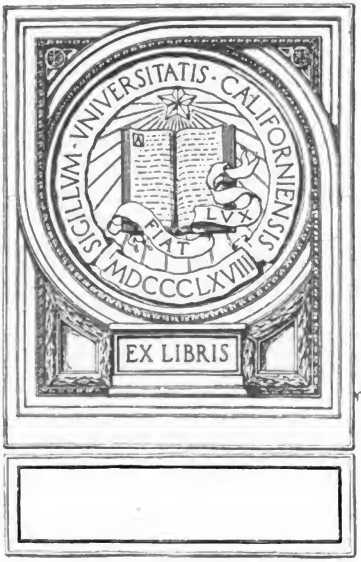
The history of the British post office

Joseph Clarence Hemmeon



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THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE

BY

J. C. HEMMEON, PH.D.

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PREFACE

In justice to those principles which influenced the policy of the Post Office before the introduction of penny postage, it is perhaps unnecessary to call attention to the fact that no opinion as to their desirability or otherwise is justifiable which does not take into consideration the conditions and prejudices which then prevailed. Some of the earlier writers on the Post Office have made the mistake of condemning everything which has not satisfied the measure of their own particular rule. If there is anything that the historical treatment of a subject teaches the investigator it is an appreciation of the fact that different conditions call for different methods of treatment. For example, the introduction of cheap postage was possibly delayed too long. But during the era of high postal rates a large net revenue was of primary importance, nor were those conditions present which would have made low rates a success.

The consideration of such debatable subjects as the telegraph system of the Postal Department and the department's attitude toward the telephone companies, as well as the intention of the Post Office to acquire the business of the latter, must necessarily give rise to controversy. Thanks to the magnificent net revenue obtained from letters in the United Kingdom the department has been able to lose a good deal of money by the extension of its activities into the realm of affairs not purely postal. Possibly a *democratic* type of government should, from the financial point of view, interfere least in the direct management of economic institutions, on account of the pressure which can easily be brought to bear upon it for the extension of such institutions on other than economic grounds. If non-economic principles are to be substituted in justifying the initiation or increase of government ownership, a popular form of government seems the least suitable for the presentation of such as shall be fair to all concerned, not to mention the difficult problem of dealing with those members of the civil service who do

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not hesitate to make use of their political power to enforce their demands upon the government.

In the treatment of a subject so complex as the history of the British Post Office it is not easy to decide how far its presentation should be strictly chronological or how far it should be mounted in "longitudinal sections," exposing its most salient features. Both methods have their advantages and their disadvantages. In order to obtain what is useful in both, I have described chronologically in the first four chapters the progress of the Post Office, while in the remaining chapters I have examined separately some of the more important aspects of postal development. But I am aware that by this compromise I have not entirely escaped the dangers of abrupt transitions from subject to subject and of the accumulation of dry details. I can only plead in extenuation, in the first place the nature of my subject, an institution with a long and varied history, characterized by the steady extension of its field of activity, and in the second place my desire to make my study as thorough as possible, even at the risk of some sacrifice of unity and interest of treatment.

The material for this sketch has been obtained from the Harvard University Library, the Boston Public Library, and the Canadian Parliamentary Library. Work was also done in the Library of the British Museum. I wish to acknowledge the help I have received from the advice and criticism of Professor Gay, under whose supervision the larger part of this history was prepared.

J. C. HEMMEON.

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Acc. & P.	Accounts and Papers.
A. P. C.	Acts of the Privy Council.
Add.	Additional.
Cal. B. P.	Calendar of Border Papers.
Cal. S. P.	Calendar of State Papers. A. & W. I., Col., D., For., and Ire., added to Cal. S. P., indicate respectively the America and West Indies, Colonial, Domestic, Foreign, and Ireland sections of this series.
Cal. T. B.	Calendar of Treasury Books.
Cal. T. P.	Calendar of Treasury Papers.
Cal. T. B. & P.	Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers.
D. N. B.	Dictionary of National Biography.
Fin. Rep., 1797.	Finance Reports, 1797–98.
Hist. MSS. Com.	Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts.
Jo. H. C.	Journals of the House of Commons.
Jo. H. L.	Journals of the House of Lords.
Joyce.	Joyce, H. The History of the Post Office to 1836.
L. & P. Hen. VIII.	Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII.
Parl. Deb.	Hansard, Parliamentary Debates.
Parl. Papers.	Parliamentary Papers.
P. & O. P. C.	Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council.
Rep. Commrs.	Reports from Commissioners.
Rep. Com.	Reports from Committees.
Rep. P. G.	Reports of the Postmasters-General.
Scobell, Collect.	Scobell, H. A Collection of Acts and Ordinances made in the Parliament held 3 Nov., 1640 to 17 Sept., 1656.

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THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE

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THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE

CHAPTER I

THE POSTAL ESTABLISHMENT SUPPORTED DIRECTLY BY THE STATE

THE history of the British Post Office starts with the beginning of the sixteenth century. Long before this, however, a system of communication had been established both for the personal use of the King and for the conveyance of official letters and documents. These continued to be the principal functions of the royal posts until well on in the seventeenth century.

Before the sixteenth century, postal communications were carried on by royal messengers. These messengers either received stated wages or were paid according to the length of the journeys they made. We find them mentioned as early as the reign of King John under the name of *nuncii* or *cursores;* and payments to them form a large item in the Household and Wardrobe accounts of the King as early as these accounts exist.[1] They travelled the whole of the journey themselves and delivered their letters personally to the people to whom they were directed. A somewhat different style of postal service, a precursor of the modern method, was inaugurated by the fourth Edward. During the war with Scotland he found himself in need of a speedier and better system of communication between the seat of war and the seat of government. He accomplished this by placing horses at intervals of twenty miles along the great road between England and Scotland. By so doing his messengers were able to take up fresh horses along the way and his despatches were carried at the rate of a hundred miles a day.[2]

From an early period private letters were conveyed by carriers

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 21.

[2] *Notes and Queries*, 1st series, iii, p. 266.

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and travellers both within the kingdom and between it and the Continent. The Paston letters,[1] containing the correspondence of the different members of the Paston family, throw some light upon the manner in which letters were conveyed during the latter half of the fifteenth century. Judging from such references as we find in the letters themselves, they were generally carried by a servant,[2] a messenger,[3] or a friend.[4] The later letters of this series, written towards the close of the fifteenth century, show that regular messengers and carriers, who carried letters and parcels, travelled between London and Norwich and other parts of Norfolk.[5] From the fourteenth century down, we have instances of writs being issued to mayors, sheriffs, and bailiffs for the apprehension and examination of travellers, who were suspected of conveying treasonable correspondence between England and the Continent.[6] For the most part these letters were carried by servants, messengers, and merchants.[7]

Sir Brian Tuke is the first English Postmaster-General of whom we have any record. The King's "Book of Payments" for the year 1512 contains an order for the payment of £100 to Sir Brian for his use as Master of the Posts.[8] As the King's appointed Postmaster, he received a salary of £66 13*s.* 4*d.*[9] He named the postmen, or deputy postmasters as they were called later, and he was held responsible for the performance of their duties.[10] All letters carried by the royal postmen were delivered to him, and after being sorted by him personally were carried to their destination by the court messengers.[11] The wages of the postmen varied from 1*s.* to 2*s.* a day according to the number of horses provided, and they were paid by the Postmaster-General, who had authority to make all payments to those regularly employed.[12] If messages or letters were sent by

[1] These letters were sent principally between London and different places in Norfolk.

[2] *The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, 1872, nos. 34, 305, 435, 609, 624, 663, 905.

[3] *Ibid.*, nos. 540, 688, 723, 727.

[4] *Ibid.*, nos. 656, 905.

[5] *Ibid.*, nos. 688, 723, 745.

[6] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 96 (68).

[7] *Cely Papers*, ed. H. E. Malden, 1900, nos. 41, 72, 123, 124, 129, 132.

[8] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, ii, pt. 2, p. 1454.

[9] *Rep. Com.* 1844, xiv, app., p. 21 (8).

[10] *Ibid.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 32 (7).

[11] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, 1515–18, 64; *ibid.*, 1526–28, 4359, 4406; *ibid.*, 1540–41, 540.

[12] *A. P. C.*, 1542–47, p. 20.

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special messengers, their payment entailed additional expense upon the state and the use of such messengers, when regular postmen were available, was strongly discouraged.[1]

In addition to his other duties Sir Brian was supposed to have a general supervision over the horses used for the conveyance of letters and of travellers riding on affairs of state. Of course on the regular roads there were always horses in readiness, provided by the postmen. Where there were no regular post roads, the townships were supposed to provide the necessary horses, and it was part of the Postmaster-General's duties to see that the townships were kept up to the mark.[2] It was largely on account of the fact that the same horses were used for conveying travellers and mails that the systems of postal and personal communication were so closely interwoven as well in England as in continental countries.[3]

The postmen along the old established routes and on the routes temporarily established for some definite purpose received a fixed daily wage. These men were called the ordinary posts.[4] If, however, letters should arrive in Dover after the ordinary post had left for London, they were generally sent on at once by a messenger hired for the occasion only. He was called a special post and was paid only for the work which he actually performed.[5] Those regular posts, who carried the royal and state letters between London and the place where the Court might be, were called "Court Posts."[6] During the sovereign's tours, posts were always stationed between him and London to carry his and the state's letters backward and forward. These were called extraordinary posts and received regular wages while so employed.[7] In addition there were always messengers employed to carry important despatches to foreign sovereigns. These received no fixed wages, but were paid accord-

[1] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, 1535, p. 27.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 32 (7). *A. P. C.*, 1542–47, p. 20.

[3] A. de Rothschild, *Histoire de la poste aux lettres*, Paris, 1873, pp. 95–97, 114–15.

[4] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii, 226; *A. P. C.*, 1547–50, pp. 111, 278, 307, 319, 413.

[5] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, 33, 136; xvi, 202, 236, 284; *P. & O. P. C.*, vii, p. 72; *A. P. C.*, 1550–52, pp. 56, 79, 108, 225, 270, 298.

[6] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, p. 540; *P. & O. P. C.*, vii, p. 133; *A. P. C.*, 1558–70, p. 238.

[7] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, 726; *A. P. C.*, 1547–50, p. 360; *ibid.*, 1592, pp. 128, 150; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–80, pp. 599, 637, 677.

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ing to the distance travelled and the expenses incurred on the road.[1]

Apart from his regular duties as outlined above, the Postmaster-General had little initiative power. He could not on his own responsibility order new posts to be laid. Such decisions always originated with the King or the Council and Tuke simply executed their orders.[2] Any increase in the wages of the posts also required the consent of the King or Council.[3]

During the sixteenth century there were three ways to send letters between England and the Continent: by the Royal Post, the Foreigners' Post, and the Merchant Adventurers' Post, apart from such opportunities as occasional travellers and messengers offered. The Royal Posts were presumed to carry only state letters, and consequently the conveyance of a large part of the private letters fell to the other two. Owing to industrial and later to religious motives there had been a large emigration of foreigners from the Continent to England. Edward III had induced many Flemings to leave their native country in the middle of the fourteenth century.[4] Froude says, probably with exaggeration, that in 1527 there were 15,000 Flemings in London alone.[5] In the fifteenth century many Italian artisans came over to reside but not to settle.[6] They were a thrifty people, who did much to place the industrial life of England on a better footing, and were probably more intelligent and better educated than the majority of the English artisans among whom they settled. It seems therefore only natural that they should seek to establish a better system of communication between their adopted and native countries. Their business relations with the cloth markets of the continental cities made necessary a better and speedier postal system than was afforded by the Royal Posts. In addition to this, it was only by act of grace that private letters were carried

[1] *A. P. C.*, 1558–70, pp. 39, 58, 111, 207, 216, 257, 258.

[2] *L. & P. Hen. VII*, xvi, 540; *A. P. C.* 1556–58, pp. 248, 309.

[3] *A. P. C.*, 1556–58, pp. 136, 188, 385. For instance, in 1557 the Council issued orders to increase the wages of the London-Berwick posts from 12*d.* to 16*d.* and eventually to 20*d.* a day; but as soon as their work had again become normal, their wages were reduced to the old rate.

[4] W. Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, 1896, i, pp. 305–306.

[5] J. A. Froude, *History of England*, 1862, i, p. 127.

[6] Cunningham, i, p. 430.

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by Tuke's postmen. In the opening year of the sixteenth century, by permission of the state, the foreign merchants in London established a system of posts of their own between the English capital and the Continent. This was called the "Foreign or Strangers' Post," and was managed by a Postmaster-General, nominated by the Italians, Spanish, and Dutch and confirmed by the Council.[1] These posts were used largely by the English merchants in spite of considerable dissatisfaction on account of the poor service afforded and on political grounds. Their grievances were detailed in a petition to the Privy Council. They considered it unprecedented that so important a service as the carriage of letters should be in the hands of men who owed no allegiance to the King. Such a procedure was unheard of in any of the continental countries. "What check could there be over treasonable correspondence while the carriage of letters continued to be in the hands of foreigners and most of them Dutchmen?" In addition they were not treated so well as were their fellow merchants of foreign allegiance. Their letters were often retained for several days at a time, while all others were delivered as soon as they arrived. The foreign ambassadors could not complain if a change were made, for most of their correspondence was carried on by special messengers.[2] The "Strangers' Post" seems to have come to an end after the Proclamation of 1591 was issued, forbidding any but the Royal Posts from carrying letters to and from foreign countries.[3]

Sir Brian Tuke died in 1545 and was succeeded by Sir John Mason and Mr. Paget, who acted as joint Postmasters-General. Mr. Paget was the sleeping partner, and what little was done was by Mason.[4] They were succeeded in 1568 by Thomas Randolph.[5] He was occasionally sent as special ambassador to France and during his absence Gascoyne, a former court post, performed his duties. From Sir Brian's death until the end of Elizabeth's reign was a period of little advance in postal matters. The regular posts, and it

[1] Stow, *London*, 1720, bk. v, p. 401. *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–80, pp. 312, 321, 432. There was considerable rivalry between them concerning those nominated for Postmaster-General. See *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–80, pp. 312, 314.

[2] Stow, *London*, bk. v, p. 401. [3] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 36 (14).

[4] *A. P. C.*, 1542–47, p. 267; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 21 (8).

[5] *Ibid.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 21 (11).

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is with them that our chief interest lies, appear to have fallen into disuse. The payments for special messengers are much larger than they had been during Henry's reign. In 1549, a warrant was issued empowering Sir John Mason to pay £400 to the special messengers used during the summer. If anything was left, he was instructed to use it in paying arrears due the ordinary posts.[1] Elizabeth is generally credited with being economical to the extreme of parsimony so far as state expenses were concerned. However this may be, she is responsible for an order to discharge all the regular posts unless they would serve for half of their old wages.[2] The postmen did not receive their wages at all regularly. Randolph was accused by the Governor of Berwick of withholding all of their first year's wages, of receiving every year thereafter a percentage of their salaries, and of demanding certain fees from them, all for his personal use. The Governor considered that Randolph's extortions were largely the cause of the general inefficiency in the posts,[3] but the accusation may have been due to personal grudge. At any rate one measure of postal reform may be credited to Randolph. In 1582, orders were issued to all the London-Berwick posts to the following effect. Every post on the arrival of letters to or from the Queen or Council was to fasten a label to the packet. On this label he was to write the day and hour when the packet came into his hands and he was to make the same entry in a book kept for the purpose. He was also to keep two or three good horses in his stable for the speedier conveyance of such packets.[4]

In 1590, John Lord Stanhope was appointed Postmaster-General by order of the Queen. The office was given to him for his life and then was to go to his son for his son's life.[5] Both the Stanhopes were men of action, but they looked upon their position rather as a means of enriching themselves than as a trust for the good of the state. They proved a stumbling block to the advancement of better men and it was not for sixty years that they were finally swept away to make room for men of greater ability. In 1621, the elder Stanhope was succeeded by his son Charles according to the terms

[1] *A. P. C.*, 1547–50, p. 360.
[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–80, p. 306.
[3] *Cal. B. P.*, 1560–94, p. 299.
[4] *Cal. S. P. D., Add.*, 1580–1625, pp. 75–76.
[5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1581–90, p. 676; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 22 (13).

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of the original patent.[1] It had been the custom for the Postmasters-General to demand fees and percentages from their appointees. So lucrative were many of their positions from the monopoly in letting horses and the receipts from private letters that many applicants were willing to pay for appointments as deputy postmasters. The ordinary payments when Lord Charles was at the head of the posts amounted to 2*s*. in the pound as poundage and a fee of £2 from each man. These payments were considered so exorbitant that the Council ordered them to be reduced.[2] One, Hutchins, entered the lists as the champion of the postmasters. He himself was one of them and acted as their solicitor in the contest. Stanhope was glad to compound the case by the payment of £30. Hutchins gave the Council so much trouble that they gave orders that "turbulent Hutchins" should cease to act as the postmasters' solicitor and leave them in peace.[3] His object, however, seems to have been accomplished so far as Stanhope was concerned. The struggle with the Paymasters of the Posts was not so successful, for, supported by a report of the Treasurer, they continued to receive their shilling in the pound.[4]

By a Privy Council Proclamation issued in 1603, all posts receiving a daily fee were required to have two leather bags, lined with "bayes" or cotton, and the post himself was to sound a horn whenever he met any one on the road or four times in every mile. The packet of letters was not to be delayed more than fifteen minutes and was to be carried at a rate of seven miles an hour in summer and five in winter. The time at which it was delivered into a post's hands and the names and addresses of the people by whom and to whom it was sent were to be entered in a book kept for the purpose. All posts and their servants were exempted from being "pressed" and from attendance at assizes, sessions, inquests, and musters.[5]

It is doubtful how far the postmasters were held responsible for the delivery of letters to the persons to whom they were addressed.

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1619–23, pp. 238, 404.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 568, 572. A postmaster's salary at this time was about 5*s*. a day. (*Ibid.*, 1623–25, p. 130.)

[3] *Ibid.*, 1623–25, pp. 117, 130, 153.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1619–23, pp. 567–68.

[5] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 38 (18).

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This did not become a burning question, however, until after the recognition of the fact that the letters of private individuals should receive as good treatment at the hands of the postmen as the letters of the state officials. Lord Stanhope in 1618 issued an order to the Justices of the Peace in Southwark to aid the postmaster of that place in the delivery of letters within six miles.[1] This was followed two years later by a general order to establish two or three foot-posts in every parish for the conveyance of letters.[2]

During the early part of the seventeenth century, Stanhope had employed a foreigner, de Quester, as one of the King's posts "beyond seas." He commended himself to the notice of his superiors by his promptitude in dealing with the foreign letters.[3] In 1619 James appointed him Postmaster-General for "foreign parts" and henceforth he was his own master.[4] This was followed four years later by a formal proclamation, confirming to de Quester and his son the position already granted to the father.[5] He was to have the sole monopoly of carrying foreign letters and was to appoint the necessary officials. All persons were formally prohibited from entrenching upon the privileges granted him in 1619. From this time until 1635, the foreign and inland posts were under separate management and the accounts were kept separate until long after the latter date. Stanhope was unwilling to submit to the curtailment of his profits, which necessarily followed the appointment of de Quester. There was much to be said for Stanhope's contention that the patent of 1623 was illegal for, ever since there had been a Postmaster-General, his duties had extended to the foreign as well as to the inland office. The question was referred to a committee, composed of the Lord Chamberlain, one of the Secretaries of State and the Attorney-General, who decided that Stanhope's patent extended only to the inland office.[6] The whole question was finally brought before the Court of King's Bench, which decided the case in favour of Stanhope.[7] This was in 1625, but de Quester seems to have paid no attention to the decision for it is certain that he continued to act as

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1611–18, p. 601. [2] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.* 15, app., pt. 7, p. 63.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1603–10, pp. 162, 397, 426, 491, 512, 521, 545, 576, 583, 588, 611.
[4] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 45 (23).
[5] *Ibid.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 45 (23). [6] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1623–25, p. 131.
[7] *Ibid.*, 1625–26, p. 30; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 48 (25).

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Foreign Postmaster until 1629[1] and in 1632 he resigned his patent to Frizell and Witherings. It can be imagined what must have been the chaotic condition of the foreign post while this struggle was going on. The Merchant Adventurers established posts of their own between London and the Continent under Billingsley. The Council issued the most perplexing orders. First they forbade Billingsley from having anything to do with foreign letters.[2] Then they decided that the Adventurers might establish posts of their own and choose a Postmaster.[3] Then they extended the same privilege to all merchants. Next this was withdrawn and the Adventurers were allowed to send letters only to Antwerp, Delft and Hamburg or wherever the staple of cloth might be.[4] These orders do not seem to have been passed in full council for, in 1628, Secretary Coke in writing to Secretary Conway said that "Billingsley, a broker by trade, strives to draw over to the merchants that power over foreign letters which in all states is a branch of royal authority. The merchant's purse has swayed much in other matters but he has never heard that it encroached upon the King's prerogative until now." He adds "I confess it troubleth me to see the audacity of men in these times and especially that Billingsley." He enclosed a copy of an order "made at a full Council and under the Broad Seal," which in effect was a supersedeas of the place which de Quester enjoyed.[5] When de Quester resigned in favour of Frizell and Witherings, the resignation and new appointments were confirmed by the King.[6] Of these men Witherings was far the abler. He had a plan in view, which was eventually to place the foreign and inland systems on a basis unchanged until the time of penny postage. In the meantime he had to overcome the prejudices of the King and get rid of Frizell. In order to raise money for the promotion of his plan, Witherings mortgaged his place. Capital was obtained from the Earl of Arundel and others through John Hall, who held the mortgage. The King heard of this and ordered

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1629–31, pp. 71, 247.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1625–26, p. 231.
[3] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 48 (26).
[4] *Ibid.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 49 (27); *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1625–26, p. 478; Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.* 12, app. 1, p. 295; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1627–28, p. 405.
[5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1627–28, pp. 436, 591.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1625–49, p. 332; 1628–29, pp. 46, 427, 558; 1631–33, p. 384.

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the office to be sequestered to his old servant de Quester and commanded Hall to make over his interest to the same person.[1] There were now three claimants for the place, Frizell, Witherings, and de Quester. Frizell rushed off to Court, where he offered to pay off his part of the mortgage and asked to have sole charge of the Foreign Post. "Witherings," he said, "proposes to take charge of all packets of State if he may have the office, but being a home-bred shopkeeper, without languages, tainted of delinquency and in dislike with the foreign correspondents, he is no fit person to carry a trust of such secrecy and importance."[2] Coke knew better than this, however, and through his influence Witherings, who had in the meantime paid off the mortgage and satisfied Frizell's interest, was made sole Postmaster-General for Foreign Parts.[3]

With Witherings' advent a new period of English postal history begins. His dominant idea was to make the posts self-supporting and no longer a charge to the state. It had been established as a service for the royal household and continued as an official necessity. The letters of private individuals had been carried by its messengers but the state had derived no revenue for their conveyance. The convenient activity of other agencies for the carriage of private letters was not only tolerated but officially recognized. The change to a revenue-paying basis tended naturally to emphasize the monopolistic character of the government service.[4]

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1634–35, pp. 11, 38, 48, 389.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1625–49, p. 489.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1635–36, p. 32; 1634–35, p. 48.
[4] See chapter IX.

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CHAPTER II

THE POSTAL ESTABLISHMENT A SOURCE OF REVENUE TO THE STATE

1633–1711

For some time there had been dissatisfaction with the services rendered by the inland posts. It was said that letters would arrive sooner from Spain and Italy than from remote parts of the kingdom of England.[1] The only alternative was to send them by express and this was not only expensive but was not looked upon with favour by the Postmaster-General. The five great roads from London to Edinburgh, Holyhead, Bristol, Plymouth, and Dover were in operation. From the Edinburgh Road there were branches to York and Carlisle, from the Dover Road to Margate, Gravesend, and Sandwich, and from the Plymouth Road to Falmouth, but the posts were slow and the rates for private letters uncertain.[2] In 1633, a project was advanced for the new arrangement of the Post Office. The plan was not entirely theoretical, for an attempt was made to show that it would prove a financial success. There were about 512 market towns in England. It was considered that each of these would send 50 letters a week to London and as many answers would be returned. At *4d.* a day for each letter, this would amount to £426 a week. The charge for conveyance was estimated at £37 a week, leaving a weekly profit of £389, from which £1500 a year for the conveyance of state letters and despatches must be deducted. Letters on the northern road were to pay *2d.* for a single and *4d.* for a double letter, to Yorkshire and Northumberland *3d.*, and to Scotland *8d.* a letter. The postmasters in the country were not to take any charge for a letter except one penny for carriage to the next market town.[3] It is probable that this project originated with Witherings. At any rate it resembles closely the plan which

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1580–1625, p. 360. [2] *Ibid.*, 1580–1625, p. 630.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1625–26, p. 366. A single letter consisted of one sheet of paper, a double letter of two, and a triple letter of three sheets.

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was introduced by him two years later. He had already reformed the foreign post by appointing "stafetti" from London to Dover and through France and they had proved so efficient as to disarm the opposition even of the London merchants. His name is without doubt the most distinguished in the annals of the British Post Office. Convinced that the carriage of private letters must be placed upon a secure footing, he laid the foundation for the system of postal rates and regulations, which continued to the time of national penny postage. He introduced the first legal provision for the carriage of private letters at fixed rates, greatly increased the speed of the posts, and above all made the Post Office a financial success. In order to do this he saw that the proceeds from private letters must go to the state and not to the deputy postmasters.

His plan was entitled "A proposition for settling of Stafetti or pacquet posts betwixt London and all parts of His Majesty's Dominions. The profits to go to pay the postmasters, who now are paid by His Majesty at a cost of £3400 per annum." A general office or counting house was to be established in London for the reception of all letters coming to or leaving the capital. Letters leaving London on each of the great roads were to be enclosed in a leather "portmantle" and left at the post-towns on the way. Letters for any of the towns off the great roads were to be placed in smaller leather bags to be carried in the large portmantle. These leather bags were to be left at the post-towns nearest the country towns to which they were directed. They were then to be carried to their destination by foot-posts to a distance of six or eight miles and for each letter these foot-posts were to charge *2d.*, the same price that was charged by the country carriers. At the same time that the foot-posts delivered their letters, they were to collect letters to be sent to London and carry them back to the post-town from which they had started and there meet the portmantle on its way back from Edinburgh or Bristol or wherever the terminus of the road might be. The speed of the posts was to be at least 120 miles in twenty-four hours and they were to travel day and night. He concludes his proposition by saying that no harm would result to Stanhope by his plan "for neither Lord Stanhope nor anie

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other, that ever enjoyed the Postmaster's place of England, had any benefit of the carrying and re-carrying of the subjects' letters."[1]

The question now was, Who was to see that these reforms were carried out? Stanhope was not the man for so important and revolutionary an undertaking. Witherings alone, the author of the proposition, should carry it into effect. Sir John Coke made no mistake in constituting himself the friend of the postal reformer. Witherings was already Foreign Postmaster-General and in 1635 he was charged with the reformation of the inland office on the basis of his projected scheme. In 1637 the inland and foreign offices were again united when he was made Foreign and Inland Postmaster-General.[2] His experiment was tried on the Northern Road first and was exceedingly successful. Letters were sent to Edinburgh and answers returned in six days. On the Northern Road bye-posts were established to Lincoln, Hull and other places.[3] Orders were given to extend the same arrangement to the other great roads, and by 1636 his reform was in full and profitable operation.

