entering as Telegraph Messengers, they may become, if not Postmaster-General, at any rate officers of different ranks. They will be the men of the service of a succeeding day. Therefore it is of very great importance, both on their own account and on that of the service, that we should take into consideration the welfare, moral, mental, physical, aye, and spiritual, too, of our boys. In other departments of the service of the Crown and State does look after its boys. In the Army and Navy the younger members of the service are always under the care and in the hands of the authorities, but such is not the case in the Post Office. The servants of the Post Office, when they have done their day's duty, have nothing to do with the office. Many will say, and quite rightly too, that whatever concerns you in other hours is altogether a matter for yourselves. So it is, but, at the same time, having a very large number of youngsters under the influence of the Department, employed in it day after day and year after year, we almost inevitably become in a sense

responsible for the influence which is brought to bear upon them, not only in hours of service, but also at other times. As, therefore, the State or Government itself, cannot with propriety take up the work of caring for the moral or mental interests of its younger employes any more than it does for its older ones, private enterprise and energy are left to fill the void. I am thankful to say that void is filled in London to a great extent by the continued labours of officers of the Department, who have done what they could to help the lads out of office hours in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and to put them in the way of fitting themselves for obtaining higher posts than they now occupy."

The Telegraph Messengers' libraries are well patronized, there being 6,234 members. The libraries consist of 7,300 volumes, and the number of exchanges during the year is 30,000. The Government Inspectors who conduct the Institute examinations express the opinion that the boys evidently profit by the excellent libraries provided for their use, and fully avail themselves of the opportunities afforded them of reading good books.

It is fortunate for the Service that the Postmasters, their immediate staff, and other officers directly responsible for the maintenance of discipline, are so much concerned for the physical, moral, and mental improvement of the lads. The attempts which have been made have, on the whole, been attended with encouraging results.

The expenses incurred in carrying on the work of the Institutes amounted during the year 1889 - 90 to 300£.

The income of the Institutes is raised generally in the following manner. The lads themselves contribute about one-third of it, and, by undergoing examination by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, aid in adding nearly one-fourth more. The remainder is obtained by donations and subscriptions, by concerts, and Treasury grants to the library funds.

When the gentlemen who act as District Postmasters are doing so much in this direction, and when officers in charge of Branch Post Offices are giving their valuable aid, it behoves the writer to contribute his mite of labour, and this little volume is therefore sent out on its mission in the earnest hope that it may aid in the good work in the way of providing funds.



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Further particulars will be furnished on application, either personally or by letter, to the Secretary, at the Society's office, 17, Giltspur Street, Newgate Street, E.C.