Witherings still continued to sell the positions of the postmasters, if we are to trust the complaints of non-successful applicants. One man said that he offered £100 for a position but Witherings sold it to another for £40.[4] The Postmaster at Ferrybridge asserted that he had paid Stanhope £200 and Witherings £35 and yet now fears that he will be ousted. Complaints of a reduction in wages were also made, and this was a serious matter, since the postmasters no longer obtained anything from private letters.[5] The old complaint, however, of failure to pay wages at all is not heard under Witherings' administration. He was punctual in his payments and held his employees to equally rigid account. Their arrears were not excused.[6] An absentee postmaster, who hired

[1] *Rep. Com.*, xiv, app., p. 55 (35). *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1635, p. 166. Letters were to be carried to and from important places at some distance from the main roads by post-horses. See *Cal. S. P. D.*, above.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, xiv, p. 5; app., p. 57 (36); *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1635–36, p. 32.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1635, p. 299.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1637, p. 527; *ibid.*, 1636–37, p. 524.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1638–39, p. 119.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1637–38, pp. 52, 53, 394.

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deputies to perform his duties, was dismissed.[1] His ambition to establish a self-supporting postal system demanded rigid economy and strict administration, and with the then prevailing laxity of administrative methods, this was no mean achievement. From one occasional practice of the Post Office, that of tampering with private letters, he cannot perhaps wholly be absolved. It is hinted that he may have been guilty of opening letters, but the suggestion follows that this may have happened before they reached England, for the letters so opened were from abroad.[2]

In June of 1637, Coke and Windebank, the two Secretaries of State, were appointed Postmasters-General for their lives. The surviving one was to surrender his office to the King, who would then grant it to the Secretaries for the time being.[3] It does not appear that Witherings was altogether dismissed from the service, for his name continued to appear in connection with postal affairs.[4] Windebank later urged as reasons for the withdrawal of Witherings' patent, that he was not a sworn officer, that there was a suspicion that his patent had been obtained surreptitiously, and that the continental postmasters disdained to correspond with a man of his low birth. He concludes by saying that something may be given him, but that he is said to be worth £800 a year in land and to have enriched himself from his position.[5] At the time of his removal, in June, 1637, the London merchants petitioned for his continuance in office, as he had always given them satisfaction. When they heard who had been appointed in his stead, like loyal and fearful subjects, they hastened to add that they thought someone else was trying for the position but they had no doubt that it would be managed best by the Secretaries.[6] If they thought so they were mistaken, for the commander of the English army against Scotland found that his letters were opened,[7] the Lord High Admiral complained that his were delayed,[8] and Windebank promised an un-

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1637–38, p. 238.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1640–41, p. 340. As early as 1639 persons were not allowed to have letters back when once posted. (*Ibid.*, 1639, p. 279.)

[3] *Ibid.*, 1637, p. 255.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1639, p. 279; *Rep. Com.*, xiv, app., p. 58 (37).

[5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1637–38, p. 51.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1637–38, p. 52.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1639, p. 295.

[8] *Ibid.*, 1639–40, p. 116.

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known correspondent that the delay in his letters should be seen to at once and Witherings was the agent chosen for the investigation.[1] This, however, was not the worst, for only a month after Witherings had been degraded, orders were issued to the postmasters that no packets or letters were to be sent by post but such as should be directed "For His Majesty's Special Affairs" and were subscribed by certain officials connected with the Government.[2] It is fair to add that this check on private correspondence may have been a protective measure induced by the unsettled state of the kingdom.

In 1640 both the inland and foreign offices were sequestered into the hands of Philip Burlamachi, a wealthy London merchant who had lent money to the king. No reasons were given except that information had been received "of divers abuses and misdemeanours committed by Thomas Witherings."[3] Stanhope, who had resigned his patent in 1637, now came forward claiming that his resignation had been unfairly obtained by the Council, and at the same time he presented his bill for £1266, the arrears in his salary for nineteen years.[4] In reply to his demand it was said that shortly before he resigned he had assigned his rights in the Post Office to the Porters, father and son. The Attorney-General gave his opinion that whatever rights Stanhope and the Porters had, they certainly had no claim to the proceeds from the carriage of private letters.[5] Stanhope had offered to enter an appearance in a suit brought against him by the Porters but now he refused to do so.[6] Windebank was also looking out for money due to him while Coke and he were Postmasters-General.[7] The state had indeed entered upon troublous times and it was every man for himself before it was too late.

As long as Witherings had enjoyed the King's favour, the House of Commons had looked upon him with suspicion. They had ordered in 1640 "that a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Grievances should be made a House Committee to consider abuses in the

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.* 12, app., pt. 2, p. 236.
[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1637, p. 338.
[3] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 59 (39).
[4] *Ibid.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 22 (19); *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1636–37, p. 534; *ibid.*, 1637–38, p. 51.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1636–37, p. 530.
[6] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.* 7, p. 154.
[7] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1640–41, p. 315.

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inland posts, to take into consideration the rates for letters and packets together with the abuses of Witherings and the rest of the postmasters."[1] As soon as Witherings was finally dismissed, the Commons took him up and resolutions were passed that the sequestration was illegal and ought to be repealed, that the proclamation for ousting him from his position ought not to be put into execution, and that he ought to be restored to his old position and be paid the mean profits which had been received since his nominal dismissal.[2] Protected by the authority of the House of Commons, Witherings continued to act as Postmaster-General.[3] Windebank, in Paris, was trying to collect evidence against him through Frizell, who, he said, had been forced out of his position by Witherings and Coke.[4] Coke himself was in disgrace and could do nothing. Parliament was now supreme. Witherings was ordered to send to a Committee of the Lords, acting with Sir Henry Vane, all letters coming into or going out of the kingdom for examination and search. Frequent orders to the same effect followed during the turbulent summer and autumn of 1641.[5] Among other letters opened were those of the Venetian Ambassador in England. He was so indignant that a Committee of the Lords was sent to him to ask his pardon.[6] The two Houses of Parliament united in condemning the sequestration to Burlamachi, but Witherings, who had become tired of the strife, assigned his position to the Earl of Warwick.[7] The Earl was supported by both Houses, but the Lower House played a double part, for, while openly supporting Warwick, they now secretly favoured Burlamachi, who had found an influential friend in Edmund Prideaux, former chairman of the committee appointed to investigate the condition of the posts and later Attorney-General under the Commonwealth.[8] Prideaux was a strong Parliamentarian, but was distrusted even by his own friends. But for the time being, as the representative of the Commons, he was supported by them. The

[1] *Jo. H. C.*, 1640–42, p. 81.
[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1640–41, p. 453; *Jo. H. C.*, ii, p. 500; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 60 (40).
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1640–41, p. 557.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1640–41, p. 536.
[5] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 101 (74).
[6] *Ibid.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 101 (74).
[7] *Jo. H. C.*, 1640–42, p. 722; *Jo. H. L.*, 1642–43, p. 343.
[8] *Jo. H. C.*, 1640–42, p. 500.

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messenger of the Upper House made oath that he had delivered the Commons' resolution to Burlamachi, commanding him to hand over the Inland Letter Office to Warwick, but James Hicks had presented an order at the place appointed by Warwick for receiving letters, to deliver all letters to Prideaux. Burlamachi on being summoned before the Lords for contempt said that Prideaux had hired his house and now had charge of the mails. The fight went merrily on. Two servants of Warwick seized the Holyhead letters from Hicks, but were in turn stopped by five troopers, agents of Prideaux, who took the letters from them by order of the House of Commons. Prideaux also seized the Chester and Plymouth letters, one of his servants calling out " that an order of the House of Commons ought to be obeyed before an order of the House of Lords."[1] Hicks, who had been arrested by order of the Lords, was liberated by the Commons as a servant of a member of Parliament.[2] As between Lords and Commons, there could be no doubt as to which side would carry the day, and by the end of 1642 the Lower House was triumphant all along the line. Understanding that discretion was the better part of valour, the Lords freed Burlamachi and dropped the contest. Warwick now petitioned the Lords again, setting forth that he was the legal successor and assignee of Witherings. Stanhope put in a counter-petition to the effect that Witherings never had any right to the position which Warwick now claimed. The House of Lords felt its own weakness too much to interfere directly, but ordered the whole matter to trial.[3] Besides Stanhope and Warwick, the following put in claims before the Council of State: Henry Robinson, through the Porters, to whom Stanhope had assigned; Sir David Watkins in trust for Thomas Witherings, Jr., for the foreign office; Moore and Jessop through Watkins and Walter Warde. Billingsley also, the old Postmaster of the Merchant Adventurers, made a claim for the foreign office.[4]

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 10 (40); *Jo. H. C.*, 1642–43, pp. 387, 388, 469, 470, 471, 473–74, 508, 512; *ibid.*, 1640–42, p. 899.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1640–42, p. 899.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1645–47, p. 461; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 68 (43); *Jo. H. L.*, 1645–46, pp. 579, 588, 637.

[4] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, pp. 159, 367; *ibid.*, 1653–54, pp. 21, 22, 297; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 69 (44); *Jo. H. C.*, 1651–59, p. 192.

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The confusion in postal administration which naturally resulted from the struggle among the rival claimants was increased by the Civil War. In 1643 the Royal Court was moved to Oxford. The Secretaries of State acting as Postmasters-General sent James Hicks, the quondam servant of Prideaux, to collect arrears from the postmasters due to the Letter Office. In addition to collecting the money due, he was to require all postmasters on the road to Coventry to convey to and from the Court all letters and packets on His Majesty's service, to establish new stages, to forward the names of those willing to supply horses and guides, and to report those postmasters who were disobedient or disloyal.[1] During the most desperate period of the royal cause Hicks acted as special messenger for the King, and apparently had some exciting experiences in carrying the letters of his royal master. He lived to enjoy his reward when the second Charles had come to his own. Parliament, in the meantime, was establishing its control over the posts and reorganizing the service. In the early period of Parliamentary government, postal affairs were as a rule looked after by what was known as the "Committee of Both Kingdoms," and the orders which it issued were necessarily based upon political conditions. Later the Postmaster-General acted under the Council of State or under Cromwell himself. In 1644 the House of Commons issued an order that protection should be granted to the postmasters between London and Hull, to their servants, horses and goods.[2] The fact that it was necessary to re-settle posts on the old established London-Berwick road shows how demoralized conditions had been during the conflict.[3] Many of the loyal postmasters were dismissed. Their lukewarm conduct in supplying the messengers of the Commonwealth with horses produced a reprimand from the Committee and a sharp warning from Prideaux.[4] Posts were settled from London to Lyme Regis for better communication with the southwestern counties. In 1644 Edmund Prideaux was formally appointed Postmaster-General.[5] He was allowed to use as his office part of the

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1641-43, p. 501; *ibid.*, 1644, pp. 6, 29.
[2] *Jo. H. C.*, 1642-44, p. 426.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1644, p. 400.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1644-45, p. 503; *ibid.*, 1644, pp. 25, 144, 447.
[5] *Jo. H. C.*, 1642-44, p. 477; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 67 (41).

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building occupied by the Committee of Accounts, formerly the house of a London alderman.[1] As long as the war continued it was necessary that a close watch should be kept over letters passing by post. Many of the new postmasters were military men and in addition others were appointed in each town under the heading of "persons to give intelligence."[2] With the return of normal conditions after 1649 Prideaux was ordered by the Council of State to make arrangements for establishing posts all over England as in the peaceful days before the war.[3] His report of the same year to the Council of State indicates the successful fulfilment of his instructions. He said that he had established a weekly conveyance of letters to all parts of the Commonwealth and that with the receipts from private letters he had paid all the postmasters except those on the Dover road.[4]

For the safety of the Commonwealth it was often found necessary to search the letters. Sometimes the posts were stopped and all the letters examined. When this was done, it was by order of the Council of State, which appointed certain officials to go through the correspondence.[5] Sir Kenelm Digby, writing to Lord Conway from Calais, asks him to direct his letters to that place, where they would find him, "if no curious overseer of the packets at the post break them 'open for the superscription's sake."[6] The Commonwealth did openly and is consequently blamed for what had been done more or less secretly by the Royal Government.

In 1651 the first proposal for farming the Post Office was submitted to the Council of State. The Council reported the question to Parliament but there is no evidence as to their attitude on the question at that time.[7] The next year Parliament ordered that the question of management, whether by contract or otherwise, should be re-committed to the Council,[8] and in 1653 it was decided that it would be better to let the posts out to farm. Prideaux had been quietly dropped by the Council after making, as it was reported, a

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1644, p. 477.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1644–45, p. 170.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1649–50, pp. 13, 147.
[4] *Jo. H. C.*, 1648–51, p. 385.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1648–51, p. 126; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1649–50, pp. 56, 533, 535, 541; 1650, pp. 7, 223; 1651–52, p. 216.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1649–50, p. 381.
[7] *Ibid.*, 1651–52.
[8] *Ibid.*, 1651–59, p. 192.

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large fortune. When we remember that under his management there was an annual deficit of £600 besides the expenses of the Dover road and that in 1653 there was a net revenue of £10,000, it seems probable that there is some truth in the report. The conditions upon which the Post Office was farmed, were as follows:—

The farmers must be men of stability and good credit and must be selected from those contracting. Official letters and letters from and to members of Parliament must be carried free. All postage rates must be fixed by the Council and not changed without its consent. Finally all postmasters should be approved by the Council and Lord Protector.[1]

The policy of the Commonwealth in letting the posts out to farm had much in its favour. The evil usually resulting from farming is the temptation and the opportunity it offers for extortion from the people. But in the case of the posts no oppression was possible, for the farmer was limited in his charge to the rate fixed by the Government. More than this, private control over the post office business afforded what was most needed at the time, greater economy and stricter supervision over the deputy postmasters. It was upon the deputy postmasters alone that the farming system might exercise undue pressure, but from them there was no complaint of the withholding or reduction of wages until after Cromwell's death.[2]

John Manley was appointed "Farmer of the Posts" for two years at a yearly rent of £10,000. There were at least four higher tenders than his, and Manley contracted only for £8259. It was hinted that Manley and the Council had come to a private agreement concerning the rent to be paid.[3] In his orders to the postmasters, Manley

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, p. 449.
The following is a list of the contractors, with the yearly amounts offered by each:

Ben Andrews for Inland Office	£3600
Ben Andrews for Foreign Office	3500
Henry Robinson for both offices	8041
Ben Andrews for both offices	9100
John Goldsmith for both offices	8500
Ralph Kendall for both offices	10103
John Manley, with good security	8259
Rich. Hicks	9120
Rich. Hill	8160

— *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, p. 450.

[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1658–59, p. 371.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1653–54, pp. 27, 328.

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requested them to take particular care of government packets and to see that no one was allowed to ride in post unless by special warrant. All letters should be counted by them and the number certified in London. They were to keep a sharp eye upon people, especially travellers, and report any discontent or disaffection.[1] In 1654 Manley's title of Postmaster-General was confirmed by act of Parliament, the first act dealing directly with postal affairs.[2] He was unsuccessful in having his franchise extended beyond the original two years, and by order of the Council of State the management of the Posts was entrusted to Mr. Thurloe, Secretary of State, for £10,000 a year, the same amount which Manley had paid.[3]

Shortly after Thurloe had been appointed Postmaster-General, general orders were issued by Cromwell to all the postmasters. He forbade them to send by express any letters or packets except those sent by certain officials on affairs of state, all others to await the regular time for the departure of the mails. The old regulations for providing mail-bags, registration of the time of reception, and the like were repeated. The number of mails to and from London was increased from one to three a week each way, and to ensure higher speed, each postmaster was to provide a horse ready saddled and was not to detain the mail longer than half an hour under any consideration. He was ordered to deliver all letters in the country at or near his stage and was to collect the postage marked on the letter unless it was postpaid. The money so collected was to be returned to London every three months.[4]

In 1657 the first act of Parliament was passed which fixed rates for the conveyance of letters and established the system for the British Islands. The preamble stated: "That whereas it hath been found by experience that the writing and settling of one General Post Office . . . is the best means not only to maintain certain intercourse of trade and commerce betwixt all the said places to the great benefit of the people of these nations, but also to convey the public despatches and to discover and prevent many dangerous and wicked designs,

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1653–54, p. 328.
[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 71 (48); *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1655, p. 138.
[3] Scobell's *Collect.*, p. 358.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1655, pp. 285 f.

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which have been and are daily continued against the peace and welfare of this Commonwealth," it is enacted that there shall be one General Post Office called the Post Office of England, and one Postmaster-General nominated and appointed by the Protector for life or for a term of years not exceeding eleven.[1] In accordance with the terms of this act, Thurloe was appointed by Cromwell and continued to act as Postmaster-General until the downfall of the Commonwealth.[2]

After the Restoration most of the old claimants to the Post Office came to the front again. Stanhope besieged King and Parliament for restoration to his old place. He seems to have received some compensation, which he deserved for his pertinacity if for nothing else. The Porters were up in arms at once, for he had promised them to come to no agreement until they were satisfied.[3] The two daughters of Burlamachi pleaded for some mark of favour, on the ground that their father had ruined himself for the late King. Frizell was still very much alive, and a nephew of Witherings carried on the family feud.[4] In the meantime James Hicks was employed by the Secretary of State to ascertain how many of the old deputy postmasters were still eligible for positions. He reported that many of them were dead and that many of those who were applying for positions had been enemies of the King. For the time being it was decided that the present officials should remain in office until a settlement should be made.[5]

Henry Bishop was appointed by royal patent Postmaster-General of England for seven years at a rent of £21,500 a year. The King agreed to persuade Parliament to pass an act [6] settling the rates and terms under which Bishop was to exercise his duties. For the time being he was to charge the same rates as those in the

[1] Scobell, *Collect.*, pp. 511–13 (1656, c. 30).

[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1657–58, p. 81. In January of 1660 the Council took the Post Office under its own control for a short time. *Jo. H. C.*, 1651–59, p. 81; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1659–60, p. 303.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1660–61, p. 178; Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.* 7, p. 109.

[4] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1660–61, pp. 93–100, 301.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1660–61, pp. 37, 82.

[6] The act of 1660 (12 Ch. II, c. 35) passed in pursuance of this agreement added nothing of importance to the act of 1657, except on the question of rates. See below, chapter VIII.

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"pretended Act of 1657," to defray all postal expenses and to carry free all public letters and letters of members of Parliament during the present session. He agreed also to allow the Secretaries to examine letters and not to change old routes or set up new without their consent. He was to dismiss all officials whom they should object to on reasonable grounds. If his income should be lessened by war or plague or if this grant should prove ineffectual, the Secretaries agreed to allow such abatement in his farm as should seem reasonable to them.[1] Bishop's régime does not seem to have been popular with the postmasters, for a petition in behalf of 300 of them, representing themselves to be "all the postmasters in England, Scotland, and Ireland," was presented to Parliament in protest against the Postmaster-General's actions. They describe how Cromwell had let the Post Office out to farm. They credit him with respecting their rights and paying their wages. Lately, however, Bishop had been appointed farmer, and unless they submitted to his orders, they were dismissed at once. He had decreased their wages by more than one half, made them pay for their places again, and demanded bonds from them that they should not disclose any of these things.[2]

In 1633, Bishop resigned his grant to Daniel O'Neale for £8000. O'Neale offered £2000 and, in addition, promised £1000 a year, during the lease, to Bennet, Secretary of State, if he would have the assignment confirmed. He explained that this would not injure the Duke of York's interest, who could expect no increase until the expiration of the original contract, which still had four years and a quarter to run.[3] This refers to an act of Parliament which had just been passed, settling the £21,500 post revenue upon the Duke of York and his male heirs,[4] with the exception of some £5000 which had been assigned by the King to his mistresses and favourites. O'Neale having died before his lease expired, his wife, the Countess of Chesterfield, performed his duties until 1667.[5]

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., pp. 75, 76 (52, 53).
[2] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 7, p. 140.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1663–64, p. 122; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., pp. 86, 91 (60, 64).
[4] *Ibid.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 91 (64). Confirmed in 1685 (Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 11, app., 2, p. 315; 1 Jas. ii, c. 12).
[5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1664–65, p. 376; 1666–67, p. 567.

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According to the grant made to O'Neale in 1663 no postmaster nor any other person except the one to whom it was directed or returned was to open any letter unless ordered so to do by an express warrant from one of the Secretaries of State. If any letter was overcharged, the excess was to be returned to the person to whom it was directed. Nothing was said about letters which were lost or stolen in the post. A certain John Pawlett complained that of sixteen letters which he had posted not one was ever delivered in London although the postage was prepaid.[1] Letters not prepaid were stamped with the postage due in the London Office when they were sent from London. Letters sent to London were charged by the receiving postmaster in the country and the charge verified at the London Office. An account was kept there of the amounts due and the postmasters were debited with them, less the sum for letters not delivered, which had also to be returned for verification.[2] All this meant losses to the postal revenue, but compulsory prepayment would have been impracticable at the time. The postmasters had nothing to gain by retaining letters not prepaid, but by neglecting to forward prepaid letters, they could keep the whole of the postage, for stamps were unknown. An incentive to the delivery of letters was provided by the penny payment which it was customary to give the postmasters for each letter delivered, over and above the regular postage. The postmasters were required to remit the postage collected to London every month and give bonds for the performance of their duties.[3]

The postal service was very much demoralized by the plague in 1665 and 1666 and the great fire which followed. Hicks, the clerk, said that the gains during this time would be very small. To prevent contagion the building was so "fumed" that they could hardly see each other.[4] The letters were aired over vinegar or in front of large fires and Hicks remarks that had the pestilence been carried by letters they would have been dead long ago. While the plague was still dangerous, the King's letters were not allowed to pass

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1664–65, p. 457. Although letters might be prepaid, it was not compulsory that they should be, and the vast majority were not.

[2] Joyce, p. 46.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1667, p. 80.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1664–65, p. 51.

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through London.[1] After the fire the headquarters of the Post-Office in London were removed to Gresham College.

When O'Neale's lease had expired in 1667, Lord Arlington, Secretary of State, was appointed Postmaster-General.[2] The real head was Sir John Bennet, with whom Hicks was entirely out of sympathy. He accused Bennet of "scurviness" and condemned the changes initiated by him. These changes were in the shape of reductions in wages. The postmasters' salaries were to be reduced from £40 to £20 a year. In the London Office, the wages of the carriers and porters were also to be reduced.[3]

At the close of the seventeenth century there were forty-nine men employed in the Inland Department of the Post Office in London. The Postmaster-General, or Controller as he was sometimes called, was nominally responsible for the whole management although the accountant and treasurer were more or less independent. Then there were eight clerks of the roads. They had charge of the mails coming and going on the six great roads to Holyhead, Bristol, Plymouth, Edinburgh, Yarmouth, and Dover. The old veteran Hicks had been at their head until his resignation in 1670. The General Post Office building was in Lombard Street.[4] Letters might be posted there or at the receiving stations at Westminster, Charing Cross, Pall Mall, Covent Garden, and the Inns of Court. From these stations, letters were despatched to the General Office twice on mail nights. For this work thirty-two letter carriers were employed, but they did not deliver letters as their namesakes now do. The mails left London for all parts of the country on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday late at night or early the next morning. On these days all officials had to attend at 6 P.M. and were generally at work all night. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday when the mails arrived from all parts of England they had to be on hand at 4 or 5 A.M. The postage to be paid was stamped on the letters by the clerks of the roads. In addition three sorters and three window-men were employed. The window-men were the officials who stood at the window to receive the letters handed in and to collect

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 12, app., pt. 7, pp. 14, 93; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1665–66, p. 14. *Cal. S. P. D. Add.*, 1600–70, p. 713.
[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1665–66, p. 573.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1667, p. 260.
[4] Stow, *London*, bk. ii, p. 163.

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postage when it was prepaid. Then there were an alphabet-man, who posted the names of merchants for whom letters had arrived, a sorter of paid letters, and a clerk of undertaxed letters.[1] In the Foreign Office, there were a controller, two sorters, an alphabet-man, and eight letter receivers, of whom two were women. In addition the Foreign Office had a rebate man who saw that overcharged letters were corrected. Both offices seem to have shared the carriers in common.[2]

Before 1680 there was no post between one part of London and another. A Londoner having a letter for delivery had either to take it himself or send it by a special messenger. The houses were not numbered and were generally recognized by the signs they bore or their nearness to some public building. Such was the condition in the metropolis when William Dockwra organized his London Penny Post. On the first of April, 1680, London found itself in possession of a postal system which in some respects was superior to that of to-day. In the Penny Post Office as so established there were employed a controller, an accountant, a receiver, thirteen clerks in the six offices, and about a hundred messengers to collect and deliver letters. The six offices were: —

The General Office in Star Court, Cornhill;
St. Paul's Office in Queen's Head Alley, Newgate Street;
Temple Office in Colchester Rents in Chancery Lane;
Westminster Office, St. Martin's Lane;
Southwark Office near St. Mary Overy's Church;
Hermitage Office in Swedeland Court, East Smithfield.

There were in all about 179 places in London where letters might be posted. Shops and coffee-houses were used for this purpose in addition to the six offices, and in almost every street a table might be seen at some door or shop-window bearing in large letters the sign "Penny Post Letters and Parcels are taken in here." From these places letters were collected every hour and taken to the six main receiving-houses. There they were sorted and stamped by the thirteen clerks. The same messengers carried them from

[1] *Notes and Queries*, series 9, i, p. 122; Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 15, app., pt. 2, p. 19; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1670, p. 578.

[2] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 15, app., pt. 2, p. 19.

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the receiving-houses to the people to whom they were addressed. There were four deliveries a day to most parts of the city and six or eight to the business centres.

The postage fee for all letters or parcels to be delivered within the bills of mortality was one penny, payable in advance. The penny rate was uniform for all letters and parcels up to one pound in weight, which was the maximum allowed. Articles or money to the value of £10 might be sent and the penny payment insured their safe delivery. There was a daily delivery to places ten or fifteen miles from London and there was also a daily collection for such places. The charge of one penny in such cases paid only for conveyance to the post-house and an additional penny was paid on delivery. From such places to London, however, only one penny was demanded and there was no fee for delivery. The carriers in London travelled on foot, but in some of the neighbouring towns they rode on horseback.[1]

Dockwra is credited with being the first to make use of post-marks. All letters were stamped at the six principal receiving-offices with the name of the receiving-office and the hour of their reception. For instance, we have samples of letters post-marked thus:

The first figure shows that they were Penny Post letters and that they were prepaid. The "W" in the centre is the initial letter of the receiving-office, Westminster. The second figure shows the hour of arrival at the Westminster office, 9 A.M. The earliest instance of these marks is on a letter dated Dec. 9, 1681, written by the Bishop of London to the Lord Mayor.[2]

[1] Stow, *London*, bk. v, pp. 403–04; Thos. DeLaune, *Present State of London*, 1681, pp. 346–47; W. Thornbury, *Old and New London*, ii, p. 209; Noorthouck, *Hist. of London*, 1773, p. 252. Noorthouck is mistaken in making Murray the promoter of the London Penny Post, although the idea may have originated with him.

[2] *Notes and Queries*, ser. 6, xi, p. 153; Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 10, app. 4, pp. 125, 132; Joyce, p. 38.

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Whenever letters came from any part of the world by the General Post, directed to persons in London or in any of the towns where the Penny Post carriers went, they were handed over to these carriers to be delivered. In the same way, letters directed to any part of the world might be left at any of the receiving-offices of the Penny Post to be carried by its messengers to the General Office. This must have increased greatly the number of letters carried by the General Post. In the case of letters arriving by the General and delivered by the Penny Post, the postage was paid on delivery.[1] Over two hundred and thirty years ago then, London had for a time a system of postal delivery not only unrivalled until a short time ago, but in the matter of parcel rates and insurance not yet equalled.

What was Dockwra's reward for the boon which he had conferred? He himself says that it had been undertaken at his sole charge and had cost him £10,000. It had not paid for the first few months, and the friends who had associated themselves with him fell away.[2] As long as it produced no surplus, Dockwra was left to do as he pleased, for the General Post was gaining indirectly from it. As soon as it began to pay, the Duke of York cast his eye on it. In 1683 an action was brought against Dockwra for infringing upon the prerogative of His Royal Highness, and the Duke won the case. The Penny Post was incorporated in the General Post soon after.[3] After William and Mary had come to the throne, Dockwra was given a pension of £500 a year for seven years. At the end of that time he was appointed manager of the Penny Post Department of the General Post and his pension was continued for three years longer. In 1700 he was dismissed, charged with "forbidding the taking in of band-boxes (unless very small) and all parcels above one pound in weight, with stopping parcels, and opening and detaining letters."[4] Such was Dockwra's reward and such had been

[1] DeLaune, *Present State of London*, 1681, p. 345.

[2] *Cal. B. P.*, 1697–1702, xliv, 56.

[3] Two men living in Limerick and Tipperary claimed in 1692 that they had organized a Penny Post in Ireland (*Cal. S. P. D.*, 1691–92, p. 449).

In 1704 the Countess Dowager of Thanet petitioned to be allowed to establish a Penny Post in Dublin, but nothing was done (*Cal. T. P.*, 1702–07, lxxxix, 305).

[4] *Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, lxxi, 40; Charles Knight, *London*, 1842, iii, p. 282.

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Witherings'. He who would reform the Post Office must be prepared to take his official life in his hands.

The transition between two reigns was usually a period of unrest and disquietude, and the Revolution which resulted in the expulsion of James was naturally accompanied by internal disorder. For a time the posts suffered quite severely. The Irish and Scotch mails were robbed several times and not even the "Black Box" escaped. This was the box in which were carried the despatches between Scotland and the Secretaries of State, the use of which was not discontinued until after the accession of the new King and Queen. After 1693 each Secretary was to send and receive his own despatches separately and all expenses were to be met from the proceeds of the London-Berwick post.[1] Major Wildman had been appointed to the oversight of the Post Office, but held office for a few months only, being succeeded in 1691 by Cotton and Frankland. The Postmasters-General were henceforth to act under the Lords of the Treasury.[2]

Important improvements in the frequency and extension of postal communication were inaugurated under the management of Cotton and Frankland. It was, however, for the extension of the foreign postal service and for that to Ireland and the plantations that their administration is most notable.

On Monday and Thursday letters went to France, Italy, and Spain, on Monday and Friday to the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, mails left for all parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and there was a daily post to Kent and the Downs. Letters arrived in London from all parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from Wales every Monday and from Kent and the Downs every day. Besides the establishment of the General Post in London, there were about 200 deputy postmasters employed in England and Scotland.[3] The Irish Post was supervised from London and during the Irish war its headquarters in Ireland

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 12, app., pt. 7, p. 262; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1690–91, p. 50; Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 15, app., pt. 9, pp. 144, 180; *Cal. T. P.*, 1557–1696, p. 284.

[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1689–90, pp. 59, 74; *Cal. T. P.*, 1557–1696, p. 203.

[3] Stow, *London*, bk. v, p. 401; DeLaune, *Present State of England*, ed. 1690, p. 343.

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were transferred from Dublin to Belfast. It was directly managed by a Deputy Postmaster-General, aided by ten or a dozen officials and clerks. The net receipts were sent to England and the books were audited by a deputy sent over by the Auditor-General of the English Post.[1]

The Scotch Post Office was not in so good condition as the Irish. The time when every Scotchman could read and write was yet very far distant. The only post road of any importance was from Edinburgh to Berwick and this had been established by the English. For many years the vast majority of letters travelling over this road were official despatches. After the crowns of England and Scotland were united, it was necessary for the English Government to keep in close touch with Scotland and "Black Box" made frequent journeys between the two countries. The canny people in the north had discovered a rich country to the south waiting to be exploited, and the post horses between Edinburgh and London were kept busy carrying the lean and hungry northern folk to the land of milk and honey. Until 1695 the English and Scotch Post Offices had been united under the English Postmaster-General with an Edinburgh deputy; but by the Scotch act of 1695 the Post Office of Scotland was separated from that of England. The terms of this act were much the same as those of the English act of 1660, although the rates established were somewhat higher. There was to be a Postmaster-General living in Edinburgh, who was to have the monopoly of carrying all letters and packets where posts were settled.[2]

The first proposal for a postal establishment in the American colonies came from New England in 1638. The reason given was that a post office was "so useful and absolutely necessary."[3] Nothing was done by the home government until fifty years later when a proclamation was issued, ordering letter offices to be settled in convenient places on the North American continent. Rates were established for the continental colonies and Jamaica.[4] In 1691, acting upon a report of the Governors of the Post-Office, the Lords

[1] *Cal. T. P.*, 1557–1696, pp. 369, 461.
[2] *Acts of Parliament of Scotland*, ix., pp. 417–419 (5 Wm. III).
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1574–1660, p. 273. [4] Joyce, pp. 196, 300.

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of Trade and Plantations granted a patent to Thomas Neale to establish post offices in North America. About the same time an act was passed by the Colony of Massachusetts appointing Andrew Hamilton Postmaster-General. The Lords of Trade and Plantations called attention to the fact that this act was not subject to the patent granted to Neale. Matters were adjusted by Neale himself, who appointed Hamilton his deputy in North America.[1] In 1699 a report was made by Cotton and Frankland to the Lords of the Treasury based on a memorial from Neale and Hamilton. The latter had established a regular weekly post between Boston and New York and from New York to Newcastle in Pennsylvania. The receipts had increased every year and now covered all expenses except Hamilton's own salary, £200. Postmasters had been appointed in New York and Philadelphia, Hamilton himself being in Boston. The New York postmaster received a salary of £20 with an additional £90 for carrying the mail half-way to Boston. The Philadelphia postmaster was paid £10 a year.[2]

The business of the Post Office was rapidly increasing. The same decade that saw the establishment of the Board of Trade witnessed also the organization of the Colonial Post. The expansion of English commerce [3] necessarily reacted on communications both internal and foreign, while the linking of the country posts with the general system and the stimulus given by the London Penny Post showed itself in the increased postal revenue.[4] The way was prepared for the great expansion of the following century, an expansion turned to account as a source of taxation.

[1] *Cal. S. P. Am. and W. I.*, 1693–96, p. 637.
[2] *Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, lx, 77.
[3] Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, ii, 707.
[4] See Appendix: Tables I, II.

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CHAPTER III

THE POSTAL ESTABLISHMENT AN INSTRUMENT OF TAXATION

1711–1840

THE year 1711 is an important landmark in the history of the British Post Office. England and Scotland had united not only under one king but under one Parliament, the war with France made a larger revenue necessary, the growth of the Colonies required better communication with the mother country and each other, and it was highly expedient that certain changes in the policy of the Post Office should receive parliamentary sanction. The act of 1711 was intended to meet these conditions. The English and Scotch Post Offices were united under one Postmaster-General in London, where letters might be received from and sent to all parts of Great Britain, Ireland, the colonies and foreign countries. The postage rates were increased to meet the demand for a larger revenue. In addition to the General Office in London, chief letter offices were ordered to be set up in Edinburgh, Dublin, New York, the West Indies, and other American colonies, and deputies were appointed to take charge of them.

One of the most important clauses of this act, by providing regulations for the management of the London Penny Post, finally placed the seal of the approval of Parliament upon a branch of the General Post, which had existed for nearly thirty years by virtue of royal proclamations and legal decisions alone. A penny rate was imposed upon all letters and packets passing by the Penny Post in London, Westminster and Southwark to be received and delivered within ten miles from the General Post Office building. This would seem at first sight to be an improvement on the old custom, by which a penny had carried only within the bills of mortality; but as a matter of fact an extra penny was demanded on letters delivered outside the bills and within the ten mile limit. Protest

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was, however, made against this as being illegal, and it was not until 1730 that the custom was sanctioned.[1]

One other provision of the new act remains to be mentioned. The last section forbade any official connected with the Post Office from meddling in politics.[2] The system of party government which had begun to take form during William and Mary's reign, was developing. Under Anne, the Whigs had been the war party, the expansionists, while the Tories were anxious for peace. So different were their policies that Marlborough had gone over to the Whigs. But the Queen and probably the majority of the people were tired of war. Godolphin, the great financier, had given way to Harley and the general election was favourable to the Tories. Frankland had died before the act was passed, but Cotton, who was a member of Parliament, preferred to keep his position in the Post Office and accordingly accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. A Mr. Evelyn was associated with him as Postmaster-General.

Shortly after his appointment the attention of the department was directed to a weakness in administrative control which had already resulted in considerable financial loss. The Postmasters-General had always experienced considerable difficulty in collecting the postage on bye and cross road letters.[3] Since these letters did not reach London, no check was possible to ascertain whether the postmaster transmitted to headquarters the full amount of the postage collected on them. The difficulty had been met before 1711 by farming a large number of the country post offices.[4] In 1711 the leases under which the farmers had held office were cancelled and all the posts in the kingdom came again under the direct oversight of the Postmasters-General. The old farmers were made managers, with an allowance of 10 per cent from the net proceeds of the posts under their control, and the deputy postmasters were again paid directly by the state. The Government had refused

[1] In 1765 the maximum weight for articles passing wholly by the Penny Post was lowered from 16 to 4 ounces (5 Geo. III, c. 25).

[2] 9 Anne, c. 11.

[3] A bye-letter was the name given to a letter carried over one of the great roads but not passing to, from or through London. A cross post letter passed not over the great roads, but over subsidiary or minor roads.

[4] Joyce, p. 136.

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to appoint surveyors when the act of 1711 was drafted and for a time these managers acted in that capacity.[1] The experiment was not a success and the Postmasters-General were at their wits' end to know what to do to save the revenue which was being diverted to the pockets of the country postmasters.

The country was happily spared any new device on their part, for in 1721 a man came forward with a proposal to take all the losses upon himself or rather to prevent them entirely. This was Ralph Allen, whose name is worth remembering, not as a reformer but as a good business man who came to the rescue of the postal revenue at a rather critical time. He was the son of an innkeeper at St. Blazey. At an early age we find him living with his grandmother, the postmistress of St. Columb. He came under the notice of one of the surveyors there on account of the neatness with which he kept the accounts for his grandmother. When he was old enough, he was appointed to a position in the Post Office at Bath and in time was made postmaster there. Tradition has it that during the insurrection of 1715 he informed the authorities that a wagon load of arms was on its way from the West for the use of the rebels and that this led to his preferment.[2] He offered to farm the cross and bye posts throughout the kingdom. The net product from these posts amounted to £4000 in 1719. Allen offered to pay half as much again and meet all expenses. The offer was accepted, and in 1721 he was given the lease of the cross and bye posts for a period of seven years. The rent was fixed at £6000 a year in accordance with the agreement. For the first quarter, the receipts exceeded expectations, but later the postmasters began to relapse into their old ways. In addition, the contract was rather hard on Allen, as £300 of the £4000 nominally received by the Post Office was for letters not delivered and hence not paid for. After the third year, matters began to improve and the receipts increased greatly. The contract was renewed for terms of seven years, until Allen's death in 1769, and the rent was increased at each renewal.[3]

How did he succeed when so many others had failed? In the first

[1] *Cal. T. P.*, 1714–19, cxc, 26; ccvi, 29. [2] Joyce, p. 146.

[3] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1731–34, p. 539; W. Thornbury, *Old and New London*, ii, p. 209; W. Lewins, *Her Majesty's Mails*, ed. 1865, pp. 104–12.

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place he introduced the use of post bills and every postmaster had to distinguish on these bills the bye letters from all others. The voucher, which he also introduced, seems to have been only an acknowledgment of the amount to be collected by each postmaster. Besides this, Allen had a most intimate knowledge of the various post towns in the kingdom, of their importance and of the number of letters which might naturally be expected to pass between them. He based his conclusions upon quite obvious considerations. Between any two towns of much the same importance he expected about the same correspondence, that it would not vary much, and that the letters received and despatched would pretty well equal each other.[1]

When Allen's contract was renewed in 1741 it was proposed that he should be obliged to settle and support at his own charge posts six days a week instead of the former tri-weekly posts between London, Cambridge, Lynn, Norwich, and Yarmouth and from London to Bath, Bristol, Gloucester, and intermediate towns. This was not done at once, but during the next few years this proposition was put into effect.[2] In 1734, in addition to his cross and bye post letters, Allen undertook to pay for the improvements which he had made in the conveyance of country letters.[3] He pointed out at the same time that there was some opposition between the two parts of his contract, since country and cross post letters interfered more or less with each other.[4]

Allen died in 1769, being worth, according to current report, £500,000. Lewins says that he made £12,000 a year from his farm. Probably both statements are exaggerated, but it is certain that he accumulated a respectable fortune while managing the bye and cross posts.[5]

[1] Joyce, pp. 155, 162.

[2] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1739–41, pp. 449–450.

[3] Country letters were those sent through London. *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1739–41, p. 450.

[4] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1734–41, pp. 445, 450; W. Thornbury, *Old and New London*, ii, p. 209.

[5] He is the man to whom Pope alluded in the couplet,

"Let humble Allen, with an honest shame,
Do good by stealth and blush to find it fame."

Allen and the poet had a falling out just before the death of the latter. In his will, Pope left his quondam friend £150 to pay a "few little debts." Allen is said to have

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There had been a considerable increase in the staff of the General Office and many improvements introduced since 1711. At the head of the office were two Commissioners called Postmasters-General, each with a salary of £2000, assisted by a Secretary and four clerks. There were in addition a Receiver-General, an Accountant-General, a Solicitor, a Resident-Surveyor, and two inspectors of missent letters. In addition to the Penny Post carriers, who were employed also by the General Post, there were a Court Messenger and a carrier for the House of Commons. At the General Office, letters were taxed and sorted by the "Clerks of the Road" and their assistants and by seventeen sorters. The window-man and alphabet-keeper received the money on prepaid letters and posted lists of those for whom letters had arrived. Undertaxed letters from the country were re-taxed by the "Clerks of the Road." Besides the receiving-houses of the Penny Post where all letters might be posted, there were thirty receiving-houses for the General Post. Letters were conveyed from these to the central office by sixty-nine carriers.[1]

Letters were sent every night to the principal South and Midland towns of England. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, there were mails for all parts of England and Scotland and on Tuesday and Saturday for Ireland and Wales. On Monday and Thursday, letters were sent to France, Spain, and Italy, on Monday and Friday to Germany, Flanders, Sweden, and Denmark, and on Tuesday and Friday to Holland. Letters arrived in London every day from the South and Midland towns, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from all parts of England and Scotland, and on Monday and Friday from Ireland and Wales.[2] It will be seen from this that the improvements in postal communications, which had taken place since the beginning of the century, had been confined to the South and Midland towns of England and to foreign countries.

With the foregoing enlargement of postal facilities an old griev-

remarked that if Pope had added another figure, it would have represented better the "few little debts." W. Lewins, *Her Majesty's Mails*, pp. 104–12.

[1] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1742–45, pp. 102–235; Maitland, *Survey of London*, p. 998; Noorthouck, *Hist. of London*, 1773, p. 658.

[2] J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, 1893, p. 235; *London and its Environs*, 1761, v, pp. 209–222.

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ance on the part of the public began to assume an acute form. It had always been a debated question as to how far the postmasters were responsible for the delivery of letters. There was no general rule upon the question and the practice varied in different parts of England. Although the towns on the post roads were fairly well off as far as their letters were concerned, it was different with those places which were neither on the great roads nor on the bye-roads leading off from them. The mails for such places were left at the nearest post towns and were conveyed to their destination by carriers and messengers. Cotton and Frankland stated that in addition to collecting the regular postage, they demanded for this service an extra payment of *3d.*, *6d.*, and sometimes *12d.* It was proposed in 1699 that the delivery should be made by persons appointed to collect as well as to deliver all letters and parcels. For this they were allowed to take one penny or whatever the people wished to give them.[1] In Sandwich the cross and bye post letters had always been delivered free, although a fee was charged for the London letters. The postmaster there decided to charge for all letters, and the inhabitants of Sandwich protested. The case was carried to the courts and the Post Office lost. Sandwich, however, was a place where there had been a free delivery of part of the letters at least. The Postmasters-General were very much disturbed at this decision and still more disturbed lest the courts might decide for free delivery in other post towns, which had always paid. They resolved to bring on a test case. The town of Hungerford in Berkshire was chosen, as it could be proved that the postmaster of that place had received a penny for each letter delivered since the beginning of the century. The case came before the Court of King's Bench, Lord Mansfield presiding, and the Post Office lost again. This case was decided in 1774, and the next year the "Liverpool Advertiser" records a complaint to the Postmasters-General that there was only one letter carrier in Liverpool. The reply was that only one carrier was maintained in any provincial town and that Liverpool could expect no better treatment.[2]

[1] *Cal. T. B.*, 1697–1702, lxiv, 17; *ibid.*, 1702–07, lxxxvi, 134.

[2] E. Green, *Bibliotheca Somersetensis*, 1902, i, p. 108; Joyce, pp. 107–108; Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, p. 416.

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At the same time that the Post Office received this adverse decision it had begun to suffer severely from the illegal carriage of letters by the post coaches. These post coaches were so called merely because they were most numerous on the post roads. John Palmer, the proprietor of a theatre in Bath, pointed out to the Postmasters-General that the coaches were speedier and cheaper than the post boys who carried the mails on horseback and proposed that he should be allowed to establish mail coaches and thus save the postage on letters illegally carried by the post coaches. His coaches were to be protected by a guard, presumably a retired soldier, who was to be armed with two guns and to sit facing the road in front of him. The driver was to carry pistols. No outside passengers were to be carried, since they impeded the guard in performing his duties. The speed was to be not less than eight or nine miles an hour, twice as fast as the post boys travelled. In addition the mails were to leave London at 8 P.M. instead of after midnight. The coaches were all to leave London together and return together as far as possible. To insure this they were not to wait for government letters when the latter were delayed.[1]

The first mail coach ran between London and Bristol in 1784. It was furnished by contractors at a cost of 3*d*. a mile. This was the initial cost, however, and by 1797, the rate had been reduced to a penny a mile each way. In the early part of August, 1784, there was only one mail coach. At the end of the same month, coaches went to Norwich, Nottingham, Liverpool, and Manchester. During the next year they were sent to Leeds, Gloucester, Swansea, Hereford, Milford, Worcester, Birmingham, Shrewsbury, Holyhead, Exeter, Portsmouth, and other places. In 1786 they ran between London and Edinburgh. In 1797 there were forty-two mail coach routes established, connecting sixty of the most important towns in the kingdom, as well as intermediate places. These coaches travelled a total distance of 4110 miles and cost the Government £12,416 a year, only half the sum paid for post horses and riders under the old system. The coaches made daily journeys over nearly two thirds of the total distance traversed and tri-weekly journeys over something less than one third the total distance. The

[1] *D. N. B.*, xliii, p. 140; Knight, *London*, 1842, iii, p. 280.

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remainder travelled one, two, four, and six times a week. The result of the establishment of these mail coaches was summed up by a Parliamentary committee in the following words: "They have lessened the chance of robbery, diminished the need for special messengers and expresses, and now carry the letters formerly sent by post coaches."[1]

Palmer had been appointed Controller-General of the Post Office and had chosen as his assistant a man by the name of Bonner. Palmer himself was of a violent and headstrong disposition, and as ill-luck would have it, Walsingham, one of the Postmasters-General, was as masterful as himself. Palmer considered that his office was outside the scope of Walsingham's authority, and although he failed in making his position absolutely free from the control of the Postmasters-General, yet he heeded them as little as possible. He organized a newspaper department without consulting his superiors and paid no attention to them when an explanation was asked. He stirred up the London merchants to complain about the late delivery of their letters, a delay which he had probably brought about intentionally. A mail coach had been ordered by Walsingham to carry the King's private despatches while His Majesty was taking the waters at Cheltenham. This was done without consulting Palmer, who was so indignant that he persuaded the contractor to send in an enormous bill for supplying the coach. All this came out through the treachery of Bonner, who owed his advancement entirely to the friend whom he betrayed. He went so far as to hand over to the Postmasters-General the private letters which Palmer had written him. Palmer was dismissed in 1792 with a pension.[2]

At the time of Palmer's appointment, a Treasury warrant had been issued for the payment to him of £1500 a year and 2 per cent of the increase from the Post Office revenue, but this warrant had been pronounced illegal by the Attorney-General. Through Pitt's influence, Palmer finally obtained £1500 a year and 2 per cent on any increase in net revenue over £240,000 a year. Palmer objected

[1] *Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Rep. Com.*, ii, pp. 4, 36, 37, 98; *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, p. 114; *D. N. B.*, xliii, p. 140.

[2] *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, pp. 82–83; Joyce, pp. 251, 275.

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to this on the ground that the old net revenue was only £150,000 a year, but Pitt replied that the increased rates of 1784 would produce at least £90,000. It is improbable, however, that the new rates produced the increase estimated. In 1797 Palmer presented a petition to the House of Commons, asking for the arrears due him according to his method of estimating the increase in net revenue, upon which his percentage was due. He said that before his system was introduced the gross product of the Post Office was decreasing at the rate of £13,000 a year. This was not true. He claimed that the increase after 1784 was wholly due to his own reforms, taking no account of the increased rates and the industrial expansion of England. No action was taken by Parliament.[1]

One of the arguments advanced by Palmer for the use of mail coaches was their security against robbers. Previous to and during the rebellion of 1745 numerous attempts were made to rob the mails, and many of them were successful. These robberies occurred principally at night. It was said that the mails were carried by boys not always of the best character, and that very often they were in league with the robbers. The Postmasters-General asked for soldiers to patrol the roads where these robberies were the most frequent. This was the method which Cromwell had used to protect the mails. The request does not seem to have been granted, but in 1765 the death penalty was imposed for robbing the mail and for stealing a letter containing a bank note or bill. Any post boy deserting the mail or allowing any one but the guard to ride on the horse or carriage with the mails was liable to commitment to hard labour.[2] Palmer's prediction was fulfilled by the comparative safety with which the mails were carried after his coaches had come into use.

Charles, Earl of Tankerville, and Lord Carteret had been the Postmasters-General in 1782 and 1783. On the fall of Shelburne's ministry in the latter year, Tankerville left the Post Office, but Carteret still remained. So far these two men had worked to-

[1] *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, p. 127; *Jo. H. C.*, 1796–97, p. 581.

[2] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1739–41, p. 234; 5 Geo. III, c. 25. The Post Office occasionally made good the loss of valuables from theft or robbery, but as a rule refused to do so. *Cal. T. P.*, 1729–30, p. 75; *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1731–34, p. 74.

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gether fairly well, although Tankerville had a suspicion that his colleague had been engaged in some doubtful transactions. In 1784, when Pitt became Prime Minister, Tankerville was restored to his old office. In the same year a transaction came under his notice which aroused his suspicion. A Mr. Lees had been appointed Secretary of the Irish Post Office. The man who had held this position was made agent of the Dover packet boats, the old agent having been superannuated. The new agent agreed to pay to his predecessor the full amount of the salary coming to the place, while he himself was to be paid by Mr. Lees the total salary coming to the Secretary in Ireland. So far there was nothing uncommon about the arrangement. The unusual part of the agreement and the part which attracted Tankerville's attention was Lees' promise to pay the money to "A. B.," an unknown person, after the old agent's death. Suspicion pointed to Carteret as the man to whom the money was to be paid. Lees himself denied this, but did not say who "A. B." was.[1]

In 1787 a Mr. Staunton, the postmaster of Islesworth, a position worth £400 a year, was in addition appointed Controller and Resident Surveyor of the Bye and Cross Posts, to which was attached a salary of £500, coals and candles and a house. The First Lord of the Treasury proposed that the house should not go with the office, and Carteret decided that Staunton should receive an extra £100 a year in lieu of the house. Tankerville refused to agree to this, and the contention became so warm that the whole matter was referred to Pitt, who, rather than lose Carteret's political support, dismissed Tankerville.[2] Tankerville at once demanded an investigation, which was granted. The results showed the Post Office to be in a deplorable state. Tankerville was completely exonerated, but failed to obtain much sympathy on account of the violence of his attack upon Pitt and Carteret. It came out in the investigation that "A. B." was a foreigner named Treves, who had no claim on the Post Office or any other department of the government except that he was a friend of Carteret. Carteret himself knew the condition of his appointment, but had done nothing except to express himself displeased with the whole arrangement. A payment of £200 a year

[1] *Jo. H. C.*, 1787, p. 800.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1787, p. 800.

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had also been exacted from Mr. Dashwood, Postmaster-General of Jamaica, as the condition of his appointment, and that too had gone to Treves. The agent at Helvoetsluys had been allowed by Carteret to sell his position to a man as incapable as himself. Staunton's office had been abolished soon after his appointment, and he had been allowed to retire at the age of forty years with a pension of £600 a year in the face of the rule that officers of an advanced age and after long service were allowed upon retirement to receive only two thirds of their salaries.[1]

The Postmasters-General had received in 1783, in addition to their salaries, over £900 for coals. They had also received £694 for candles during two years and a half and £150 for tinware for the same period. Tankerville had taken his share of these perquisites, but it is only fair to add that Carteret's emoluments exceeded his by £213 for the periods under consideration. It had become customary to receive a money payment in place of a large part of their supplies. In 1782 the total sum going to the officials of the General Office amounted to £28,431, of which sum about £10,000 were placed under the heading of emoluments other than salaries.[2] Of all the departments of the Post Office, the Sailing Packet Service was the one most in need of reform.

The light, which was then let in among the dark places of the Post Office, had a most excellent effect. Acting on the report furnished by the committee of the House, a new establishment was effected in 1793. The reforms were approved by the Postmasters-General and carried out under the direction of the Lords of the Treasury. The good work had been begun in 1784 by Palmer. He had appointed additional clerks, letter carriers, surveyors and messengers, had established new offices, and had increased the inadequate pay of minor officials. This had entailed an increase of £19,022 in expenses in the General and Penny Posts, but the increase was justified by increased efficiency and by larger returns from the conveyance of letters. Of the total increase, £11,451 had been spent on the General Office and £7571 on the Penny Post, to which had been added eighty-six more letter carriers for London

[1] *Jo. H. C.*, 1787, p. 800.

[2] *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, pp. 82–83; *Jo. H. C.*, 1787, p. 817.

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and seventy-eight more for the suburbs, as well as some supernumerary carriers.[1] The reforms introduced in 1793 may be grouped under three heads: regulations respecting fees and emoluments, abolition of some offices and an increase in officers and clerks in others; regulation of official business. The regulations respecting fees and emoluments were necessarily negative in their character. The most important were as follows: The postmasters were no longer to pay fees to the Postmasters-General on the renewal of the bonds given by their securities. The two per cent allowed to the Scotch Deputy Postmaster-General on all remittances from Scotland was discontinued and a compensation for life was granted instead. The fees for tinware were abolished, and the pension to the New York agent was to cease. No postal official was allowed to own shares in the sailing packets, and with a few minor exceptions all salaries were henceforth to be in lieu of every emolument or fee.[2]

A number of sinecure and useless offices were abolished. The chief among them were: Jamineau's perquisite office which had the monopoly of selling newspapers to the "Clerks of the Roads," the Secretary's position as agent for the packets, the Controller of the Bye and Cross Posts, the Inspector of Dead Letters in the Bye Letter Office, the Collector in the Bye Letter Office, the Secretary of the Foreign Office, and the Controller of the Inland Office.[3]

The changes in business regulations were as follows: The Postmasters-General were no longer to include legal charges, chaise hire, and pensions under the head of dead letters. The Postmasters-General's warrant must be entered previous to any money being paid. The payment of debts must be enforced. The West India accounts should be sent to the deputy there every quarter. The payments to mail coach contractors must be made directly by warrant instead of through the Controller-General. No change was made in the anomalous position of the Accountant-General. He was supposed to be a check upon the Receiver-General, but had to depend upon the Receiver-General's books for verifying the remittances from the deputies.[4]

The Englishman's belief in the sanctity of vested interests has

[1] *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, pp. 3, 66–83.
[2] *Ibid.*, no. 7, pp. 52–65.
[3] *Ibid.*, no. 7, pp. 52–65.
[4] *Ibid.*, no. 7, pp. 8, 52–65.

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usually been too strong to permit any abridgment of rights or privileges without compensation. Those postal officials who had been dismissed or whose sinecure offices had been abolished were not to be turned entirely adrift. Provision was made for pensioning most of them. Before the reform the total sum paid by the Post Office in pensions was £1500. The incumbrances dismissed were allowed £6101, and between 1793 and 1797 £1475 more were added to the pension list. It was pointed out at the time that it was far better to pension them off and leave them to die than to continue them in service. In 1797 it was a relief to be able to announce "that already £648 had been saved from dead and promoted pensioners."[1]

The report of the committee which had been appointed at Tankerville's suggestion is silent on the question of the opening and detention of letters. It had been provided by the act of 1711 that no letters should be opened or detained except under protection of an express warrant from one of the Secretaries of State. The Royal Commission of 1844 reported that from 1712 to 1798, the number of warrants so issued was 101, excluding those which were well known or easily ascertained. The Secretary of State for the Inland Department issued most of them. From 1798 to 1844, 372 warrants were issued, many of them being general warrants and often for very trivial causes. At the trial of Bishop Atterbury, the principal witnesses against him were Post Office clerks, who had opened and copied letters to and from him, under warrant from one of the Secretaries.[2]

In addition to this regular method for intercepting letters, a particular department had been in existence for some time with no other duties than to examine letters. Strictly speaking it had nothing to do with the Post Office and was supported entirely from the "Secret Service Fund." The truth about it came out in the examination of the conduct of Sir Robert Walpole by the "Committee of Secrecy." From 1732 to 1742, £45,675 had been spent upon this department. It had originated in 1718 and the expenses

[1] *Fin. Rep.*, no. 7, p. 130.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, pp. 9–11; app., p. 105 (78); app., p. 107 (79); app., p. 111 (83).

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for that year were only £446, but by 1742 they had increased more than tenfold. The Secretary of the Post Office in giving his evidence before the committee, said that this office received instructions from the Secretaries of State and reported to them. The working force consisted of a chief decipherer, assisted by his son and three other decipherers, five clerks, the Controller of the Foreign Office, a doorkeeper and a former alphabet keeper. Either considerable business was transacted there or it was a retreat for useless officials.[1]

An account is given in Howell's "State Trials" of the trial of Hensey and of the practice then in vogue for finding treasonable correspondence. His letters were handed over for investigation to the Secretary of State by a Post Office clerk. This clerk in giving his evidence said that when war was declared against any nation, the Postmasters-General issued orders at once to stop all suspected letters. These orders were given to all the Post Office clerks and letter carriers. Such instructions can only be justified as a war measure, for the act of 1711 had provided that no letter should be detained or opened unless by express warrant from one of the Secretaries of State for every such detention or opening.[2]

We find very few complaints about the opening of letters during the second half of the eighteenth century. On the other hand it must be confessed that letters were at times opened and searched merely to learn the beliefs and plans of political opponents. It is difficult to determine to how great an extent this practice was prevalent as there seems little doubt that the complainants may occasionally have been prompted by their own vanity to believe that their correspondence had been tampered with.[3] In 1795, during the great war with France, the Government ordered all letters directed to the United Provinces to be detained. The question then was, what was to be done with them? None of them seems to have been opened and the cause for their detention was only to prevent any information being given to the enemy. Accordingly

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 112 (84); *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1742–45, p. 669.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 112 (85); Howell, *State Trials*, xix, col. 1369. This was in 1758.

[3] Joyce is of opinion that such practices were very common. So also is May (T. E. May, *Constitutional History of England*, 1882, iii, pp. 44–49; D. B. Eaton, *Civil Service in Great Britain*, New York, 1880, p. 115).

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by an act of Parliament passed in the same year, the Post Office was empowered to return them to the writers.[1]

Although the larger part of the fees and emoluments enjoyed by the postal officials had been abolished in 1793, the proceeds from those which were left continued to increase steadily. By far the most lucrative was the privilege of franking newspapers, within the kingdom, to the colonies, and to foreign countries. Ever since newspapers had been printed, the "Clerks of the Roads" had been allowed to send them to any part of the kingdom without paying postage. After 1763, when members of Parliament were allowed the same privilege, every one felt at liberty to make use of a member's frank for this purpose, and the Clerks suffered accordingly. Newspapers to the Colonies were franked by the Secretary of the Post Office and produced a revenue of £3700 in 1817, all of which went to Sir Francis Freeling who was then Secretary. In 1825 the privilege of franking papers within the kingdom and to the colonies was withdrawn, but compensation was granted to Sir Francis.[2] This did not end the trouble, for the Clerks still acted as newspaper venders. On account of their official position they were able to post them until 8 P.M., while the regular newsvenders were allowed to do so only until 5 P.M. at the Lombard Street Office and 6 P.M. at the General Office or they must pay a special fee of a halfpenny on each.[3] Mr. Hume, the member for Montrose, brought the case before the House, and in 1834 all Post Office officials were forbidden to sell newspapers. At the same time the officials in the Foreign Office lost the right to frank papers to any foreign country.[4]

The members of the Secretary's office had, since 1799 and 1801, issued two official publications, which paid no postage. These were called the "Packet List" and the "Shipping List." The first of these contained all the intelligence received at the Post Office concerning the sailing packets. The second contained information about private vessels, furnished principally by "Lloyds." The Commissioners commented upon this practice in very uncompli-

[1] 35 Geo. III, c. 62.
[2] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, pp. 215–222.
[3] London *Times*, 1829, Oct. 6, p. 2; *ibid.*, 1832, March 14, p. 1.
[4] *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., xxiv, col. 875.

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mentary language.[1] In addition, the members of the Secretary's department received fees on the deputations granted to new postmasters in England and Wales, upon commissions granted to agents and postmasters abroad, upon private expresses to and from London, and upon news supplied to the London press during a general election.[2] In 1837 the fees on deputations and commissions were abolished, private expresses were discontinued, the "Shipping List" was discontinued, and the "Packet List" passed from the control of the Post Office. The revenue from these fees in the Secretary's Office which were still continued was to go henceforth to the general revenue.[3]

An extra charge of 6*d.* was demanded upon letters posted between 7 P.M. and 8 P.M. This had been the rule since 1800, and the proceeds went either to the Inland or Foreign Office. So also did the registration fees on ships' letters. These fees were transferred to the general revenue in 1837.[4] In 1827 the total amount received in fees, emoluments, and gratuities by the officials in the London Office was £23,100, by agents and country postmasters £16,500. Most of these were either abolished or transferred to the general revenue in 1837.[5]

The distinguishing feature of the Post Office during the eighteenth century was the extension of its service, which accompanied the industrial expansion of the kingdom. The abuses which naturally flourish during a prosperous period had been largely remedied by the reform of 1793. The nation's need for a larger revenue led not only to a great increase in postage rates but also to stricter economy in the organization of the Post Office. The London and Dublin Penny Posts were reformed and extended, the work of the General and Penny Posts in London was harmonized, the employees were increased, and the new departments which had been established were reformed and consolidated.

The Newspaper Office which had been illegally established by

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1817, pp. 4–16; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 8th rep. app., nos. 12, 13, 14.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1837, xxxiv, 8th rep., app., no. 12.

[3] *Acc. & P.*, 1837–38, xlv, 265, p. 5.

[4] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 8th rep., app., no. 3.

[5] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, p. 214.

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Palmer was continued after his dismissal. Walsingham had objected to it on the ground that Palmer had no right to appoint any officials without his consent. Previously all newspapers had been forwarded to the postmasters free of postage by the "Clerks of the Roads." Now that they might be sent with the letters, they were brought in at the last moment still wet from the press so that they defaced the writing on the letters sent in the same bag.[1] In 1784 a Dead Letter Office was also established. Previously, dead and missent letters had been handed to a clerk in the General Office. During Allen's farm of the cross and bye post letters, missent letters were no longer forwarded to London, but any postmaster, into whose hands they came, was instructed to place them on the right track.[2] Four years later a third office was instituted, a Money Order Office. No order could be issued for more than five guineas and the fee for that sum was 4*s.* 6*d.* It was started as a private speculation by some of the postal officials and so remained until 1838 when it was taken over by the General Post Office.[3]

The policy of the Post Office with reference to the registration of letters containing valuables varied with the nature of the enclosure and the manner in which it was sent. On ships' letters sent from England, the registration fee was one guinea, and a receipt was given to the person sending a registered letter. The fee for a letter coming into the kingdom was only 5*s.*[4] If bank notes were enclosed in a letter, it received no special attention from the Post Office. If gold or silver was sent in a letter marked "money letter," the postmaster placed it in a separate envelope and made a special entry on the way bill, which was repeated at every office it passed through. No special fee was charged for the extra attention bestowed upon these letters until 1835 when the Postmaster-General was allowed to charge a fee for their registration in addition to the ordinary postage.[5] The Money Order Department, still a private undertaking, had its fees reduced from 6*d.* to 3*d.* on sums not ex-

[1] *Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Rep. Com.*, ii, p. 87.
[2] *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, pp. 82–83.
[3] W. Thornbury, *Old and New London*, ii, p. 212.
[4] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 8th rep., app., no. 3.
[5] *London Times*, 1832, Apr. 27, p. 3; 5 and 6 Wm. IV, c. 25; 3 and 4 Vict., c. 96.

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ceeding £2 and from 18*d.* to 6*d.* on sums exceeding £2 but not more than £5.[1]

At the same time that the General Post was being reformed, a former letter carrier by the name of Johnson was improving the Penny Post. The six principal receiving-houses which Dockwra had instituted had been reduced to five and were now still further reduced to two. The subsidiary receiving-houses in the shops and coffee-houses were increased and the number of letter carriers more than doubled. Six regular deliveries for the city proper and three for the suburbs were introduced. Before 1793 the deliveries in the city had not been made at the same time, for the carriers had to go to one of the main receiving-houses to get their letters. The deliveries were now made as near the same time as possible all over the city and the delivery hours were posted so that people might know when to expect the carriers and thus act as a check upon them. Mounted messengers conveyed the letters to those carriers who delivered in distant parts of the city.[2]

In 1794 an act was passed "to regulate the postage and conveyance of letters by the carriage called the Penny Post." The rate for letters posted in London, Westminster, Southwark and the suburbs for any place within these places and their suburbs remained one penny. Letters sent from these places to any place outside paid 2*d.* as before. Hitherto letters sent from outside to London, Westminster, Southwark and the suburbs had paid only one penny. This was raised by the act of 1794 to 2*d.* It was also provided that the postage for Penny Post letters need not be paid in advance. This would increase the expense but the idea was probably to secure greater safety in the delivery of letters. Finally, the surplus revenue at the end of each quarter was to be considered part of the revenue of the General Post.[3]

The changes introduced by Johnson and the act of 1794 were in the right direction. This seems a reasonable conclusion not so much on account of the increase in net product, which was not great, as on account of the increase in gross product, showing that the num-

[1] London *Times*, 1837, Jan. 26, p. 5; Dec. 13, p. 4; *Acc. & P.*, 1841, xxvi, 221, no. 6.

[2] Joyce, p. 302; *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, p. 83.

[3] 34 Geo. III, c. 17.

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ber of letters and parcels sent by the Penny Post had doubled. The financial condition of the Penny Post before and after the reform is shown by the following figures:—

	Average Yearly Gross Product	*Average Yearly Expense*	*Average Yearly Net Product*
1790–1794	£11,089	£5289	£6000
1795–1797	£26,283	£18,960	£7323 [1]

London was not the only place which could boast a Penny Post in 1793. The system was extended in that year to Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol, and Birmingham, while Dublin had been so favoured since 1773. It is almost unnecessary to add that in all these places, it was a pronounced success from a financial and social point of view.[2]

In 1801 the London Penny Post which had lasted for 120 years was practically swept out of existence, for *2d.* was then charged where a penny had formerly been the rate. An exception was made in the case of letters passing first by the General Post, for on these the old rate still held.[3] Four years later, the limits of the Twopenny Post, as it was called, were restricted to the General Post Delivery and *3d.* was charged for letters crossing the bounds of this delivery. This was called the Threepenny Post.[4] The effect of the increased rates and the growth of population in the metropolis is shown by the increase in gross receipts, which rose from £11,768 in 1703 to £96,089 in 1816 and to £105,052 in 1823. During the same period, the number of letter carriers was increased from 181 to 235, and nineteen officials were added to the establishment.[5]

Although the General, the Twopenny, and the Threepenny Posts, were all under one management, no attempt was made to harmonize their methods of procedure until 1831. Letters for the General Post were often entrusted to the Twopenny Post but the receiving-houses of both Posts were frequently established in the same street and close together. The General Post had seventy receiving-houses in the city, the Twopenny Post 209, the Threepenny Post 200 more in

[1] *Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Rep. Com.*, ii, p. 94.
[2] 41 Geo. III, c. 7.
[3] Joyce, pp. 196, 300.
[4] 45 Geo. III, c. 11.
[5] *Acc. & P.*, 1817, pp. 15, 16; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, pp. 10, 136.

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the suburbs and adjoining country. In addition there were 110 "bellmen" who collected letters from door to door, ringing their bells as they went. They charged one penny for each letter collected.[1] The General Post receiving-houses closed at 7 P.M., the Twopenny receiving-houses at 8 P.M., but letters might be posted at the Charing Cross Office until 8.30 and at the General Office until 9 P.M.[2] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were three deliveries, by the Inland, Foreign, and Twopenny Post carriers. The limits of the Inland Post Delivery were very irregular and left out a large part of the populous suburbs. The Foreign Post Delivery was also very irregular and still more restricted in area. The Twopenny Post Delivery included London, Westminster, Southwark and their suburbs, and was the most extensive. Letters were delivered by the Threepenny Post within an irregular area bounded on the inside by the Twopenny Delivery and extending nearly twelve miles from the General Post Office. The separate delivery of foreign letters was abolished first and all foreign letters were delivered by the General Post carriers, and in 1831 the deliveries of the General and Twopenny Posts were made coextensive, extending to a distance of three miles from the General Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand. Three years later the Twopenny Post building in Gerard Street was given up and all Twopenny Post letters henceforth were sent to the General Post Office building to be sorted.[3]

The regular collections of Twopenny Post letters were made at 8 A.M., 10 A.M., 12 M. and 2, 5 and 8 P.M. Deliveries were made at the same hours in the morning, at noon, and at 2, 4 and 7 o'clock in the afternoon. A letter posted at or before 8 A.M. was sent for delivery at 10 A.M. and so on. The letters collected were taken to the General Office by horsemen to be sorted. Two sets of men were employed, one collecting while the other delivered.[4] There was an additional "early delivery" as it was called. The carriers on the

[1] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 9th rep., app., no. 1; *ibid.*, 1829, xi, pp. 310–311; *London Times*, 1825, Dec. 6, p. 2.

[2] London *Times*, 1835, Jan. 24, p. 3.

[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 9th rep., app., nos. 30, 63, 64.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1837, xxxiv, 9th rep., app., no. 1; London *Times*, 1835, Jan. 24, p. 3.

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way to their own "walks" delivered letters to subscribers, who paid 5*s*. a quarter for the accommodation thus afforded. The postage for letters so delivered was not paid until the carriers called again on their regular delivery.[1] In 1837 the times of the regular deliveries were changed to every second hour from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. and collections were made at the same hours.[2] In the Threepenny Post limits, there were on an average three deliveries a day but those towns which had a General Post delivery received only two a day from the Threepenny Post. Letters were sent by horsemen or mail carts for delivery. The same receiving-houses were used for General and Threepenny Post letters.[3]

The Dublin Penny Post was remodelled in 1810. The deliveries, which had been only two a day, were increased to four and then to six, additional letter carriers were appointed and receiving-houses established. The penny delivery extended to four miles around the city. There was a *2d*. rate for letters beyond the four mile radius.[4] Previous to 1835, the boundary of the Edinburgh Penny Post was a circle with a radius of 1⅜ miles from the Register Office. Some Scotch mathematician must have been consulted when in 1835 the boundary was made an ellipse with its foci a furlong apart, the distance from each focus to the most remote part of the circumference being 1⅝ miles. Outside this ellipse, there was a *2d*. rate. There had been three deliveries a day, raised in 1838 to five.[5]

Before 1837 Penny Posts had also been established in Newcastle and Glasgow.[6]

Since nearly all the mail coaches left London at 8 o'clock in the evening, most of the letters arriving there in the morning for outside places were not despatched until the same evening. It was pointed out by the commissioners in the Report of 1837 that a large proportion of these letters might be forwarded by the post coaches.[7]

[1] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, p. 50; *Parl. Deb.*, 1st ser., xxxi, col. 943; *Acc. & P.*, 1826–27, xx, p. 397.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xlv, 265, p. 6.

[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 9th rep., app., no. 1.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1829, xii, p. 73; 7 Wm. IV, and 1 Vict., c. 34.

[5] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, 2d rep., app. E, no. 31.

[6] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 9th rep., app., no. 14.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., p. 7, and app., nos. 46, 47, 48.

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If they arrived on Saturday morning they were not forwarded until Monday evening since Sunday was not a mail day and mail coaches arriving on Sunday were detained in the outskirts of the city.[1] The rumour that the Post Office was considering the expedience of a Sunday Post brought forth a flood of protests. Bankers, merchants, vestries, and religious societies were represented by delegations and petitions to the Postmaster-General and the House of Commons, praying that no change might be made.[2] Sixteen hundred solicitors joined in the opposition. Lord Melbourne informed the Bishop of London that the subject was not under consideration, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer told Sir Robert Inglis that the Government had no intention of opening the Post Office on Sunday.[3] Derby had a Sunday delivery in 1839, but, on their own request, many of the inhabitants were excluded from it.[4]

For over forty years all the mail-coaches in England were provided by one man, with whom a new contract was made every seven years. Before 1797 a penny a mile was paid each way but on the imposition of a tax on carriages, the rate was raised to 1½*d.*, then to 1¾*d.*, and later to 2⅛*d.* a mile. One contractor supplied the coaches, others provided horses and drivers, but the guards were hired directly by the Post Office. In Scotland and Ireland, coaches, horses, and drivers were all provided by the same men. The number of miles a day covered by the mail-coaches in 1827 was 7862 and the mileage allowance for that year was £46,900. When the mails were exceptionally heavy, mail carts were used, which cost somewhat more than the coaches, since they carried no passengers. In 1836 the contract for the supply of coaches was thrown open to public competition. By this move, the expenses dropped from £61,009 a year to £53,191 although the total distance travelled per day increased from 13,148 to 14,482 miles.[5] The mail-coaches were at a disadvantage in competing with the post-coaches, since the former were allowed to carry no more than four inside and two out-

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1837, l. 316.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1837, xlvi, 176.
[3] *Parl. Deb.*, 1st ser., xlvi, coll. 206, 332.
[4] London *Times*, 1839, June 1, p. 7.
[5] *Parl. Papers*, 1811, *Rep. Com.*, p. 9; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., apps. 5, 7, 26, p. 71; London *Times*, 1832, Apr. 27, p. 2; *Acc. & P.*, 1837–38, xlv, 265, p. 3: 265, p. 4; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, p. 294.

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side passengers nor were they allowed to carry any luggage on the roof.[1] On the other hand the mail-coaches in England paid no tolls until 1837.[2] The 268 mail guards of the British coaches received £7577 in salaries in 1837, paid directly by the Post Office. Seven inspectors were also employed at a fixed yearly salary and 15*s.* a day when travelling. They superintended the coachmen and guards, investigated complaints, delays, and accidents, and made preliminary agreements in contracting for coaches.[3] The majority of the Irish coaches had paid tolls ever since they had been introduced. Generally they were paid by the Post Office at stated intervals. The total distance travelled by mail-coaches in Ireland in 1829 was 2160 miles each day, by mail-carts 2533 miles. The number of guards employed was eighty-five, receiving £2935 a year. The Irish coaches were allowed to carry four outside passengers.[4]

The first railway in England over which mails were carried was operated between Manchester and Liverpool. In 1838 the Government paid the Grand Junction Railway 5⅞*d.* a single mile for the conveyance of its mails. At the same time the average rate by the coaches was 2⅛*d.* a single mile. On the London and Birmingham Railway when a special Post Office carriage was used, 7½*d.* was paid. When the ordinary mail-coach was carried on trucks the rate was 4¼*d.* When a regular railway carriage was used, the rate was 2½*d.* a mile for one third of a carriage.[5] For the year ending 5th January, 1839, the Post Office paid £105,107 for the conveyance of mails by coaches and £9883 to the railways. For the next official year, the figures had risen to £109,246 and £39,724.[6]

The increased business of the Post Office made necessary a corresponding increase in the employees and better arrrangements for

[1] *Parl. Papers*, 1811, *Rep. Com.*, pp. 10, 32, 50, 51.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1811, *Rep. Com.*, p. 1; *Parl. Deb.*, 1st ser., xix, col. 683; Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 33.

[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, p. 34; *ibid.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., app., nos. 30, 31.

[4] *Parl. Papers*, 1811, *Rep. Com.*, p. 1; 43 Geo. III, c. 28; *Rep. Com.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 336, 338, 339; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., app., no. 31.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., app., nos. 12, 13. The first day coach left London in 1837, connecting at Birmingham with the railway to Hartford, Cheshire. (London *Times*, 1837, Sept. 5, p. 4; *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, pts. 1 and 2, 2d rep., app. E, No. 48; pt. 1, p. 469, no. 17.)

[6] *Acc. & P.*, 1841, xxvi, 221, no. 5.

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dealing with the reception and despatch of letters. The number of persons employed in the General Office in 1804 was 486. In 1814 there were 576. There were 563 postmasters in England and over 3000 persons officially engaged in the receipt and delivery of letters. Additional offices had also been established. In 1813 a Returned Letter Office was organized for the purpose of returning undelivered letters to the writers and collecting the postage due. Previous to 1813, the practice had been to return only such letters as appeared to contain money or were supposed to be important enough to escape destruction. A Franking Department was organized to inspect such letters as were sent free. The increased use of private ships for conveying letters led to the establishment of a Ship Letter Office.[1]

The old Post Office building in Lombard Street was quite too small to provide for the new offices and employees. The Inland Department contained only 3140 superficial feet, half of which was occupied with sorting tables, leaving only 1500 feet for 130 persons. In the Foreign Department with thirty-five men, there were only 250 superficial feet where they must perform their duties. The accommodations for receiving letters were so inadequate that when a foreign mail was being made up, the windows were crowded with an impatient and seething mob waiting for their turn to post their letters. The condition of the Penny Post Department was no better. In 1814 a committee of the House of Commons reported that a new General Post Office building was absolutely necessary. Objections were raised on account of the necessary expenses involved and it was not until 1829 that the new Post Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand was formally opened.[2]

In 1784 Ireland was given much larger political powers than she had previously enjoyed, and her Parliament was freed from the direct tutelage of the English Privy Council. At the same time greater latitude in postal matters was also granted. An Irish Postmaster-General was appointed to reside in Dublin and to collect the postage on all letters which did not pass beyond Ireland. The postage between the two countries was to be collected on delivery,

[1] *Parl. Papers*, 1813–14, *Rep. Com.*, p. 35; *Acc. & P.*, 1817, pp. 4–16; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, p. 137.

[2] *Parl. Papers*, 1813–14, *Rep. Com.*, pp. 11–16.

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and then to be divided between the two according to the distance travelled in each. All net receipts from the Irish Office were ordered to be transmitted to London. The sailing packets remained in the charge of the English Postmasters-General, but £4000 a year was paid to the Irish Office for this privilege.[1]

After the separation of the Irish from the English Post Office, different postage rates had been established for the two countries. The division of authority thus established had caused endless difficulties. Complaints about the delay or loss of letters crossing the Channel at Kingstown, Howth, and Waterford were referred from one office to the other. The Commissioners who inquired into the condition of the Dublin Office found things in a deplorable condition. There were nearly as many postal officials employed in Dublin as in London, although the number of letters handled was not one fourth so great. In the secretary's office, employing six persons, the fees amounted to £2648 a year, largely on English and Irish newspapers. In the whole Dublin establishment they averaged over £15,000 a year. The contracts for the supply and horsing of the mail-coaches were supposed to be public but they were awarded by favour. The Postmasters-General did not attend to business and were very jealous of each other. The Commissioners recommended the amalgamation of the English and Irish offices, and this was accomplished in 1831, the Irish postage rates having been altered four years earlier to coincide with the English rates.[2]

Ireland was divided into eight postal divisions, according to the routes of the mail-coaches. Mails left Dublin at 7 A.M. with an additional mail for Cork at noon. They arrived in Dublin between 6 and 7 A.M. The most important postal centres in addition to Dublin were Belfast, Cork, Limerick, and the packet stations at Waterford and Donaghadee. The total number of post towns in Ireland was 414. At the same time there were in Great Britain 546 post towns.[3] A new post office building was completed in Dublin in 1821 at a cost of £107,000.[4]

[1] 24 Geo. III, c. 6.

[2] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xii, 253, pp. 7, 8, 15–84; *ibid.*, 1837, 7th rep., app. nos. 22, 68; 7 and 8 Geo. IV, c. 21.

[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xii, 253, pp. 7, 8; 1831–32, xvii, p. 325.

[4] 48 Geo. III, c. 48; *Parl. Papers*, 1821, xix, 286.

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The Scotch Post Office had been amalgamated with the English Office in 1711, and Scotland was constituted one of the eighteen postal divisions of Great Britain. The Scotch rates had been the same as the English rates since that date, although an additional half-penny was paid on Scotch letters to meet mail-coach tolls. In 1821 there were only eight towns for which mails were made up. At the same time that a new building for the use of the Post Office was being erected in Dublin, a contract was signed for a new General Office building for Edinburgh to cost £14,000.[1]

The rates established by the act of 1765 were still unchanged for the colonial possessions of the United Kingdom. The American dominions had been sadly depleted by the Revolutionary War but the postage revenue from the loyal remnants had steadily increased. In 1838 the amount of postage charged upon the colonial postmasters in America amounted to £79,000. At one time Jamaica had been the most important American colony from a postal point of view. Canada now took the lead, followed in order of importance by Jamaica, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. In 1834 it was provided that, as soon as the North American Provinces passed postal acts of their own and these acts were approved by the King, the colonial rates of 1765 should cease and the net postal revenue of the North American Provinces should be retained by them.[2]

The British Post Office was now to experience the most far reaching and vital change since 1635. Sir Rowland Hill was the representative of the movement, aided by Mr. Wallace, who, as a member of Parliament, was able to exercise an important effect upon the proposed reform. The history of the adoption of penny postage has been so well told by Hill himself that only a bare story of its acceptance by Parliament is necessary here. A committee was appointed to report upon the condition of the Post Office, the attitude of postal officials and of the public towards the proposed change, its effect upon the revenue, and finally to give their own opinion. This committee examined the Postmaster-General,[3] the Secretaries and Solicitors of the London, Dublin, and Edinburgh offices,

[1] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xii, 353, p. 8; *Parl. Papers*, 1821, xxi, 423.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, pts. 1 and 2, 2d rep., app. E, no. 42; 4 and 5 Wm. IV, c. 7.

[3] Since 1823 there had been only one Postmaster-General, as the dual system was abolished in that year.

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other officials in the Post Office, the Chairman, Secretary, and Solicitor of the Board of Stamps and Taxes, Rowland Hill and eighty-three other witnesses from different classes of people, and obtained many reports from the Post Office. Hill presented his plan to the Committee as follows: —

That inland letters should pay postage according to weight at the rate of one penny for each half ounce.[1]

Such postage should be paid in advance by means of stamped papers or covers.[2]

An option might be allowed for a time to pay a penny in advance or 2*d*. on delivery.[3]

Day mails should be established on the important lines of communication.[4]

There should be a uniform rate of postage because the cost of distributing letters consisted chiefly in the expenses for collecting and delivering them.[5] The plan then in operation for letters not exceeding one ounce in weight was to charge according to the number of enclosures. This plan was uncertain because the number could not always be ascertained, necessitated a close examination, and was evaded by writing several letters on one sheet.[6]

Payment on delivery made it necessary to keep two separate accounts against each postmaster, one for unpaid letters posted in London, and one for paid letters posted in the country. The postmasters had also to keep accounts against each other. Payment in advance, if made compulsory, would do away with half of these accounts and the use of stamped covers or paper would do away with the other half.[7] In some small places where the penny charge would not cover the cost of delivery, Hill proposed that a small additional charge be made, either in advance or on delivery, but he withdrew this suggestion later.[8]

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, 3d rep., 708, p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, p. 13; xx, questions 113, 128, 129, 548.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, p. 13; *ibid.*, xx, qs. 113, 128, 129, 548.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 750–59, 890–92.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 114, 11092–97; pt. 1, 3d rep., 708, p. 5; pts. 1 and 2, 2d rep., app. E, no. 58.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 3116, 4599, 8137, 9770; 3d rep., p. 44.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, 3d rep., pp. 35, 38; qs. 113, 620, 621.

[8] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, pp. 48, 59, 424; pts. 1 and 2, 1st rep., no. 25, p. 508.

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The witnesses summoned to give their evidence before the committee pointed out that a multitude of business transactions were not carried on at all, or were carried on clandestinely, or were pampered by the high postage rates. Bills for small amounts were not drawn,[1] commercial travellers did not write until several orders could be sent on one sheet of paper,[2] samples were not sent by post,[3] communication between banks and their branches was restricted,[4] statistical information was denied,[5] social correspondence restricted especially among the poor,[6] working men were ignorant of the rates of wages in other parts of the country,[7] and the high postage was a bad means of raising revenue.[8] In order to estimate the probable revenue after the change, it was necessary to know the number of letters carried. Hill had come to the conclusion that the total number was about 80,000,000 a year. The Secretary, Maberley, considered that there were about 58,000,000. A return was called for by the committee and Hill's estimate proved to be nearly correct.[9]

The committee reported that the Post Office "instead of being viewed as an institution of ready and universal access, distributing equally to all and with an open hand the blessings of commerce and civilization, is regarded as an establishment too expensive to be made use of" (by large classes of the community) "and as one with the employment of which they endeavour to dispense by every means in their power." They were on less solid ground when they proceeded to state that the idea of obtaining revenue had been until lately only a minor consideration and that the Post Office had primarily been established for the benefit of trade and commerce.[10] Finally Hill's plan was approved, though only by the casting vote of the chairman, Mr. Wallace.

The House of Commons received the proposed change with favour. Over 300 petitions with 38,000 signatures were presented praying for its adoption. The Duke of Richmond, a former Post-

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 6682, 7093.
[2] *Ibid.*, q. 7668.
[3] *Ibid.*, qs. 7671, 7721.
[4] *Ibid.*, q. 10,059.
[5] *Ibid.*, qs. 6951, 10,305.
[6] *Ibid.*, qs. 2923, 5522–54, 5443–54, 6703, 7961.
[7] *Ibid.*, qs. 7991, 9840–42.
[8] *Ibid.*, qs. 8126, 8130 (Lord Ashburton).
[9] *Ibid.*, pt. 1, pp. 9, 434; *ibid.*, pt. 2, pp. 59, 658; app., p. 58; *ibid.*, pts. 1 and 2, 3d rep., p. 19.
[10] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, 3d rep., p. 10.

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master-General, thought that it would be beneficial and that it was the only means of stopping the illegal conveyance of letters.[1] Sir Robert Peel was of the opinion that, with the prevailing deficits, it was an unfortunate departure, and he feared that prepaid letters would not be delivered.[2] But the Treasury was given power to lower rates and in 1840 a treasury warrant was issued, imposing postage rates between the colonies and between foreign countries through Great Britain according to weight and distance.[3] Stamped covers were issued for the use of members of Parliament, and in 1840 an act was passed establishing penny postage for the United Kingdom, permitting the use of stamped paper or covers, and imposing rates on foreign and colonial letters according to weight and distance conveyed.[4]

The complete change thus produced in the policy of the Post Office is vividly set forth by the old Secretary, Sir Francis Freeling. "Cheap postage" — he writes, "What is this men are talking about? Can it be that all my life I have been in error? If I, then others — others whose behests I have been bound to obey. To make the Post Office revenue as productive as possible was long ago impressed upon me by successive ministers as a duty which I was under a solemn obligation to discharge. And not only long ago. Is it not within the last six months that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer [5] has charged me not to let the present revenue go down? What! You, Freeling, brought up and educated as you have been, are you going to lend yourself to these extravagant schemes? You with your four-horse mail coaches too! Where else in the world does the merchant or the manufacturer have the materials of his trade carried for him gratuitously or at so low a rate as to leave no margin of profit?"[6]

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, 2d rep., app., p. 3; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d series, xlvii, col. 1231.
[2] *Ibid.*, 3d series, xlvii, coll. 278–84, 293.
[3] *Acc. & P.*, 1841, xxvi, p. 53; 1839, xlvi, p. 568.
[4] *Parl. Deb.*, 3d series, li, col. 227; 3 and 4 Vict., c. 96.
[5] The Rt. Hon. Thomas Spring Rice.
[6] Joyce, pp. 427–28.

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CHAPTER IV

THE POSTAL ESTABLISHMENT AN INSTRUMENT OF POPULAR COMMUNICATION

WITH the inauguration of inland penny postage the Postal Establishment ceased to exist primarily as a tax-collecting agency, and, although maintained as a whole upon a paying basis, certain of its recent experiments have, from a financial point of view, been far from successful. On the other hand, the simultaneous unification and reduction of rates, together with various other changes which have been adopted since 1840, have resulted in lessening appreciably the expenses of management.

The postage on inland letters was reduced in 1865, 1871, 1884, and again in 1897. In 1839, the last year of high postal rates, the total number of letters, including franks, delivered in the United Kingdom, was somewhat in excess of eighty-two millions. This number was rather more than doubled in the following year. During the ensuing ten years the figures were again doubled, the total in 1850 being 347 millions. For the five-year period 1866–70, following the reduction in postage of 1865, the average yearly number delivered was 800 millions. In 1875 this increased to a little over 1000 millions; in the postal year 1880–81 to 1176 millions, in 1890–91 to 1705 millions, and in 1900–01 to 2323 millions.[1] So far as colonial letters were concerned, a marked reduction in rates was granted soon after inland penny postage was obtained, the reduction being extended to the larger part of the Empire.[2] Further reductions followed until, in 1898, a penny half ounce rate was established for most of the colonies, and all were included in 1905. As on a previous occasion, the United States was the first foreign country with which an agreement was made to adopt this low rate,

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1855, p. 65; 1881, app., p. 11; 1891, app., p. 16; 1901, app., p. 25.

[2] Colonial legislatures were given the power in 1849 to establish posts of their own and to fix the inland postal rates (12 and 13 Vict., c. 26).

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and its advantages have been enhanced still further by an increase in the initial weight from half an ounce to an ounce. During the sixties, treaties were entered into with the most important European countries for lower postage rates, and, in 1874, at the first meeting of the Postal Union, a uniform rate for prepaid letters of 2½*d.* a half ounce was agreed to. Reductions also followed for other postal matter. In 1891 a universal foreign letter rate of 2½*d.* was announced so far as the United Kingdom was concerned, with the exception of those countries where a lower rate already prevailed, and a further reduction followed in 1907 by increasing the initial weight from half an ounce to an ounce in the case of all foreign and colonial letters, the charge on foreign letters for each unit after the first being reduced at the same time from 2½*d.* to 1½*d.*

After 1840 the registration fee was reduced by a series of gradations from 1*s.* to 2*d.*, and the compulsory registration of all letters containing coin was enforced. In 1891 the separate system of insurance was abolished, and registration was extended for the first time to inland parcels. The limit of compensation was increased at the same time to £25 and in the following year to £50 by the payment of 2*d.* for the first £5 and an additional penny for each additional £5 of insurance.[1] Seven years later the amount of compensation payable was increased to £120 and the fee payable was lowered for all sums over £15. Arrangements were also made by which letters addressed to certain colonies and foreign countries might be insured to the same maximum amount.[2] The limit of compensation is now £400 for inland registered correspondence as well as for correspondence to many foreign countries and a few of the colonies.

Among other postal reforms dear to Hill's heart had been the compulsory payment of postage by means of stamps. He pointed out that this would greatly simplify the keeping of accounts by the department and increase the net revenue. The proposition was, however, too unpopular to secure approval. Nevertheless in 1847 the Postmaster-General secured parliamentary authority to abolish or restrict payment in money and require stamps to be used, but the experiment proved so unpopular that it was eventu-

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1892, p. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1899, pp. 4, 6–7.

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ally abandoned.[1] The use of perforated stamps, an invention of Mr. Archer, was in 1852 recommended by a committee appointed to report on the question.[2] Finally, in 1904, the law forbidding the use of embossed or impressed stamps cut out of envelopes, postcards, letter cards, wrappers, and telegraph forms was repealed.[3]

From 1808 to 1840 the rural districts as a rule obtained their postal matter by a special payment on their part to messengers for its conveyance from the nearest town, sometimes aided by a bonus from the revenue, or by means of the "fifth-clause" posts,[4] or by the penny posts which were constantly increasing in number and were occasionally established under guarantee. In 1838 there were fifty-two "fifth-clause" posts in England and Wales, and 1922 villages in the United Kingdom were served by penny posts. In 1843 the government of Sir Robert Peel laid down the following principle: "All places the letters for which exceed one hundred per week should be entitled to a receiving office and a free delivery of letters." A "delivery" here meant a daily delivery, and the boundary of the free delivery was to be determined by the Postmaster-General. The principle enunciated above was followed until 1850, and during that period the increase in the number of free and guaranteed rural deliveries was very great. At the close of this period it was decided that in future the determining rule should be based upon the probability of financial success. A post was held to pay its way whenever its cost was covered by a halfpenny on each letter delivered, but, since it was held that the number of letters would be doubled by free delivery, double the number arriving before its establishment might be assumed to arrive afterward. The post might be bi-weekly, tri-weekly, or weekly. This rule was to a certain extent made retroactive, but no post established under the rule of 1843 was stopped so long as the cost was covered by calculating delivered letters at a penny each. It was decided in 1853 that a post less frequent than once a day might be increased in frequency whenever the cost would be covered by a revenue esti-

[1] 10 and 11 Vict., c. 85; *Rep. Com.*, 1852, xv, 386, p. 150; *Rep. P. G.*, 1859, p. 25.
[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1852, xv, 386, pp. iii–iv.
[3] 4 Edw. VII, c. 14.
[4] Established by agreements between the Postmaster-General and the inhabitants of small towns and villages.

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mated on the basis of three farthings for each letter, and in treating an application for a second daily post this amount was to be reduced to one farthing. The experiment was tried of delivering letters at every house in a few selected places but did not prove a success. It was stated that at the end of this revision, 93 per cent of all postal packets were delivered. In 1860 the rule was laid down that new posts should be set up only when the cost would be covered by half a penny on each letter actually arriving, the old rule having been found to be too liberal. Two years later it was stated by the Post Office that only 6 per cent of the total postal packages were undelivered. In 1882 the question of extending the rural posts was considered by Mr. Fawcett, the then Postmaster-General, who decided that credit should be given for revenue by increasing the halfpenny to 6/10*d.* for each letter, and in the next year the existing rule as to a second daily delivery was made more liberal. In 1890, for places hitherto unserved, the rate per letter for estimating revenue was increased to three farthings, for each parcel the rate was fixed at 1½*d.*, and in the following year rural sanitary authorities in England and Wales were authorized to guarantee posts. In Scotland the district committee or the county council, where the counties were not divided, was given the same power in 1892. In the same year the rule was laid down that a second service in the day might be given provided that its cost did not exceed half a penny a letter and a penny a parcel and in addition that the total cost of night and day mail services should not exceed the revenue from the whole correspondence at half a penny per letter and a penny per parcel. It was estimated in 1892 that about thirty-two and a half millions of letters were undelivered, but the work of extending the rural posts went on gradually until in 1897 it was announced that provision would be made as soon as possible for delivery to every house in the United Kingdom. In 1900 the Postmaster-General was able to report that house to house delivery had been completed in England and almost completed in Scotland and Ireland.[1]

In addition to the ordinary delivery at regular intervals there was a growing demand for a more rapid service on extraordinary

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1898, pp. 32–39; 1860, pp. 9 f.; 1864, p. 15.

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occasions as well as a desire for a special messenger service when the use of the Post Office as a medium meant an undesirable loss of time. In 1886 a private company started to supply messengers for postal services. After some trouble with the Post Office, a licence was granted them in 1891 in return for which they agreed to pay a percentage of their gross receipts to the department and observe certain conditions with reference to the delivery of letters.[1] An express delivery service was also established by the Post Office, the fee in addition to the ordinary postage being *2d.* for the first mile, *3d.* for the second and beyond that, and where no public conveyances existed, *1s.* a mile or actual cab-fare. In the case of letters delivered locally the ordinary postage was abrogated soon after and a charge of *1½d.* per pound for parcels exceeding one pound in weight was imposed, but this charge was later lowered to a penny per pound with a maximum payment of *1s.* and the maximum limit of weight was increased from 15 to 20 pounds where the messenger could travel by public conveyance. The initial charge for the first mile of *2d.*, and *3d.* for each succeeding mile, for each parcel was made a uniform charge of *3d.* per mile, and the fixed charge of *2d.* for each parcel beyond the first was reduced to a penny where several packets were tendered by the same sender for delivery by the same messenger. In the case of several packages delivered at the same address the charge was lowered to *3d.* plus an additional penny for every ten packages or part thereof, later changed to a weight fee of *3d.* on each packet or bundle of packets weighing more than one pound.[2] Rural postmen were also allowed to receive letters and parcels from the public at any point in their walks and deliver them without passing them through a post office, having first canceled the stamps.[3] An agreement was also made with the railways to carry single letters left in the booking office for *2d.* each. These letters may be taken to the booking office by messenger and delivered by a messenger at the end of their journey or posted there.[4] The express delivery service was also extended to

[1] Their extended licence will expire in 1922 (*Rep. P. G.*, 1901, p. 2).

[2] *Parl. Deb.*, 3d series, cccli, col. 1751; *Rep. P. G.*, 1901, p. 2; 1892, p. 7; 1891, pp. 4 f.; 1893, p. 7; 1894, p. 6; 1899, pp. 2, 3.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1894, p. 5.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1891, p. 5.

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such foreign countries as would agree to it, including nearly all of Western Europe, part of South America, and the far East. In every case the primary fee in England is 3*d.*, the foreign charges varying with local conditions. Express letters from abroad are delivered free within one mile from the Post Office. Beyond that the distance charge is 3*d.* a mile for one parcel, with a penny for each additional parcel delivered to the same person. The Postmaster-General reported that the establishment of this service was not only much appreciated by the people, but was self-supporting and even profitable to the state. During the ten year period ending March 31, 1901, the number of express delivery services in the United Kingdom increased from 108,000 to 804,000.[1]

The impressed stamp to which newspapers were subject until 1855 enabled them to pass free by post. After this stamp ceased to be compulsory, newspapers which bore it passed free from other postage until 1870 — when the halfpenny rate was established — and were known as "free"[2] as distinguished from "chargeable" newspapers. Of the former there were carried by post in 1856 over 53 millions, of the latter, including book packets, 20 millions. In 1875 the number of newspapers delivered in the United Kingdom had increased to 121 millions. For the five year period ending March 31, 1881, the average yearly number had increased to a little over 129 millions, for the next five years to something over 142 millions. During the period ending March 31, 1891, they had increased to 155 millions, there being an actual decrease in one year. In the period following there was an average yearly increase of only three millions and the ensuing five years ending March 31, 1901, showed a decrease of about one million.[3]

The book post, instituted in 1848, had its rates reduced in 1855 and again in 1870 to a halfpenny for the initial two ounces and an additional ½*d.* for each succeeding two ounces. In 1892 its scope was greatly enlarged and the expression Halfpenny Post, which is now its official name, better illustrates its cosmopolitan character

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1893, p. 10; 1897, p. 3; 1901, app., p. 28.

[2] Free newspapers also included those coming from abroad on which no charge was made in the United Kingdom.

[3] *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, p. 2; 1859, pp. 28 f.; 1881, app., p. 12; 1891, app., p. 17; 1901, app., p. 27.

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for it now includes all printed documents of a conventional, formal, or impersonal character. From 1872 to 1875 the number of articles carried by the Halfpenny or Book Post increased from 114 millions to 158 millions. The yearly average during the next five years was 204 millions; during the following five, 305 millions and for the five year period ending March 31, 1891, they had increased to 418 millions. During the next five years there was a still greater average increase to 596 millions and the average for the postal year ending in March, 1901, was 732 millions.[1] The rates for the Inland Pattern and Sample Post, established in 1863, were assimilated with those of the Book Post in 1870. It was abolished or rather incorporated with the Letter Post in the following year but was reëstablished in 1887, the rates being a penny for the first four ounces and ½*d.* for each succeeding two ounces, but, when the Jubilee letter rates were published, it lost its *raison d'être* and was abolished for inland purposes.[2]

Post cards were introduced in 1870, being carried for ½*d.* each prepaid, 2*d.* when payment was made on delivery.[3] In addition to the stamp a charge was made to cover the cost of the material in the card itself. Somewhat later reply post cards were issued for the inland service and arrangements were made for the use of international reply post cards. In 1894, private post cards, to which a halfpenny stamp was affixed, were allowed to pass by post. The resulting enormous growth[4] in their number showed that the privilege was appreciated. In less than five years they were estimated to form 5 per cent of the total number passing through the post.[5] Shortly after, the prohibition of any writing save the address on the face of a post card was withdrawn and it was provided that the address side of all mail matter might be used for purposes of correspondence provided that it did not obscure the address, encroach upon the stamp, or prove in any way inconvenient. Formerly, so

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, p. 2; 1903, p. 5; 1904, p. 5; 1881, app., p. 12; 1891, app., p. 17; 1901, app., p. 27.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1864, p. 29; 1896, p. 2; *Acct. & P.*, 1871, xxxvii (pp. 1–2).

[3] Charge on unpaid inland post cards reduced to 1*d.* each in 1896.

[4] They increased from 248 millions for the postal year 1893–94 to 312 millions during the ensuing year.

[5] *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, p. 2; 1882, p. 4; 1895, p. 18; 1900, p. 1.

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far as mail matter other than post cards was concerned, the right half of the face side was reserved for the address.[1] During the four five-year periods from 1881 to the year ending 31st March, 1901, the average numbers of post cards delivered yearly in the United Kingdom were about 108 millions, 152 millions, 272 millions, and 379 millions.[2]

It had not been usual for England to lag behind the continent in the adoption of new postal ideas. Such was the case, however, with reference to the adoption of the convenient post card and the no less useful parcel post. In 1880 the question of the establishment of an international parcel post was discussed in Paris and an agreement was reached for the transmission throughout nearly the whole of Europe of parcels not exceeding three kilogrammes in weight. It was impossible for Great Britain to sign, as she had no inland parcel post at the time and found it difficult to establish one as an agreement with the railways was necessary. A movement was at once begun for one and it was started three years later. The first despatch of foreign and colonial parcels took place in 1885, and at the beginning of the following year arrangements were completed for the exchange of parcels with twenty-seven different countries, including some of the colonies, India, and Egypt. An agreement was concluded in 1904 with the United States for the interchange of parcels by post at the rate of 25. for each and the maximum is two kilogrammes. These cannot be insured and customs' duties must be paid by the recipient. The previously existing agreement for parcels weighing as much as eleven pounds each, providing for insurance and the prepayment of customs' duties, continues to be carried on by the American Express Company.[3] Since the establishment of the inland parcel post the question of collecting the value of the parcels on delivery, if the sender and the recipient so desire, has often been raised. Owing to the opposition of retail dealers, it has not yet been adopted although in operation in India and nearly all important foreign countries. In the words of the Postmaster-General — "In these circumstances I am by no means

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1897, p. 5.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1881, app., p. 12; 1891, app., p. 17; 1901, app., p. 27.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1881, p. 4; 1885, p. 4; 1886, p. 5; 1895, p. 21; 1905, p. 7; *The Economist*, 1881, Nov. 5, p. 1369; 1882, July 29, p. 939.

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satisfied, so far as my enquiries have gone, that the apprehensions expressed by retail traders in this country afford sufficient cause for withholding a convenience from the community at large."[1]

The various changes and improvements adopted by the Post Office since 1840, in addition to those already named, are so numerous that only the most important can be considered here. Among others the amalgamation of the London District Post with the General Post in 1854 deserves attention. In the following year it was ordered that letters should be sorted in each of the ten postal districts into which London was divided instead of being taken to the General Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand as had been customary, thus materially lessening the expenses of sorting and facilitating their delivery.[2]

In 1840 there were but 4028 post offices in the Kingdom; in 1854, 9973.[3] Road letter boxes were introduced in 1858 and the public receptacles for the receipt of letters numbered 13,370 in 1859 as compared with 4518 before the establishment of penny postage.[4] In 1829 the total number of persons in England employed in Post Office business numbered only 5000. Twenty-five years later for the United Kingdom over 21,000 were so employed; in 1880 over 47,000, of whom, however, more than 11,000 were engaged wholly in telegraph duties. By 1890 these had increased to nearly 118,000 and by 1900 to 173,000 of whom 35,000 were females.[5]

The money order business which originated as a private speculation in 1791 was the result of an attempt to check the frequent theft of letters containing money. In 1838, shortly after its acquisition from the proprietors, the rates were reduced and the number of money orders transmitted increased from 188,000 in 1839 to 587,000 in 1840 and to 1,500,000 in 1842. From the latter date until 1879 the increase both in the number and in the value of money orders transmitted was steady, aided by the increase in 1862 from £5 to £10 of the maximum transmissible sum and by the reduction in rates in 1871. The penny rate of that year for orders to the value of ten shillings was a mistake, for the actual cost to the

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1904, pp. 4–5.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1855, p. 12; 1856, p. 9; 1860, p. 8.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1855, p. 21.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1855–59.
[5] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, ii, p. 137; *Rep. P. G.*, 1855, p. 20; 1881, app., p. 16; 1891, app., pp. 34–35; 1901, app., p. 50.

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state of issuing and paying a money order was about 3*d*. In order to meet this difficulty a simpler form of order was issued in 1881 with an initial rate as low as half a penny, the cost of which to the Post Office was much less than that of the old kind of order. These postal notes, as they were called, were issued for new denominations in 1884 and 1905 and the rates on some of them were diminished. The lowest rate for a money order was for a few months fixed at 3*d*. but, as this aroused considerable opposition, the present rate of 2*d*. was soon after substituted, and in 1903 the maximum sum transmissible was increased to £40 with a few accompanying changes in rates. In 1889 an opportunity was given in the case of a few towns for sending telegraphic money orders and during the ensuing three years the privileged area was greatly extended. In 1897 the expenses were considerably reduced. In 1858 arrangements were made for the exchange of money orders with Canada and by 1862 similar agreements were decided upon with most of the other colonies, but foreign countries were not included until somewhat later and in 1880 colonial and foreign rates were harmonized. Rates were reduced in 1883, 1896, and 1903, and in the last year the inland £40 limit was agreed upon with most foreign countries and some of the colonies.

Inland money orders which started to decrease in amount in 1878–79 steadily continued their downward course until 1891–92, when there was a slight recovery for a few years, but since 1903–04 the number has somewhat diminished. During the postal year ending in March, 1907, the number of inland money orders transmitted was nearly eleven millions as compared with nearly nineteen millions for the year ending March, 1879. This decrease in numbers is largely due to the lowering of the registration fee for letters, the introduction of postal notes, and the use of other means for transmitting small sums of money. The total value of inland money orders also began to diminish in 1879, but began to recover in 1886, and has since increased quite uniformly, being in 1907 nearly £38,000,000 as compared with £29,000,000 in 1879.[1] The increase in the number of postal notes has been enormous, although there

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, pp. 28–32; 1897, pp. 10–11; 1881, app., p. 37; 1891, app., p. 53; 1901, app., p. 69; 1907, p. 74.

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was an apparent falling off in the years 1903 and 1904 due to the increased number of denominations offered for sale. For the first complete postal year after their authorization the number issued was nearly four and a half millions of the value of £2,000,000, and for the postal year 1906–07 the number was 102,000,000 of the value of nearly £41,000,000.[1] On the other hand, while inland money orders were decreasing in number, colonial and foreign orders increased in general both in number and value.[2]

The establishment of Post Office savings banks is naturally closely connected with the money order department since both of these departures from a purely postal character were adopted at about the same time, for much the same reasons, and were opposed on the ground of their infringement upon the banking prerogative. In 1859 the efforts of Mr. Sikes of Huddersfield to bring a Post Office Savings Bank into being were supported by Mr. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Rowland Hill, the then Secretary of the Post Office, and two years later it was established by Parliamentary sanction.[3] The main features of the system were that deposits could be withdrawn not later than ten days after demand; that accounts should be kept at London alone, all money being remitted to and from headquarters; that the total amount deposited should be handed over to the "Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt" for investment in government securities, and that interest on complete pounds at the rate of 2½ per cent should be allowed to depositors. As the interests of the poorer classes were made the primary object in establishing the banks, deposits were limited in the case of individuals to £30 a year and £150 in all, later increased to £50 a year and £200 in all, but Friendly Societies were allowed to deposit without limit and Provident and Charitable Societies might deposit within limits of £100 a year and £300 in all or, with the consent of the Commissioners, beyond these limits.[4]

In 1880 the savings banks were made a medium for investing in government stock at a trifling expense varying from 9*d.* to 2*s.* 3*d.*

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1891, app., p. 59; 1901, app., p. 77; 1907, p. 84.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1891, app., pp. 52–53; 1892, p. 12.
[3] 24 Vict., c. 14. [4] *Rep. P. G.*, 1897, app., pp. 32–36.

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and with the privilege of having dividends collected free from further charge. These special advantages were confined to investments from £10 to £100 in value, the latter being the maximum sum in any one year, and the investments themselves might be sums especially deposited or transferred from a depositor's account. In 1887 the minimum amount of stock purchasable was reduced to 1s., and anyone who had purchased stock through a savings bank might have it transferred to his own name in the Bank of England. In 1893 the limits of investment were raised from £100 to £200 in one year, from £300 to £500 in all, and the Post Office was empowered to invest in stock any accumulations of ordinary deposits above the limit of £200, unless instructions were given by the depositor to the contrary.

An act was passed in 1864 enabling the Postmaster-General to insure the lives of individuals between the ages of fourteen and sixty for amounts varying from £20 to £100. He might also grant annuities, immediate or deferred, to any one of ten years of age or upward for sums between £4 and £50. The act came into operation in certain towns of England and Wales in the following year, and the system remained unaltered until 1884. During this period of nineteen years, 7064 policies of insurance were effected, representing a yearly average of 372 policies amounting to an average of £79 each. The contracts for immediate annuities numbered 13,402 or an average of 705 a year and there were 978 contracts for deferred annuities. The value of immediate annuities granted was £187,117 and of deferred £19,938, but a part of the latter never came into payment as the purchasers were relieved from their bargains upon their own representation.

A new system associated with Mr. Fawcett's name was prescribed in 1882. Its merit consisted in linking the annuity and insurance business with the Savings Bank Department so that payments for annuities and insurance are made through deposits in the savings banks. It was further provided that for persons between the ages of fourteen and sixty-five the limits of insurance should be from £5 to £100 and that sums of money might be insured payable at the age of sixty or at the expiration of a term of years. For annuities the minimum was reduced to £1, the maximum increased to

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£100, and the annuity and insurance privileges were extended to all places having savings banks. Owing to the necessary preparation of tables the new regulations did not actually come into operation until 1884. The growth of life insurance and annuity business was slow as compared with the rapid growth of the savings deposits. Intended, however, primarily for the poor, it has not been without success, especially as the premiums charged are lower than those of insurance companies or industrial societies.[1]

In addition to joining the insurance and annuity business with the savings banks operations, Mr. Fawcett was responsible for a rapid increase in the number of branch saving offices in villages, for the special attention paid to "navvies" and workmen at their places of employment, and above all for the arrangement for making small deposits by slips of postage stamps. In 1887 by act of Parliament the Postmaster-General was empowered to offer facilities for the transfer of money from one account to another and for the easier disposal of the funds of deceased depositors. In 1891 the maximum permissible deposits of one person were increased from £150 to £200 inclusive of interest. The annual limit remained at £30 but it was provided that, irrespective of that limit, depositors might replace the amount of any one withdrawal made in the same year. Where principal and interest together exceeded £200, the interest was henceforth to cease on the excess alone, whereas previously it had ceased entirely when it had brought an account to £200. The next development arose from the Free Education Act of 1891 in order to make it easier for children and parents to save the school pence which they no longer had to pay. Special stamp slips were prepared to be sold to children, and clerks attended the schools with these slips. About 1400 schools adopted the scheme at once and three years later the number had risen to 3000, but the movement seemed by 1895 to have spent its force.

In 1893 the annual limit of deposits was increased to £50 and, as we have already seen in another connection, any accumulations over £200 were to be invested in Government Stock unless the de-

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1897, app., pp. 32–38. The insurance and annuity business of the Post Office has been described by the *Economist* as a practical failure because of the government's refusal to solicit business (*Economist* 1881, Nov. 5, p. 1369).

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positor gave instructions to the contrary. In the same year arrangements were made for the withdrawal of deposits by telegram. A depositor might telegraph for his money and have his warrant sent by return of post at a cost of about 9*d*. or the warrant also might be telegraphed to him at a total cost of about 1*s*. 3*d*. In 1905 a rule was introduced by which a depositor, on presentation of his pass-book at any post office doing savings bank business, may withdraw on demand not more than £1. This obviates the expense of telegraphing and, that it was appreciated, is shown by the fact that during the first six months after the privilege was extended there were nearly two millions of "withdrawals on demand," forming nearly one half of the total number. As a result the number of telegraphic withdrawals fell from 227,573 for the postal year 1904–05 to 180,996 for the year 1905–06.[1]

There has been a steady and pronounced growth in savings bank business since its establishment. This growth has shown itself in the increased number of banks, of deposits, and of the total amounts deposited. The average amount of each deposit has varied somewhat from £3 6*s*. in 1862 to £2 in 1881, but since this date it has increased slowly but steadily and in 1901 it stood at £2 14*s*. 2*d*., which is about the average yearly amount since 1862. At the end of the year 1900 over £135,000,000 were on deposit in the Post Office savings banks.[2] The increase in amounts invested in government stock has not been by any means so pronounced but there has been an increase. In 1881 we find that nearly £700,000 were so invested, in 1891 nearly £1,000,000, and in 1900 a little over £1,000,000.[3] So far as annuities are concerned, the immediate seem to be considerably more popular than the deferred. The purchase money receipts for the former were £184,000 in 1881, £296,000 in 1891, and have since increased more rapidly to £728,000 in 1900, with an actual decrease, however, for the four preceding years. The receipts for the purchase of deferred annuities amounted to £5243 in 1881, £12,578 in 1891 and £14,283 in 1900, also a decrease since 1896. The amounts received as premiums for

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1897, app., pp. 32–36; 1906, pp. 12–13; 56 and 57 Vict., c. 59.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1881, app., pp. 32–33; 1891, app., p. 46; 1901, p. 60; 1907, p. 67.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1891, app., p. 47; 1901, app., p. 62.

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life insurance policies have also been rather disappointing, having increased from £10,967 in 1881 to £15,073 in 1891 and to £22,185 in 1900.[1]

The increasing use of railway trains for the conveyance of the mails has presented new and difficult problems with reference to the authority of the Postmaster-General over mail trains and reasonable payments to the railway companies. So far as the method for ascertaining the rate of payment was concerned, a difficulty arose as to whether the Post Office should pay any part of the tolls as distinguished from operating expenses. Major Harness, a Post Office official, stated that in discussing this question with Robert Stephenson in the case of the London and Birmingham Railway it had been agreed that tollage should not be paid but only the out-of-pocket expenses, this being in conformity with the principles adopted in paying for mail coaches. The question of tollage was not mentioned by the Railway Mails Act (10 and 11 Vict., c. 85), but Major Harness, in his evidence before a parliamentary committee, stated that he, as an arbitrator, estimated the tollage payable by the Post Office by finding out how much each ton, if the road were fully occupied, should contribute to return 10 per cent upon the share capital and 5 per cent on the bonds, the Post Office to pay its proportion according to the weight of mail matter carried. The cost of locomotive power was also taken into count and the carriage accommodation was paid for on the basis of what the railways charged each other.[2] In addition to these items the committee recommended that the expenses for station accommodation, the additional cost of the working staff, and interference with ordinary traffic should also be taken into account.[3] In the event of a failure on the part of the Post Office and a railway company to come to an agreement as to the amount payable, each of the parties nominated an arbitrator whose first duty was to select an umpire. Each arbitrator was required to present his case in writing to the umpire and to attend in person if required. The umpire was supposed to give his decision within twenty-eight days after the receipt of the

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1891, app., p. 48; 1901, app., p. 63.
[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1854, xi, 411, pp. 370–371.
[3] *Ibid.*, 411, p. 14.

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cases.[1] In 1893 it was provided by act of Parliament that when any dispute arose between the Post Office and a railway, the question should be taken to the Railway and Canal Commission for settlement instead of being left to arbitration.[2] The Postmaster-General has also been authorized to make use of tramways for transporting the mails, and in 1897 the experiment was made of using motor vans for the same purpose. A few years later the Postmaster-General expressed himself as "doubtful whether a thoroughly reliable motor vehicle suitable for Post Office work has yet been found." However, in 1906–07 about thirty-five mail services were performed by motors, the work being undertaken by contractors who provide the vans and employ the drivers. They have proved to be more economical than horse vans when the load is heavy, the distance considerable, and greater speed desirable.[3]

The expenditure for the conveyance of mails by the railways for the year ending 5th January, 1838, amounted to only £1743. In 1840 this had increased to £52,860, in 1850 to £230,079, in 1860 to £490,223, in 1870 to £587,296, in 1880 to £701,070 and in 1890 to £905,968. By 1896 the million mark had been reached and after that year all the expenses for the conveyance of the mails are grouped together. For the following year this total was £1,453,517, the payment for mail coaches in the preceding year, which are here included, being £365,000. In 1906 the total expenditure for the "conveyance of the mails" was £1,821,541.[4]

In common with the members of other branches of the civil service the postal employees, prior to 1855, were political appointees. The appointment of a patronage secretary had relieved members of Parliament from the odium incurred as a result of this reprehensible method of manning the service, but it is doubtful whether any improvement in the personnel of the force actually resulted or was even anticipated. With the adoption between 1855 and 1870 of the principle that fitness should be tested by competitive examinations, the vast majority of the members of the postal establishment came

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 411, p. 280; 1 and 2 Vict., c. 98. [2] 56 and 57 Vict., c. 38.
[3] 56 and 57 Vict., c. 38; *Rep. P. G.*, 1898, pp. 9 f.; 1907, p. 3.
[4] *Parl. Papers*, 1852–53, xcv, p. 3; *Rep. P. G.*, 1861, p. 20; 1872, pp. 26–27; 1884, p. 56; 1893, p. 78; 1896, p. 86; 1906, p. 92.

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under its influence. At the same time the postmasters of small rural communities, where the postal revenue was insignificant,[1] still continued to be nominated by the local member. In 1896 this power was abridged, but members still continued to exercise a limited right of recommendation. Finally in 1907 the Postmaster-General announced that, though due weight should continue to be given to the opinions of members in the case of the appointment of these rural postmasters, such recommendations should be based on personal knowledge and should carry no more weight than the opinion of any other competent person.[2]

No question which has arisen in the internal management of the Post Office has presented more difficult problems for solution than that of the condition of the postal employees with reference to hours of labour, promotion, and remuneration. The first complaints which attract our attention during the period under discussion came rather from outside the service as a protest against Sunday labour in the Post Office, but the fact that many of the postal servants were deprived of their holiday and often needlessly so deprived was a real grievance advanced by the employees themselves. It had been the policy of the Post Office for some time not to grant any application for the withdrawal of a Sunday post if there were any dissentients to the application. In 1850 all Sunday delivery was abolished for a time, but this hardly met the approval even of the strict Sabbatarians, and the rule was promulgated the same year that no post should be withdrawn or curtailed except upon the application of the receivers of six sevenths of the letters so affected. Of the rural posts in the United Kingdom at that time more than half did no work on Sunday and about half of the remainder had their walks curtailed, while in certain cases a substitute was provided on alternate Sundays. A committee reporting on the question in 1871 advised that it should be made easier to discontinue a Sunday delivery by requiring that a Sunday rural post should be taken off if the receivers of two thirds of the letters de-

[1] Less than £120 in England, less than £100 in Scotland and Ireland.

[2] D. B. Eaton, *Civil Service in Great Britain*, New York, 1880, pp. 75, 307, 308; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., ccxxxix, col. 211; cclv, col. 1575; *ibid.*, 4th ser., clix, col. 397; clxx, col. 641.

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sired it, that no delivery in the country should be granted except upon the demand of the receivers of the same proportion of letters, and that the principle of providing substitutes on alternate Sundays should be more generally adopted. This report was favourably received and its recommendations adopted in the early seventies. In London and many of the provincial towns there is no ordinary Sunday delivery, and so little advantage is taken of the opportunity for express delivery on Sundays that there is presumably no strong demand for a regular Sunday delivery. Various measures advocated for the relief of the town carriers were also adopted.[1]

In 1858 an attempt was made by the Post Office employees, led by the letter carriers, to secure higher wages and to obtain a remedy for certain other grievances advanced by them. Sir George Bower asked for a select committee of enquiry in their behalf but this was refused by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He agreed, however, to the appointment of a committee composed of Post Office and Treasury officials, but their personnel was so repugnant to the employees that they refused to give evidence, and as a result of this and other difficulties four of their leaders were suspended. The protest on the part of the men was not entirely unproductive, for in the end the Postmaster-General granted them a slight increase in their wages. At the same time he referred to the following rates of wages in support of his contention that there was no good ground for dissatisfaction among the servants of the Post Office: for carriers, 19*s.* a week advancing to 23*s.*; for sorters of the first class, 25*s.* to 30*s.*; of the second class, 32*s.* to 38*s.*; and of the third class, 40*s.* to 50*s.* "Carriers also obtain Christmas boxes averaging, so it is said, £8 a year. In addition these wages are exclusive of uniform, of pension in old age, and of assistance for assurance." [2]

The first thorough-going attempts to remedy the grievances of the Post Office employees were made in 1881 and 1882 by Mr. Fawcett in his capacity as Postmaster-General. His scheme for

[1] *Acct. & P.*, 1872, xxxvi, 337, pp. 1–2; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1872, xviii [c. 485], pp. 1–5; *Rep. P. G.*, 1872, p. 6; *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., xciv, coll. 1358–60, 1364–65.

[2] *Rep. P. G.*, 1859, pp. 40–43; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., clix, coll. 211–214; clxviii, coll. 675–82.

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improving the pay and position of the sorters, sorting clerks, telegraphists, postmen, lobby officers, and porters resulted in a mean annual cost to the Post Office of £320,000. In 1888, 1890, and 1891, under the supervision of Mr. Raikes, improvements were made in the condition of the chief clerks and other supervising officers, the sorting clerks and telegraphists in the provinces, the telegraphists, counter-men and sorters in London, and the sorters in Dublin and Edinburgh at an additional yearly expense of £281,000. While the representatives of the London postmen were in process of examination, some of them went out on strike. They were severely punished, some 450 men being dismissed in one morning, and a committee was appointed to enquire into the complaints of the London and provincial postmen.[1] In the same month that the strike took place Mr. Raikes announced increases in the pay of the postmen involving an additional yearly payment of £125,000. The revisions so announced from 1881 to 1894 have been estimated to involve an increased annual expenditure of nearly £748,000.[2]

A committee was appointed in 1895 to deal with the discontent which was only lessened, not silenced, by the efforts of Messrs. Fawcett and Raikes. This was composed of Lord Tweedmouth, Sir F. Mowatt, Mr. Spencer Walpole, and Mr. Llewellyn Smith, and the compromise which they proposed was known as the "Tweedmouth Settlement" which apparently gave little satisfaction at the time and less thereafter. It resulted in a higher average rate of payment, but dissatisfaction was felt because the pay for some services was less than before. The basis of the report was "the abolition of classification whereby each man was allowed to proceed by annual increments to the maximum pay of a combined class, subject only to an efficiency-bar which he may not pass without a certificate of good conduct and ability, together with the abolition of allowances for special services." Differences in pay according to the volume of business in particular localities were left untouched, and this was the cause of much complaint. Special inducements in the shape of double increments were offered to the staff on the postal

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1895, pp. 9–11; 1891, p. 3; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., cccxviii, coll. 537, 1549; cccxlix, col. 213.

[2] *Rep. P. G.*, 1895, pp. 9–11.

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and telegraph sides to learn each other's work in order to lighten the strain which might otherwise fall on a particular branch. Overtime, Sunday and bank-holiday pay were assimilated throughout the service, and efforts were made to reduce the hardship resulting from "split" work, so called from the fact that the working day of many of the men was divided by an interval when there was nothing to do. The higher officials were acquitted of favouritism in the matter of promotion and of "unfairness and undue severity in awarding punishments and in enforcing discipline." The general charges of overcrowding the post offices and leaving them in an unsanitary condition were also rejected. The changes proposed were all adopted at an immediate estimated cost of £139,000 a year and an ultimate cost, also estimated, of £275,000.[1] The Tweedmouth Commission in its turn was soon followed by a departmental committee, composed of the Duke of Norfolk, then Postmaster-General, and Mr. Hanbury, the Secretary of the Treasury, then acting as the representative of the Post Office in the House of Commons. The postal employees demanded that their grievances should be laid before a select committee composed of members of the House of Commons, and motions to that effect were introduced year after year only to meet the Government's disapproval. The most important demands of the men turned upon the questions of full civil rights, complete recognition of their unions, the employment of men who were not members of the civil service, and the old difficulty of wages and hours. So far as the question of full civil rights was concerned, the Post Office employees had been granted the franchise in 1874, but were required not to take an active part in aiding or opposing candidates for election, by serving on committees or otherwise making themselves unduly conspicuous in elections. The men demanded that these restrictions should be withdrawn. In the second place, the Postmaster-General refused to receive deputations from those employees not directly interested in the question at stake, refused to recognize officials who were not also employees of the Department, and exercised more or less control over the meetings of employees. Finally, in addition to the general demand for higher wages due to

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1897, pp. 27 f.

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the higher cost of living, the telegraphists contended that they had been deceived by the promise of a maximum salary of £190 a year, whereas they actually received only £160. Mr. A. Chamberlain opposed the appointment of a select committee of members of the House of Commons because of the pressure likely to be brought upon them and because of their unfitness to decide upon the question at issue. He agreed, however, after consultation with various members of Parliament and the men themselves, that a committee of enquiry might reasonably be granted, composed of business men not in the Civil Service and not members of the House of Commons.[1]

In accordance with this promise the so-called "Bradford Committee" was appointed to report on "the scales of pay received by the undermentioned classes of established civil servants and whether, having regard to the conditions of their employment and to the rates current in other occupations, . . . the remuneration is adequate." In the meantime Mr. Chamberlain retired, but his successor, Lord Stanley, asked that the enquiry be continued. The members of this committee, interpreting their instructions very loosely, extended their report to include their own recommendations as to changes in pay, and refrained entirely from making any comparison between the wages of postal servants and those in other employments, on the ground that such information was easily accessible from the statistics published by the Board of Trade. They added that it was difficult to make any comparison between a national and a private service, for payment according to results and dismissal at the will of the employer are inapplicable under the state. There was also a pension fund in the service, the present value of which it is difficult to estimate. In their own words, "It appears to us that the adequacy of the terms now obtaining may be tested by the numbers and character of those who offer, by the capacity they show on trial, and finally by their contentment." They agreed that there was no lack of suitable candidates and no complaints as to capacity, but there was widespread discontent. Finally the committee recommended the grading of the service as a whole, taking into consideration the differences in cost of living as

[1] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., viii, col. 673; xxix, col. 117; lxxxii, coll. 199 f.; xciv, coll. 1357 f.; cvi, coll. 660–683, 715, 747; cxxi, coll. 1021–64; cxlviii, coll. 1367–69, 1382.

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between London and other cities and between these cities and smaller towns and an increase in pay of the man at an age to marry, irrespective of years of service. "They" (the above recommendations) "obviously do not concede all that has been asked for, but they go as far as we think justifiable in meeting the demands of the staff and we trust it will do much to promote that contentment which is so essential to hearty service."[1] From an examination of the evidence presented by the Committee and a comparison of present scales of pay in the Post Office with those current in other employments, the Postmaster-General concluded that there was no reason for increasing the maximum wages payable, but there seemed to be ground for modifying and improving the scales in some respects. The special increase at the age of twenty-five was granted. The maximum was increased in London and the larger towns on account of the higher cost of living and at the same time wages in the smaller towns were advanced. The postmen also, both in London and the provinces, were granted higher wages, and all payments to the members of the force were in the future to be made weekly. The additional cost entailed by these changes was estimated at £224,400 for 1905–06, the average in later years at £372,300.[2]

The Post Office employees who had asked for the appointment of a select committee were greatly dissatisfied with the personnel of the "Bradford Committee." This dissatisfaction on their part was increased by the fact that the recommendations of the committee were to a great extent disregarded by Lord Stanley on the ground that the members had not reported upon the question laid before them, but had instead proposed a complete reorganization of the whole of the service. He was willing to grant some increase in pay but there were certain recommendations of the committee which he refused to accept. He himself was of the opinion that the average wages of the employees were in excess of those of men doing similar work under competitive conditions, but the postmen objected to a comparison of their wages with those of employees in the open labour market on the ground "that there

[1] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1904, xxxiii, 171, pp. 5–26.

[2] *Acc. & P.*, 1905, xliv, 98, pp. 3–6; *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., cxlviii, col. 1363.

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is no other employer who fixes his own prices or makes an annual profit of £4,000,000 sterling." Delegates representing over 42,000 members of various postal associations protested strongly against Lord Stanley's refusal to adopt the findings of the "Bradford Committee" *in toto* and the men prepared to take an active part against the Government in the approaching election. Appeals were sent out by the men from which Lord Stanley quoted as follows in the House: "Two thirds at least of one political party are in great fear of losing their seats. The swing of the pendulum is against them and any member who receives forty or fifty of such letters will under present circumstances have to consider very seriously whether on this question he can afford to go into the wrong lobby. This is taking advantage of the political situation."[1] The Postmaster-General's unpopularity with his employees was not diminished by his reference to these appeals as "nothing more or less than blackmail." He himself was of the opinion that there should be some organization outside of politics to which such questions should be referred.[2]

Shortly after the Liberals had come into power, a Post Office circular was issued granting to the secretaries of the branches of the various postal organizations the right to make representations to the Postmaster-General relating to the service and affecting the class of which the branch of an association was representative. In matters solely affecting an individual the appeal had to come from the individual himself. This was followed by a full recognition of the postal unions by the new Postmaster-General, Mr. Buxton, with the rights of combination and representation through the representatives of different classes. These conclusions were commented upon most favourably at the annual meeting of the "Postmen's Federation."[3] The representatives present were glad to see that

[1] In connection with such appeals both sides of the House as represented by their leaders had in 1892 advised that members should pay no attention to them (*Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., v, coll. 1123 f.).

[2] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., cxxxix, coll. 1633–34; cxlviii, coll. 1350, 1357–61, 1365; the London *Times*, 1904, Oct. 11, p. 4; Oct. 18, p. 4; Oct. 22, p. 10; 1905, Jan. 16, p. 7; Apr. 7, p. 11.

[3] The Postmen's Federation was established in 1891 and a journal, the *Postman's Gazette*, representing their views, was started in the following year (*Postman's Gazette*, May 28, 1892; *Post Office Circular*, no. 1702).

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"the old martinet system was fast breaking down."[1] But the greatest triumph of the men was to follow in the appointment of a select committee composed of members of the House of Commons with full powers to investigate the conditions of employment of the postal employees and make such recommendations, based upon their investigation, as might seem suitable. Nine members were appointed for this purpose, two of their number being members of the Labour Party, and Mr. Hobhouse was chosen as chairman. Their report is very voluminous and treats minutely all the questions concerning which the postal employees had expressed so much dissatisfaction. The most important of these are connected with the civil rights of the men, their wages, hours of labour, and the conditions of their employment. The demand for full civil rights was supported by four members on the ground that the position of the postal employees is not in many respects "comparable to that of the Civil Service as a whole," but the point was lost for the men by the vote of the chairman. Some departments asked for a reduction in the age of voluntary retirement from sixty to fifty and of compulsory retirement from sixty-five to sixty, but these changes were not recommended by the committee. The question of extending part of their pensions to the widows and children of deceased employees was referred to a plebiscite of the employees themselves. So far as incapacitated officials were concerned, it was pointed out that the "Workmen's Compensation Act" of 1906 had been extended to them. Night work had been limited to the time from 10 P.M. to 6 A.M., seven hours of night work counting as eight hours of day work. The committee asked that night duty be from 8 P.M. to 6 A.M., the ratio of the relative value to remain unchanged. Some servants asked for a forty-two hour week, especially in the case of those who had "split" work to do, and for a half holiday each week. The committee thought that the forty-eight hour week should remain unchanged but that a half holiday might be granted where "the exigencies of the service demand." They also recommended that compensation should be allowed where free medical attendance was not granted. There was a general protest from

[1] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., cliv, col. 202; clix, col. 396; clxxiv, col. 387; the London *Times*, 1906, June 9, p. 9.

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postmen, telegraphists, and sorters against the employment of casual and auxiliary labour on the ground that it dealt a blow at thorough work and trade unionism. The Department replied that it was necessary in the case of especially busy holiday periods and where "split" attendance was unavoidable. The committee contented themselves by asking that casuals who have full work elsewhere should not be employed. The claim on the part of the employees that promotion should be contingent on "seniority, good conduct and ability," in the order named was not accepted by the committee, whose members contended that ability, as at present, should count for most. So far as wages themselves were concerned, a general increase was approved by the committee, and it also, commenting unfavourably on the complexity and number of existing classes, recommended a reduction in their number and greater regularity and simplicity in grading them.[1]

The recommendations of the "Hobhouse Committee" have proved, in many respects, unsatisfactory to the postal employees who have not hesitated to express their condemnation of what they consider the sins both of commission and omission of the members. In the words of the delegates from the branches of the "Postmen's Federation" meeting in London: "We express our deep disappointment with the report of the Select Committee for the following reasons": the "cowardice" of the committee in recommending the continuance of the system of Christmas boxes; the failure in many cases to increase the minimum and maximum rates of wages; the mistaken method of grading towns for wages; the failure to grant full civil rights and the granting of so much power to the permanent officials. The Conference of Postal Clerks in turn expressed their dissatisfaction with the findings of the committee. The "Irish Postal and Telegraph Guardian" considered that the "report had intensified discontent" and commented on the fact that large increases in salaries to highly paid classes had been recommended without any agitation on their part while the lower grades got practically nothing, this in direct opposition to opinions expressed both by Mr. Buxton and Mr. Ward, a member of the committee. Deputations were appointed to discuss with the Post-

[1] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., cliii, coll. 323–38, 354–58; *Rep. Com.*, 1907, 266.

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master-General those findings of the committee which were unsatisfactory, but Mr. Buxton refused to grant a re-trial of the controverted points although he agreed to listen to the plea of those employees whose case had not been presented before the committee.[1]

Mr. Buxton explained his position with reference to the recommendations of the committee in a speech delivered in the House. He knew that in the case of the Tweedmouth and Bradford committees the men stated beforehand that they would not be bound by the decisions reached, but on the other hand had asked for a Parliamentary committee as the only solution of the difficulty. Broadly speaking, he was of the opinion that the findings of the committee should be binding, and he understood that the men would agree to accept them. There were, however, certain points of the report on which nearly every section of the staff asked for a re-trial, but this he was compelled to refuse. The most important recommendations of the committee which were adopted by Mr. Buxton are: an increase in the case of each employee to the minimum or "age pay" of his class; the extension of the "technical increment" beyond the ordinary maximum pay, after a searching examination; the reduction in London of the four "wage" zones to three; a reduction in the number of classes in the provinces, with wages based on volume of work and cost of living in the order named; a reduction after the first five years from five to four years in the period necessary to obtain good conduct stripes; an increase in the pay of women; a reduction in the amount of auxiliary labour employed; night labour to be reckoned from 8 instead of 10 P.M.; overtime to be watched and checked; unsanitary conditions in the Post Office buildings to be remedied; and wages increased in the engineering branch.[2]

[1] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., clxxxiv, coll. 1058–59, 1061–66, 1080; cxcii, coll. 1175, 1173; the London *Times*, 1907, Aug. 19, p. 17; Aug. 20, p. 2; Oct. 16, p. 12.

[2] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., clxxxiv, coll. 1058–70; cxcii, coll. 1120–21. It has been estimated that the recommendations adopted by the Postmaster-General will entail upon the country an additional cost of about £600,000, rising to £1,000,000 (*Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., cxcii, col. 1156).

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CHAPTER V

THE TRAVELLERS' POST AND POST HORSES

THE duty of providing horses for conveying letters and for the use of travellers on affairs of state was enforced from the beginning of the sixteenth century by orders and warrants issued by the Postmaster-General and the Privy Council to mayors, sheriffs, constables, and other officials.[1] Where ordinary posts were laid, the postmen themselves were supposed to have horses ready. Such at least was the understanding, not, however, invariably realized. In 1533 we find the Postmaster-General complaining that, except between London and Dover, there were never any horses provided over the whole kingdom.[2] A few years later when the London-Berwick posts became an established fact each postman had to provide one horse, always to be ready to carry either the mails or a chance traveller on affairs of state. In 1542, since, owing to trouble with Scotland, the number of letters and travellers between that country and London had become much more numerous, each postman was required to have in readiness three horses instead of one, and it was partly for this reason that their pay was increased at the same time.[3] The fee for the use of these horses was fixed at a penny a horse for every mile travelled. Generally this fee was named in the warrant empowering the traveller to take up horses.[4] When the sum was not definitely named, it was required that it should be reasonable.[5] It seems to have been the custom of the members of the Council to grant these warrants quite indiscriminately. To remedy this, it was provided in 1566 that in future no warrant should be granted to any person, who was not actually travelling upon state affairs.[6] Twelve years later we find the people of

[1] Hist. MSS. Com. *Rep.*, 14, app., pt. 8, p. 35; *P. & O. P. C.*, vii, p. 350.
[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 32 (7).
[3] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvii (1542), p. 484.
[4] *A. P. C.*, 1542–47, pp. 164, 333, 465, 469, 527; 1547–50, p. 505.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1550–52, p. 452; 1542–47, p. 384. [6] *Ibid.*, 1558–70, p. 326.

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Grantham petitioning the Council against the taking-up of horses to ride post. They said that the practice had increased so much that it had become intolerable.[1] The demand for horses had become so great that *2d.* a mile was asked for each horse and complaint was made that travellers and messengers refused to pay the increased charge.[2] It is improbable that the state was successful in preventing the use of the postmasters' horses by private individuals, and it is more improbable still that the postmasters themselves objected to hiring their horses to those who travelled on their own affairs. Warrants issued by the Council nearly always fixed the price which should be paid. Now such prices, like wages when fixed by employers, are likely to be lower than demand and supply warrant. On the other hand, as between the postmasters and the ordinary travellers, the question of charge was adjusted by agreement.

When the postmasters themselves were too poor to obtain horses at their own expense, they were sometimes aided by the town or county. In Norfolk, for instance, each one of three postmasters was provided with a certain sum out of the treasury of the city of Norwich to be lent without interest. They were also paid so much a year out of money levied on the people of Norwich, one half on the innkeepers and tipplers and one half on the other inhabitants. No man was to take up post horses in Norwich unless licensed by warrants from the Queen, the Council, the Duke of Norfolk, or the Mayor of Norwich. No one was to ride a horse farther than twelve or fourteen miles at a stretch, and he was to pay *2d.* each mile and *6d.* to his guide to lead back the horses. No horse was to carry any cloak bag over ten pounds in weight.[3]

If more horses were demanded from the postmaster than he himself had in his stable, he might seize them from his neighbours but the full amount paid was to go to the owners. The date of the commission empowering horses to be used, the name of the person using them, and the date when the horses were demanded were to be entered in a book, kept for the purpose.[4]

Complaints from the postmasters concerning the abuses of

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–80, p. 612.
[2] F. Blomefield, *Norfolk*, 1806, iii, p. 294.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1547–80, p. 362.
[4] *A. P. C.*, 1571–75, p. 181.

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travellers were frequent. The London-Berwick posts in a petition to the Council stated that on account of the great number riding over that road many of their horses were injured or spoiled and were not paid for, while the constables, whose duty it was to see that horses were provided, were often ill-treated. Accordingly by a proclamation issued in 1578, it was provided that no commission to ride in post should be issued unless it was first moved at a council meeting or ordered by the Secretary for causes properly relating to Her Majesty's service.[1] This was followed in 1582 by a still more stringent proclamation, forbidding any person to use a commission more than once unless otherwise specified. The pay of *2d.* a mile for each horse was to be in advance as was also the "guide's groat" and, if the payment was not so advanced, the postmaster might refuse to supply horses.[2] Occasionally we find people objecting to having their horses taken when the postmaster had not sufficient of his own. Complaints like these were generally followed by an order to the offending postmaster to provide himself with more horses.[3]

The travellers, however, were not the only people who were at fault. The owners of the horses were often offenders and can hardly be blamed for rendering as difficult as possible the enforcement of the obnoxious proclamations, which they were ordered to obey. If they had to supply horses, they must do so, but there was nothing to prevent them from offering clumsy plough horses or venerable specimens no longer capable of drawing a plough. The constables were more apt to sympathize with the owners, who were their neighbours, than with the travellers. Consequently it is not surprising that complaints were loud and deep over the pieces of horseflesh, whose angular outlines must have presented a sorry seat for the Queen's messengers.[4]

By a Privy Council proclamation issued in 1603, all posts receiv-

[1] *A. P. C.*, 1577–78, p. 219. A particularly violent man roused the ire of the Mayor of Guildford, who wrote to Walsingham asking for damages to a gelding killed by a Mr. Wynckfeld, riding post from Guildford to Kingston. The gelding stumbled and fell on the road and Wynckfeld thrust his dagger into him, beat the guide and threatened to kill the constables on his return (*Cal. S. P. D.*, ii, p. 529).

[2] *A. P. C.*, 1577–78, p. 219.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1588–89, p. 206.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1577–78, p. 62; 1580–81, p. 203.

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ing a daily fee were required to keep at least two horses apiece. So far as the letting of horses was concerned, they had up to this time been subject to competition from other people, who had horses to hire. They were now granted the prior right to provide horses for travellers and it was only in case of their supply being inadequate that horses might be procured elsewhere. The hire as usual was to be paid in advance and was fixed at 2½*d.* a mile, together with the guide's fee for those riding on commission and was to be settled by agreement for all others. No heavier burden than thirty pounds in excess of the rider's weight was to be carried by each horse.[1]

It is in connection with the monopolistic restriction of 1603 that Macaulay says that the state must have reaped a large reward from the prior right of the postmasters to hire horses to travellers.[2] Mr. Joyce has pointed out that the proceeds went to the postmasters and not to the state, but he has given no good reason for dissenting from Macaulay's opinion. Without doubt Joyce is correct, as is shown by a complaint from the postmasters on the Western Road that they had been injured by an interloper who supplied travellers with horses.[3] In 1779, the state made an attempt to obtain something from the postmasters by requiring them to take out a licence for the hiring of horses and to pay a percentage for their receipts to the government.[4] Indirectly, however, the state did reap some benefit from the revenue from post horses, for if the postmasters had received nothing from their horses or from the conveyance of private letters, it would have been necessary to pay their salaries much more promptly than was the custom. As early as the latter part of the sixteenth century, we find complaints from the London-Dover posts that they had received nothing on their salaries for a whole year.[5] This was nothing to later complaints and proves that an impecunious government was enabled to act the bad debtor by the fact that other forms of revenue were available for the postmasters.

In 1609 the rate for each horse was raised from 2½*d.* to 3*d.* a mile, and an attempt was made to enforce the postmasters' monopoly

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., pp. 38, 39, 40 (18).
[2] Macaulay, *Hist. of England*, 1849, i, p. 387. [3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1629–31, p. 193.
[4] 19 Geo. III, c. 51. [5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1581–90, p. 131.

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more strictly.[1] No horse was to be ridden beyond the initial stage unless with the consent of the postmaster concerned. The postmasters complained that they were held responsible for supplying horses, and yet, when it was necessary to obtain them from the surrounding country, they were resisted by the owners or were supplied with inefficient animals.[2] The complaints of the public were more to the purpose. According to them there were some who were being called upon constantly for horses while others escaped all demands. The postmasters often accepted bribes from owners of horses on condition that they should not be troubled.[3] At times the horses, after being seized, were not used but were kept in the stables of the postmasters, and their owners charged the expense of maintaining them.

At the establishment of Witherings' plan in 1635, the postmasters on all the roads in England were required to have as many horses ready as were necessary for the carriage of letters and the accommodation of travellers. The rate for each horse was lowered from 3*d.* to 2½*d.* or 5*d.* for two horses and a guide.[4] Before 1635, the post enjoyed no priority over the traveller in being provided with horses, and if all the horses happened to be in use when the mail arrived, it had to wait. Now it was provided that on the day when the mail was expected, enough horses should be kept in the stable to ensure its prompt transmission.[5] In 1637, after Witherings' dismissal, the fee for the hire of a horse was raised again to 3*d.* at which rate it continued until 1657, when it was lowered to 2½*d.* by the Commonwealth Government. So much trouble had been caused by the seizure of horses from owners unwilling to part with them that it was provided by the act of 1657 that no one might take or seize horses for service without the consent of the owner, but no one save the Postmaster-General and his deputies might hire horses to persons riding in post with or without commission.[6] At the Restoration in 1660, the old rate of 3*d.* a mile for each horse was re-imposed together with a 4*d.* fee to the guide for each stage.

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 42 (20). [2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1619–23, p. 517.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1619–23, p. 86; 1635, p. 18; 1631–33, p. 257. [4] *Ibid.*, 1635, p. 299.
[5] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 57 (36); *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1637, p. 338.
[6] Scobell, *Collect.*, 1656, c. 30.

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If the postmaster was unable to furnish horses within half an hour, they might be obtained elsewhere, but always with the consent of the owner.[1]

The sole right to supply horses was continued to the Postmasters-General and their deputies by the famous act of 1711. The rate per horse and the guide's fee remained at the figure imposed by the act of 1660. If the postmaster did not supply the horses demanded within half an hour, he was liable to a fine of £5 and the horses might be obtained from any one who would consent to hire them. The maximum burden for one horse over and above the rider's weight was eighty pounds.[2]

The postmasters enjoyed the monopoly of letting horses to travellers until the middle of the eighteenth century. But the industrial growth of England and the improvement in the roads had produced such an increase in the number of travellers that the postmasters were unable to supply the demand. The use of carriages had become more common, enabling people to travel who could not proceed on horseback, and this had still further increased the demand for horses. It was plain that something must be done and some more extensive source of supply drawn upon than that furnished under the old system. The postmen had heard some of the rumours in the air that a change was about to be made, and they forwarded a petition to the House of Commons, protesting against the contemplated change as an infringement upon their old monopoly. They said "that if the amendment should pass into a law as it is now drawn, it would not only tend to the great damage and loss of the petitioners, but also the prejudice of His Majesty's revenue."[3] The amendment did pass, however, declaring that in future any one might furnish chaises and calashes with horses and that people letting chaises might supply horses for them at the same time.[4]

In 1779, when the Treasury was sadly in need of money, an act was passed, requiring all persons letting horses to take out licences. In addition, duties were levied on all horses and carriages hired for the purpose of travelling post.[5] In the following year this act was

[1] 12 Ch. II, c. 35.
[2] *Jo. H. C.*, 1745–50, p. 830.
[3] 9 Anne, c. 11.
[4] 22 Geo. II, c. 25.
[5] 19 Geo. III, c. 51.

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superseded by a stricter and more comprehensive one. It was provided by the new act that every person letting horses to travel should pay five shillings a year for a licence. In addition one penny a mile should be paid for every horse, or, if the distance was not known, 1*s.* 6*d.* a day, such duties to be paid by the person hiring the horses to the postmaster or other person who provided them, to be by him handed over to the Treasury. At the time of payment the postmaster was to give the traveller a ticket, which must be shown to the toll keepers on the road. If he had no ticket to show, the toll keeper was ordered not to allow him to pass.[1] Five years later the duty to be collected was raised to 1½*d.* a mile for each horse or 1*s.* 9*d.* a day.[2] In 1787, permission was given to let these duties out to farm, because so many difficulties had been experienced in their collection.[3] The whole theory of these duties was illogical, for it was to every one's interest to evade them, and direct supervision was impossible. In 1808 another act for farming the post-horse duties was passed, modifying somewhat the provisions of the previous act. The tax was to extend to horses used in travelling, when hired by the mile or stage and when hired for a period of time less than twenty-eight days for drawing carriages used in travelling post. Persons licenced to let horses were required to have their names and places of abode painted on their post carriages if they provided these also. The carriages must have numbers painted on them so as to distinguish them easily.[4] In 1823 all previous acts relating to licences and fees for keeping horses for hire were repealed, and a complete system of rates was substituted. Every postmaster or other person keeping horses to hire for riding by post must pay an annual licence of five shillings and additional duties calculated according to distance or time. The Treasury was given authority to let these duties to farm.[5]

[1] 20 Geo. III, c. 51.
[2] 25 Geo. III, c. 51.
[3] 27 Geo. III, c. 26.
[4] 48 Geo. III, c. 98.
[5] 4 Geo. IV, c. 62:—

For every horse let to hire by the mile at the ordinary rate, 1½*d.*

For no greater distance than eight miles, one fifth part of the sum charged or 1*s.* 9*d.*

For no greater distance than eight miles and when the horse or horses shall not bring back any person nor deviate from the regular road, 1*s.*

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For every horse let for a period less than twenty-eight successive days and not let according to the terms given above, one fifth part of the sum charged or 2*s*. 6*d*. for each day not exceeding three days and 1*s*. 9*d*. for each day exceeding three days but not exceeding thirteen days and 1*s*. 3*d*. for each day exceeding thirteen but not exceeding twenty-eight days.

For every horse let for twenty-eight successive days or for a longer period, one fifth of the sum charged or 2*s*. 6*d*. for each day not exceeding three and 1*s*. 9*d*. for each day exceeding three days but not exceeding thirteen days and 1*s*. 3*d*. for each day exceeding thirteen and less than twenty-one days.

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CHAPTER VI

ROADS AND SPEED

SIR BRIAN TUKE, writing in 1533, said that the only roads in the kingdom over which letters were regularly conveyed were from London to Dover and London to Berwick.[1] The road to Berwick had been in use in 1509[2] but had evidently been discontinued, for Sir Brian says in his letter that postmen were appointed to it in the year that he wrote. Regular posts were established between London and Portsmouth when the fleet was there and discontinued as soon as it left, so that it can hardly be included among the regular roads.[3] Between 1580 and the accession of James I, there was a distinct revival in postal affairs within and without the kingdom. The posts on the London-Holyhead road had been discharged for some time and Irish letters were conveyed to London by the postmaster at Chester.[4] In 1581 Gascoyne, the acting Postmaster-General, was ordered to appoint stages and postmen on this old route.[5] A letter patent was issued, calling upon all Her Majesty's officers to assist him in so doing, and a warrant was signed for the payment of £20 to defray his expenses. The Rye-Dieppe posts were also reorganized, principally for the conveyance of letters to and from France.[6] Bristol ranked next to London in size and importance, but it was not until 1580 that orders were given to horse and man the road between the two cities,[7] and only in the following decade were posts also laid from London to Exeter and somewhat later from Exeter to Plymouth.[8] This illustrates as well as anything the fact that the early English postal system was mainly political in

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 32 (7). [2] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, pt. 2, p. 1444.
[3] *A. P. C.*, 1556–58, pp. 249–309.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1571, 75, p. 201; *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–80, p. 265.
[5] *Cal. S. P. Ire.*, 1574–85, p. 176; *A. P. C.*, 1580–81, p. 131.
[6] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 13, app., pt. 4, p. 89.
[7] *A. P. C.*, 1580–81, p. 211.
[8] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1581–90, p. 712; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 43 (21).

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its aims. The great post roads were important from a political rather than an economic standpoint. It was necessary to keep in close touch with Scotland because the Scotch would always stand watching. The wild Irish needed a strong hand and it was expedient that English statesmen should be well acquainted with things Irish. The post to and from the continent was quite as necessary to keep them informed of French and Spanish politics.

In conveying letters the postman who started with them did not, on the regular roads, proceed through to the place where they were directed, but carried them only over his stage to the next postman. By this method a fair rate of speed should have been maintained, for the horses' path in the middle of the road was as a rule not so bad as seriously to impede travelling.[1] Nevertheless complaints about the tardiness of the post are numerous. Lisle, the Warden of the Marches, said that letters from London were nearly five days in reaching him at Alnwick.[2] Nine days from London to Carlisle was considered too slow but it often took that long, notwithstanding that the letters were marked twice "for life, for life."[3] The Earl of Sussex complained to Cecil that they never arrived in York under three days. He expected too much, however, for three days from London to York was considered good speed.[4] According to a post label made out in 1589, the distance from Berwick to Huntingdon was accomplished in ninety-one hours. By the mileage tables then published, the distance was 203 miles, giving an average speed of only a little over two miles an hour. It is only fair to add that the real distance was 282 miles, and this would raise the speed to about three miles an hour.[5] The distance from Dover to London was covered in twelve hours, from Plymouth to Hartford Bridge in forty-four hours, from Portsmouth to Farnham in five hours, from Weymouth to Staines via Sherborne in five days, but this must have been exceptionally long.[6]

Orders were given to the postmen in 1603 that they should not delay the mails more than fifteen minutes at each stage and that

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 14, app., pt. 8, p. 35.
[2] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, 1543, p. 4.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–65, p. 360.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1566–79, p. 109.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1580–1625, p. 278.
[6] Hist. MSS. Com., *Hatfield House*, pt. 7, pp. 174, 168, 332, 358.

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they should travel at the rate of seven miles an hour in summer and five in winter.[1] This was an ideal but seldom realized. Complaints continued to come in pretty constantly during the first thirty-five years of the seventeenth century.[2] Secretary Conway wrote to Secretary Coke that the posts must be punished for their tardiness.[3] Even those from London to Dover were reprimanded and they had hitherto given the best satisfaction. The postmaster at Dover was threatened with imprisonment unless he mended his ways.[4] Letters were either not delivered at all or were needlessly delayed on the road. Some of the postmasters, who held lucrative positions, were themselves absentees and their work was performed by their agents, who were often incompetent, and this sort of thing was connived at by the Postmaster-General, from whom their positions were bought. The postmen themselves acknowledged their tardiness but said that they were able to do no better, since they had received no wages for several years.[5] One had been paid nothing for over two years,[6] another had received no wages for seven years,[6] and finally in 1628 a petition was presented to the Privy Council from "all the posts in England, being in number ninety-nine poor men." This petition prays for their arrears, due since 1621, the amount unpaid being £22,626, "notwithstanding the great charge they are at in the keeping of many servants and horses to do His Majesty's service."[7] The Council did not grant their petition, for two years later £25,000 were still due them.[8]

The Council of State gave directions in 1652 for roads to be manned between Dover and Portsmouth, Portsmouth and Salisbury, London and Yarmouth, and London and Carlisle through Lancaster.[9] Hitherto, Carlisle had to depend upon a branch post from the great North Road. Dover and Portsmouth had no direct

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., pp. 38–40 (28).

[2] Six days from London to Holyrood House (*Cal. S. P. D.*, 1611–18, p. 44). Five hours from Sittingbourne to Canterbury (12 miles) (*ibid.*, 1619–23, p. 610). Nine hours from Sittingbourne to Dover (*ibid.*, 1625–26, p. 256).

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1619–23, p. 564.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1625–26, pp. 43, 168.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1627–28, p. 307.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1623–25, p. 141; 1627–28, p. 307.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1628–29, p. 184.

[8] *Ibid.*, 1629–31, p. 379.

[9] *Ibid.*, 1652–53, p. 312.

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connection nor had Bristol and Exeter, but letters between these places passed through London. These orders formed part of the directions given to the farmer of the posts in the following year.[1] Cromwell seems to have recognized the impracticability of enforcing the speed limit ordered by Elizabeth in the case of the ordinary mails. He issued orders that in future only public despatches or letters from and to certain high officials should be sent by express, and such despatches and letters must be carried at a speed of seven miles an hour from the first of April to the thirtieth of September, and five miles an hour the rest of the year.[2]

Toward the close of the seventeenth century, more attention was directed to the slowness of the posts and the delays along the road. The average speed on the great roads varied from three to four miles an hour, anything below three miles generally calling for reproof. For instance, the posts on the Portsmouth road were reprimanded for travelling only twenty-two miles in ten hours.[3] It was said that it took the Yarmouth mail sixty-six hours to travel less than one hundred miles. The post labels were an important check upon the postmaster's carelessness. Each postmaster was supposed to mark the time that he received the mail on a label attached to it for that purpose. In this way no postmaster marked the speed that his own postboy made and each was a check upon his neighbour.[4] Lord Arlington gave orders in 1666 for this practice to be enforced more strictly. In addition to marking the time of arrival, the time of departure was also to be added.[5] A year later a further improvement was made by the use of printed labels, containing also directions as to speed. The names of the post towns through which the mail must pass were also added, and blanks were left for the postmasters to fill in the hours of arrival and departure.[6]

It was often difficult to tell the relative position of places in Eng-

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, p. 449.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1655, pp. 285–86.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1661–62, p. 385.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1665–66, p. 19.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1666–67, p. 384.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1667–68, p. 116. From copies of these labels made out in 1666 and 1667 we know exactly how long it took to convey the mails between London and the

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land from the post towns. The Post Office had for its own use a table of places along the great roads,[1] and from the middle of the seventeenth century, private individuals began to publish road maps. On these maps, the post towns are marked by a castle with a flag flying from it. Some of them are quite artistically done and represent on a large scale every important road in England with the places where branch roads leave them. One map has each road outlined on a long scroll, and it gives the rivers, brooks, bridges, elevations, villages, post towns, forests, and branch roads throughout the whole distance.[2] In 1668, Hicks, in writing to Arlington's secretary, advised him not to have a new map of the post roads printed, fearing the great changes that might thereby be produced in the Post Office. He says: "When Parliament sees how all the branches lie and most of them carried on at the charge of those in the country concerned, they will try to have them carried through by the Postmaster-General, which will be very chargeable." [3]

At the close of the seventeenth century, the five great roads to Edinburgh, Holyhead, Bristol, Plymouth, and Dover remained practically unchanged. The Plymouth road had been continued to

important cities of the kingdom although the time varied more or less at different trips and different seasons.

Between	*Hours*
London and Yarmouth [1]	From 29 to 32
Plymouth	50 58
York	39 42
Chester	30 56
Bristol	25 30
Gloucester	20 26
Portsmouth	15 23
Edinburgh	73 103 *
Newcastle	57 81
Manchester	32 48
Preston	47 58
Dover	19 22
Southampton	18 23

(*Cal. S. P. D.*, 1667–68, pp. 117, 118, 120, 121; 1666–67, pp. 388, 389.)

* Reproved for slowness.

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1673–75, p. 494. [2] John Ogilby, *Itinerarium Angliae*, 1675.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1667–68, p. 543.

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Falmouth and the Northern Road now passed through York. The greatest changes noticeable are in the Southern and Eastern counties. In the South, nearly all the coast towns were now connected with the Falmouth road, and the post ran to the extreme southwest of Cornwall. Portsmouth had a direct service from London through Arundel and Chichester. There were branches from the Falmouth road to several towns in Dorset and Somerset, but as a rule the country between the two great roads to the West was poorly supplied. A new road of considerable importance ran from Maidenhead on the Bristol road through Abingdon, Gloucester, Cardiff, and Swansea to Milford, where there was a packet boat for Ireland. From this road there were a few unimportant branches to the North.

In the Northeast, the post road to Edinburgh now passed through York to Northallerton. From York there was a branch to Scarborough and Whitby. A new road left the Edinburgh road at Royston, about forty miles from London, and passed along the coast nearly parallel to the great road, through Newmarket, Lynn, Boston, and Hull to Bridlington. Another branch left Newmarket for Norwich and the seacoast towns of northern Norfolk. An important road left London for Yarmouth, with branches to the coast towns of Suffolk. One new road ran through the midland counties, leaving the Holyhead road about thirty miles from London and passing through Sheffield, Manchester, and Preston to Carlisle. Derby was supplied by an east and west road from Grimsby to Manchester. Liverpool had a post road to Manchester. In 1683, provision was made for an extension of the post roads by an order issued to the Postmaster-General to set up posts between the market towns and the nearest post towns. These were called bye-posts. It was to them that Hicks had objected as leading to increased expense. At the same time orders were given for a map to be printed, showing where all these bye-posts were situated so that people might know where to address their letters.[1]

In Ireland, there were three main post roads, running from Dublin through Ulster, Munster, and Connaught.[2] There were

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 91 (64). [2] Joyce, p. 53.

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practically no post roads worthy of the name in Scotland. That part of the great North Road beyond the Tweed was English rather than Scotch. Between Edinburgh and Glasgow there was a foot-post. The mail was also carried between Glasgow and Portpatrick.[1] In 1699, the length of the roads in America over which the mails passed was 700 miles. These roads connected the principal towns along the Atlantic coast.[2]

In 1696, the Postmaster-General reported favourably on the establishment of a cross post road between Bristol and Exeter.[3] The report was approved, and two years later Bristol and Exeter had direct postal communication. Colonial and foreign letters for Bristol, after their arrival in Falmouth, still went via London.[4] Towns adjacent to Bristol and Exeter, which might have been connected with the cross post, remained separated. For example, the post went from London through Cirencester to Wotton-under-Edge, which was within fourteen miles of Bristol, yet letters from Cirencester to Exeter went via London.[5] The Exeter-Bristol cross post proved a success. After it had been in operation three years, it produced over £350 net profits a year. The use of cross posts was advocated as leading to the conveyance of a larger number of letters, and private individuals started to establish them.[6] In 1700, the post road from Exeter to Bristol was continued to Chester through Worcester and Shrewsbury.[7] Three years later, a direct road was ordered between Exeter and Truro, but it seems to have been discontinued after one year's trial.[8]

The post roads throughout the kingdom had not been measured correctly. A mile on the London-Edinburgh road was fully ten furlongs. This had resulted in a decreased revenue from post horses and often unjustifiable reprimands for slowness. By a provision in the act of 1711, it was ordered that all the post roads in the kingdom should be measured. This was to be done by officials

[1] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1739–41, p. 240; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 94 (67); *Acts of the Parl. of Scotland*, ix, p. 417 (5 Wm. III).
[2] *Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, p. 280.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1657–96, p. 55.
[4] Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, p. 488.
[5] *Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, pp. 21–22.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1697–1702, p. 56.
[7] *Ibid.*, 1702–07, p. 26.
[8] *Ibid.*, 1702–07, p. 134.

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appointed by the Postmaster-General and the measurements left in the general offices in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin.[1]

As the seventeenth century had seen the extension of roads in the southern and eastern counties of England, so the eighteenth century was marked by the establishment of posts in those parts of the kingdom most affected by the industrial revolution. The country about Birmingham, Kidderminster, and Worcester was to share in the better postal facilities offered by the mail coaches. Lancashire and the West Riding of York were not debarred from the use of Palmer's innovation. This was especially the case in Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Halifax, and Leeds, for where industrial expansion paved the way, the coaches were sure to follow.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the roads in Ireland were attracting considerable attention, and it was the slow speed made by the mail carts there which was a primary cause in producing any improvement. The Postmasters-General were directed to cause surveys to be made and maps drawn of those roads in Ireland over which the mail passed. The roads were to be levelled so that the ascent or descent should be no more than one foot in thirty-five wherever this was practicable, the expense to be borne by the county or barony.[2] This was in 1805, and the next year the Grand Jury was given the power to call for another survey, and the surveyor whom they appointed was to decide as to the necessity for a change in the direction of the road. Copies of all Grand Jury presentments were to be made to the Postmasters-General.[3] In 1813 the Grand Juries were empowered to present for damages accruing to owners and occupiers of land, such damages to be raised by the county and advanced from the consolidated fund.[4]

After 1817, the Postmasters-General were able to report a considerable acceleration in the speed at which the mails were carried. This was owing largely to the introduction of a lighter and more improved type of mail coach, and after 1821 the use of steam packet-boats in the case of the transportation of the Irish and continental mails. Letters leaving London at 8 P.M. on Tuesday for Ireland had not been delivered in Dublin until 10 A.M. on Friday. In 1817

[1] 9 Anne, c. 11.
[2] 46 Geo. III, c. 134.
[3] 45 Geo. III, c. 43.
[4] 53 Geo. III, c. 146.

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they arrived on Thursday in time for delivery on that day.[1] In 1828, the coaches travelled from London to Holyhead, a distance of 261 miles, in twenty-nine hours and seventeen minutes. Four years later the time had been reduced to twenty-eight hours.[2] By the introduction of one of the patent mail coaches on the Yarmouth road, the inhabitants of that town were enabled to answer their letters a day earlier. The coach left London at the usual time (8 P.M.), arriving in Yarmouth at 11.40 A.M., returning at 3 P.M. on the same day.[3] The mails to Manchester and Liverpool travelled at the rate of nine miles an hour over the greater part of the road.[4] The average speed varied from eight to nine miles an hour. To give the exact figures, the highest speed attained in England was ten miles and five furlongs an hour, the slowest six miles, and the average eight miles and seven furlongs.[5] In Ireland the highest speed attained by the mail coaches was nine miles and one furlong an hour, the slowest speed six miles and seven furlongs, and the average eight miles and two furlongs.[6] Mail carts drawn by two horses were also used largely in Ireland for the conveyance of the mails, and by these the speed was not so great. The highest speed made by them was seven miles and five furlongs an hour, the slowest five miles and one furlong, and the average six miles and three fur-

[1] London *Times*, 1817, Aug. 28, p. 2.

[2] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, xiv, p. 347; 1831–32, xvii, p. 7.

[3] London *Times*, 1819, July 17, p. 2. Yarmouth is distant from London 124 miles.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1821, Aug. 23, p. 3.

[5] *Acc. & P.*, 1836, xlv, 364, pp. 2 f.

The following times are given in *Rep. Commrs*, 1830, xiv: —

p. 348	London to Liverpool	22 hrs.	7 min.,	distance 202 miles
p. 349	London to Bristol	13	14	122
p. 350	Bristol to Milford	19	38	149
p. 351	London to Carlisle (via Leeds)	34	7	311
p. 352	Carlisle to Portpatrick	11	32	85
p. 353	Bristol to Birmingham	10	29	87

[6] *Acc. & P.*, 1836, xlv, 364, p. 4.

The following times are given in *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830 xiv: —

p. 354	Dublin via Cashell to Cork	22 hrs.		distance 126 miles
p. 355	Cork to Waterford	12 hrs.	4 min.,	72
p. 356	Dublin to Belfast	13	15	80
p. 356	Donaghadee to Belfast	2	24	14

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longs.[1] In Scotland the highest speed was ten miles and four furlongs an hour, the slowest seven miles, and the average eight miles and two furlongs.[2]

The mails which left London at 8 P.M. arrived in Holyhead at 12.6 A.M. on the next day but one. The packet left Holyhead twenty-five minutes later for Howth. The packet left Howth at 4 P.M. for Holyhead, and the mails for London left Holyhead at 12.15 A.M. The passage across the Irish Sea took from five to eight hours. The London coach arrived in Milford at 5.27 A.M., travelling at a rate of eight miles an hour, and twenty-five minutes after its arrival, the packet left for Dunmore. Another left Dunmore with the mails at 12 P.M., and the coach left Milford for London at 7.30 P.M.[3] The London mail coach arrived at Portpatrick at 10.27 P.M., fifty hours and twenty-seven minutes from London. The packet did not leave Portpatrick until 6.10 A.M., after the arrival of the Glasgow mail, which left Glasgow at 4.45 P.M., arriving at 5.6 A.M. The packet left Donaghadee at noon, and the mail left Portpatrick at 4 P.M., arriving in Glasgow at 6 A.M. Ordinarily the passage across took four hours. The London mail coach arrived in Liverpool at 6 P.M., twenty-two hours from London, and left at 10.30 P.M. Packets sailed from Liverpool and Kingstown at 5 P.M. and 5.15 P.M., the time for crossing being about fourteen hours. No London letters went via Liverpool until 1841.[4]

The method used to ensure a rapid transmission of the mails by the coaches was as follows: Time bills were issued to the guards of the different coaches. On these bills were printed the speed that should be made from stage to stage, and it was the guard's duty to fill in the time made by the coach on which he rode. Penalties were inflicted for any mistakes which he might make or any failure on his part to leave the bill in the office at the end of his route. On some of the time bills it was set forth that a fine of one shilling was payable by the proprietor for each minute that the coach was late and he might recover it from the guard or coachman if the delay was due to the negligence of either of them. The coachmen were

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1836, xlv, 364, p. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1836, xlv, 364, p. 5.
[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 7, 373–74.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 373–74.

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ordered to make up any time lost on the road and to report the horse keepers if they were at fault.[1]

The chief cause for delay was the lack of close connection between the mail coaches and the packets to and from Ireland. In 1837 the London mail arrived in Holyhead at 11 P.M., but the packet did not leave for Kingstown until 8 A.M., a change having been made in the time of sailing.[2] Letters from England were detained in Dublin eleven hours before their departure for the rest of the island.[3] More than one third of the Irish letters for England left Kingstown by the day packet at 9 A.M., remaining in Holyhead from 3 P.M. to 4 A.M., with the exception of the letters for Chester and Manchester, which were forwarded by a special coach.[4]

The packets from Liverpool started shortly before the arrival of the London mail. The Commissioners proposed that they should be detained until it had arrived, but this was not done until ten years later.[5] The packets at Portpatrick always waited for the mails from Glasgow, and as these were nearly always late, letters from Carlisle and Northern England were necessarily detained.[6] The station at Milford had always given the most trouble. From a financial point of view it was the least satisfactory, and English letters for the south of Ireland often went through Holyhead. The packet left Waterford[7] for Milford at 12 P.M., arriving in Milford about noon, but the mail did not leave for London until 7.30 P.M.[8] English letters for Ireland via Milford were detained from ten to thirteen hours in Waterford.[9]

Before the introduction of Penny Postage, the use of railways had only started. In 1837, it was objected that the railways could never be of much use in this respect because they could not travel at night

[1] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., app., nos. 40–45.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., app., no. 11. The packet leaving Holyhead at 6.30 P.M. carried letters from Birmingham, brought by the coach from that place, but took no London letters (*Acc. & P.*, 1841, ix, p. 9).

[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1831–32, xvii, p. 325.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., app. no. 11.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 5–9; *Acc. & P.*, 1841, xix.

[6] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 5–9.

[7] Sometimes the packet left Dunmore. See *Rep. Commrs.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 373–4.

[8] *Ibid.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 5–9, 373–74.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 325.

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for fear of accidents. In answer to this objection it was pointed out that trains between Liverpool and Manchester and Leeds and Selby found no difficulty in that respect.[1] In 1837, mails were carried between Manchester and Liverpool at a rate of twenty miles an hour, and these trains left both Liverpool and Manchester as late as 5 P.M.[2] The Postmaster-General was given authority by Parliament to require any railway to carry mails either by ordinary or special train and to regulate the speed to the maximum of the fastest passenger train, as well as to control places, times and duration of stoppage and the times of arrival, provided that such regulations were reasonable. He might require the exclusive use of a carriage, if necessary, provided either by the railway or himself as seemed better to himself. In 1844 he was allowed to order a speed not in excess of twenty-seven miles an hour but he complained that he was unable to enforce his regulations although the speed was increasing. In 1855 a parliamentary committee reported in favour of a deduction of payment for irregularity on the part of the railways and the fining of the Post Office for irregularity in dealing with mail to be entrusted to the railways, the amounts of such deductions and fines to be a matter of contract, and in addition it was advised that the Postmaster-General's demands with reference to speed should be certified by the Railway Department of the Board of Trade to be consistent with safety. In conformity with this resolution, the Postmaster-General proposed to pay a bonus to the railways when their trains were on time and to exact a penalty from either the railway or the Post Office whichever were the offender, but the proposition was, as a rule, not very favourably received by the railways.[3]

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, p. 469, no. 17.

[2] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 7th rep., app., no. 13.

[3] 1 and 2 Vict., c. 98; 7 and 8 Vict., c. 85; *Rep. Com.*, 1854, xi, 411, p. xiii; *Rep. P. G.*, 1857, p. 7.

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CHAPTER VII

SAILING PACKETS AND FOREIGN CONNECTIONS

THE Irish mail service was the first to boast a regular sailing packet.[1] The postal expenditure for the year 1598 included £130 for a bark to carry letters and despatches between Holyhead and Dublin, and an additional vessel was hired occasionally for the same purpose.[2] At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Queen Elizabeth ordered packets to be established at Milford Haven and Falmouth to ply between England and Ireland. This order was probably temporary, being intended to furnish a means of communication only during Essex's expedition.[3] In 1649 the port of departure for the Irish packets was changed from Holyhead to Portinllain in Carnarvon and at the same time the land stages were altered to meet the new conditions.[4] Prideaux reported the same year that the cost of these packets averaged £600 a year.[5]

In 1653 the Council of State gave orders for the revival of the old packet service between Milford and Waterford. At the same time Chester was substituted for Portinllain as the point of departure on the English side, and mails were carried weekly between the two countries by the Milford and Chester Packets.[6] The establishment of these boats was made one of the conditions under which the post was farmed in the same year.[7] The situation of Holyhead, however, was so much in its favour that in 1693 a contract was signed for the conveyance of the mails between Holyhead and Dublin. Mr. Vickers, the contractor, agreed to maintain three packet boats for this purpose for £450 a year. He also undertook to provide two boats for the mail service between Portpatrick and Donaghadee. When the Scotch was separated from the English Post Office in

[1] *Cal. S. P. Ire.*, 1574–85, p. 401.
[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 37 (15).
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1598–1601, p. 107.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1648–49, p. 210.
[5] *Jo. H. C.*, 1648–51, p. 385.
[6] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1644, pp. 6, 29; 1641–43, p. 501.
[7] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, pp. 312, 449.

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1695, three packet boats came under the control of Scotland.[1] Upon the separation of the British and Irish Posts in 1784, it was provided that each office should receive its own proportion of the inland postage collected on letters passing between the two countries. The packet service between the two countries continued to be managed by the English Postmaster-General, to whom all receipts were forwarded. In return for this they were required to pay to the Irish Office a sum not exceeding £4000 a year. This was to be the rule until Ireland had established packet boats of her own.[2]

The Irish Post Office, before the Act of Union, had employed boats called wherries for the despatch of special messengers and expresses to England. In the course of time they lost their special character and, after 1801, were used to carry passengers and goods in opposition to the Holyhead packets. In 1813, Lees, the Secretary of the Irish Office, informed the London Office that these wherries would henceforth be employed to carry the Irish mails to Holyhead. This was actually done for six weeks and the regular packets arrived on the English side without the mail, which was brought by boats that, as a rule, did not arrive until after the coach had left for London. Lees may have been obstinate and ill advised but there was no doubt that he was acting entirely within his rights. The question then arose, should the Irish Office receive that part of the £4000 due them while the Holyhead packets did not carry the mails? The Postmaster-General decided that they should, much to Freeling's disgust. Lees had obtained his object, for two years later Parliament passed an act increasing the amount payable to the Irish Office to £8000 a year.[3]

Shortly after the Restoration, two packet boats were employed between Deal and the Downs. They carried letters to and from the ships of the merchant marine and the Royal Navy lying there. They also collected letters from vessels arriving from foreign ports and brought them to the shore whence they were transmitted by the General Post.[4] By an act passed in 1767 the Isle of Man was for the first time supplied with a postal service. A packet boat was

[1] *Cal. T. P.*, 1557–1696, p. 308.
[2] 24 Geo. III, c. 6.
[3] Joyce, pp. 380–83; 55 Geo. III, c. 145.
[4] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1667–68, pp. 248, 249; Joyce, p. 46.

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to run between Whitehaven and the Port of Douglas in the island.[1] In 1828 sixteen packet boats were employed in carrying mails between the coast towns and to and from the outlying islands of the United Kingdom. All of these boats were hired by the Post Office, except those from Weymouth to Jersey and Guernsey.[2]

Early in the sixteenth century Dover was the port of departure and arrival for letters to and from the continent, and Calais was the distributing point on the other side, although the royal mail was occasionally conveyed between Rye and Dieppe.[3] From Calais the letters were carried to their destination by the English messengers to whom they were entrusted. They took up post horses along the way, paying for them as they proceeded, and often grumbling at the excessive charges which were demanded.[4] Letters from abroad directed to England were usually carried as far as Calais by foreign messengers. The foreign Postmaster-General would then send his bill to the English Postmaster-General for expenses so incurred.[5] Regular sailing packets were not used to carry the mails between Dover and Calais during the sixteenth century, but merchant vessels were employed by the Post Office.

Witherings' appointment as Foreign Postmaster-General in 1632 was made the occasion for a report to Sir John Coke on the foreign postal service. The immediate cause of the report was the fact that mails had not arrived from Germany, the Hague and Brussels. The fault was laid upon the messengers, who were accused of "minding their own peddling traffic more than the service of the state or the merchants, omitting many packages, sometimes staying for the vending of their own commodities, many times through neglect or lying in tippling houses." The report goes on to express confidence in Witherings and in his plan for the reform of the foreign post.[6] In 1631, thirteen messengers were employed to carry letters to the continent: three for France; six for Germany, Italy and the Netherlands; and four, who travelled to Paris and other parts of France on special occasions.[7] The service which they gave

[1] 7 Geo. III, c. 50.
[2] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, xiv, app., nos. 78, 80.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1581–90, p. 485.
[4] *Cal. S. P. For.*, 1553–58, pp. 239, 341.
[5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1580–1625, p. 188; 1581–90, p. 84; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, i, 3639.
[6] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 12, app., pt. 1, p. 478.
[7] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1631–33, p. 242; Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 12, app., pt. 2, p. 103.

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was inadequate and slow, and in 1633 the foreign post, at Witherings' suggestion, was ordered to be conducted on the following principles. Packet posts were to be appointed at suitable stages to run day and night without stopping. This was the plan which was commented upon favourably in the report to Sir John Coke. The Foreign Postmaster-General was to take the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, to have an office in London, and to give notice at what time the public were to bring in their letters for despatch to the continent. A register was also to be kept, in which should be enrolled the names of all persons bringing letters, together with the names of those to whom they were addressed. The letters themselves were placed in a packet and locked and sealed with the Foreign Postmaster-General's seal. Letters from abroad for ambassadors residing in England and for the Government were to be delivered at once, after which a table of all other letters was to be set up for every one to see and demand his own.[1]

Witherings attempted next to come to some agreement with the postal officials of foreign countries about the despatch of letters. In Calais he met the Countess Taxis, secretary of the Postmaster of Ghent, and she agreed to settle stages between Antwerp and Calais. Witherings himself established stages between London and Dover. There had always been trouble with the boatmen who conveyed the mail between Dover and Calais. Witherings reported that he had found a man, who for 40*s.* would wait for the packet and depart with it at once, carrying nothing else. The messengers hitherto employed between Antwerp and Calais were dismissed.[2] The arrangement in France for the carriage of letters to and from England was decidedly unique. Witherings obtained the permission of the French ambassador to settle stages in France himself.[3]

In 1644, King Charles, from his headquarters at Oxford, ordered sailing packets to be established at Weymouth to ply between that town and Cherbourg. This was done ostensibly for the accommodation of the merchants in the southwest of England. James Hicks was ordered to live in Weymouth for the purpose of exercising a general oversight over all letters going or coming by these

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1631–33, p. 522. [3] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 12, app., pt. 2, p. 6.
[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1634–35, p. 193.

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packets. All dues must be paid before they were allowed to depart and the masters were accountable to him for passage money. Postage was charged on all letters going to or coming from any part of England except those on His Majesty's service. No letters were to be sent from those parts of England in the hands of the rebels.[1]

Until 1638, Flanders was the only country with which England had come to an agreement concerning the mutual exchange of the correspondence of each. In that year, a similar agreement was concluded with de Nouveau, the French Postmaster-General. All letters between England and France were henceforth to pass through Dover, Calais, Boulogne, Abbeville, and Amiens. Both the French and English kings ratified this agreement, and all others were prohibited by them from infringing upon the monopolies enjoyed by the two Postmasters-General.[2] On special occasions, of course, both the French and English kings sent special messengers but they were not used so often as before.[3] In 1640, the Governor of the Merchant Adventurers was asked to give his opinion upon the question of foreign correspondence concerning which there was considerable dissatisfaction, especially in the case of letters sent to Flanders and Holland. The Governor in his reply said that complaints had hitherto been restrained because of the connection of the state with the foreign post. He added that some time before a letter had come from the Court of their company at Rotterdam, complaining about the overcharging of the Company's letters. He did not care to investigate the question alone but proposed that it be entrusted to a committee composed of two members from each of the great companies, the Merchant Adventurers, the Turkish, the Eastland, and the French.[4] After the Restoration, matters were adjusted with de Nouveau and provision was made for the transmission of letters to England twice a week.[5] At the same time an attempt was made to reach an understanding with the burgomaster of Amsterdam and the Dutch ambassador for the conveyance of English letters to Germany, the East, and Italy through Holland. Bishop, the English Postmaster-General, was

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1644, pp. 6, 29.
[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 58 (37).
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1639–40, p. 457.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1640, p. 163.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1660–61, p. 82.

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accused of accepting money for making this bargain and the proposed agreement did not materialize.[1] In 1665, Frizell was sent abroad to talk over postal connections with de Nouveau and the Flemish Postmaster-General, de Taxis, between whom difficulties had arisen. De Taxis was reminded that letters from Holland for England passing through Flanders were not treated in accordance with the agreement made between England and Flanders.[2] The old contract was continued, for in 1693 a bill was presented to the English Post Office by the next in order of the House of Thurn and Taxis, referring to the former agreement. £2711 was then due to the Flemish Postmaster-General and, as the bill was presented in the form of a petition signed by the Prince of the House and his brothers and sisters, there was probably some difficulty experienced in collecting it.[3] The Dutch were not satisfied with receiving letters through Flanders, and in 1667 we find the Postmaster-General of Holland in Harwich, arranging for a direct service with England, which was established in the following year.[4] Letters to and from Holland might go via Calais through France and Flanders, or by sailing packet to Nieuport and thence through Flanders, or directly from Harwich to Helvoetsluys. The mail for Holland left London every Tuesday and Thursday night. The route was along the Yarmouth road as far as Colchester and then directly to Harwich. The Harwich boats were stopped for a short time in 1672,[5] but after William's aceession they were in such constant service that it was necessary to hire extra boats.[6] Orders were often given to delay them until the arrival of an express from the King and on other occasions they were hurried off before their regular time for departure.[7]

It was agreed by a contract signed by the French and English Postmasters-General in 1698 that the mails, as soon as they arrived in Dover from Calais or in Calais from Dover, should be forwarded by "express" to London and Paris respectively. This was done in England, but in France the foreign mail continued to be sent at the

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1661–62, p. 56.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1693, p. 57.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1664–65, p. 489.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1667, p. 440.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1667–68, p. 428; 1672, p. 189.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1690–91, p. 119.
[7] *Ibid.*, 1690–91, p. 552.

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regular time of departure and, as there was only one mail a day, English letters might have to remain in Calais for nearly twenty-four hours, if the packet from Dover happened to be late. Cotton and Frankland remonstrated but Mr. Pajot, the French Postmaster-General, returned no answer. The English Postmasters-General had agreed to pay about £2500 a year to Mr. Pajot for the conveyance of English letters through France. One or two instalments were paid before the war broke out.[1] Nothing further was done until after the Treaty of Utrecht, when a commission was sent to France to negotiate a new postal agreement. Pajot refused to accept a lump sum and declared that each letter passing through France must pay the ordinary postage according to the French rates. Objection was taken to this as the French rates were higher than the English, but objections were of no avail. Pajot, who carried matters with a high hand, gained his point. By the act of 1711, the postage for a single letter through France to Italy was 15*d.*, and by the terms of the new treaty with France, 21 sous would have to be paid by the English Postmasters-General for the conveyance of a letter through France.[2]

The withdrawal of the sailing packets between England and France in 1689 had interrupted postal communication between England and Spain, since the regular route lay through Calais. Accordingly, packet boats were hired to ply between Falmouth and the Groyne.[3] After the Methuen treaty had been signed and while England and France were struggling in the Spanish Netherlands, it was proposed to replace the old boats between Falmouth and Lisbon by new. In 1703 a weekly packet service, supplied by four boats, was established between England and Portugal.[4]

At the end of the war, Cotton and Frankland contracted with Mr. Macky to furnish five boats to carry the mails between England, France, and Flanders for three years. In 1701, the contract was extended to five years for £1400 a year. Macky was to provide boats and men but not provisions and equipment. In case war broke out, the contract would become void at once. War did break out the next year,[5] and during the war the packet boats from

[1] Joyce, p. 77. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 139. [3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1691–92, p. 97.
[4] *Cal. T. P.*, 1702–07, p. 94. [5] *Ibid.*, 1702–07, p. 145.

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Harwich to Holland were kept very busy. They had been large boats, well manned and formidable enough to take care of themselves in an emergency. They seem even to have become the aggressors at times. William, himself, as was natural, felt a warm interest in them. A stranger in a strange land, misunderstood and personally unpopular, they were the link between him and his home. He thought that speedier boats should be built and that when pursued they should attempt to escape rather than stand up to their pursuers. The government had four narrow, low boats built for purposes of speed. The sailors complained that the new boats were so low in the water that they were constantly being swept by the waves and they themselves were drenched all the time. There is no doubt that William's move was in the right direction, and the men were placated by an increase in their wages. This could be done the more easily since the new boats were smaller than the old and carried fewer men.[1]

At the time of the War of the Austrian Succession, the Dover packets were supplied by a man named Pybus. He agreed to carry mails, passengers, and expresses from Dover to Calais and Ostend. If he could not reach the latter place by sea he was to land the mails and have them forwarded overland. He was to receive as pay the fares of all passengers, but so many officers and soldiers had to be transported free that he was paid what the Treasury considered that he lost by them.[2] A position in one of the packets was so dangerous in time of war that a fund was provided for the widows and children of the killed and for the support of the wounded. This was met by deducting 10*d*. a month from the pay of each seaman.[3]

In 1803, as a war measure, packets were established between Falmouth, Gibraltar, and Malta.[4] It was understood that the regular service to Portugal should be discontinued at the same time. In 1812 during Wellington's campaign in Portugal and Spain, the Post Office announced that sailing packets would be despatched to

[1] Joyce, pp. 75, 76. Mr. Vanderpoel, postmaster at the Brill, was appointed by the king to take charge of all letters and despatches sent by or to their Majesties by the Harwich boats (*Cal. S. P. D.*, 1691–92, p. 404; *Cal. T. P.*, 1702–07, pp. 19, 33).

[2] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1742–45, p. 509.

[3] *Cal. T. P.*, 1708–14, p. 3.

[4] 43 Geo. III, c. 73.

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Corunna every fortnight.[1] From Corunna they proceeded to Lisbon before returning to Falmouth. There was some complaint from the mercantile interests on account of the stop at Corunna, since the merchants were more interested in the Lisbon markets than in keeping up communication with Wellington's army.[2]

By the end of 1813, Napoleon had lost control over Europe. The Dutch had freed themselves from French domination. On November 26th a Dutch mail was made up at the Post Office and despatched for Harwich. The regular packet boats were reëstablished and were ordered to land the mails at Scheveningen, a small fishing town three miles from the Hague.[3] Following Napoleon's expulsion to Elba, postal communications with France were resumed. Mails were despatched from Dover four times a week, on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, leaving London at 11 P.M. on Tuesday and Friday and at 7 P.M. on Wednesday and Thursday.[4] Thirteen sailing vessels were stationed at Harwich in 1828, all of them hired permanently. Nine sailed between Harwich and Helvoetsluys, four between Harwich and Gothenburg.[5]

The London merchants in 1837 complained that no mails were made up in Paris for London on Wednesday and Thursday. The mails from Spain, Italy, and Switzerland arrived in Paris on Tuesday and Friday, and Tuesday's mails were not despatched until Friday. An arrangement was asked for by which a daily post might be established between Paris and London. They pointed out that there was a daily post from Paris to Calais, a daily packet service and a daily post from Dover to London.[6] English letters for France arrived in Dover daily at 5 A.M., except on Wednesday and Saturday, were despatched to Calais at once and left Calais at noon for Boulogne and Paris. On post nights,[7] letters did not leave London until midnight, arrived in Dover at 10 A.M., and were often not in time for the Paris mail, which left Calais at noon.[8] The two

[1] London *Times*, 1812, Aug. 31, p. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1813, Aug. 22, p. 2. [3] *Ibid.*, 1813, Nov. 29, p. 3.
[4] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1829, xi, p. 232; *Acc. & P.*, 1817, p. 11; London *Times*, 1814, April 18, p. 3.
[5] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, xiv, app., no. 78. [6] London *Times*, 1830, May 21, p. 3.
[7] Post nights were probably on Wednesday and Saturday nights.
[8] London *Times*, 1837, Jan. 14, p. 7.

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packets between Dover and Ostend carried the mails four times a week.[1] By virtue of a treaty with Belgium, these packets conveyed letters both ways and the Belgium Government paid £1000 a year as its part of the expenses. The Dover-Calais boats on the other hand carried letters only to Calais, and not from Calais to Dover.[2] Letters from Belgium to Dover went first to London and this held true of any letters from Belgium to England via Dover.[3]

It was provided in 1835 that, after the Postmaster-General had entered into an agreement with any foreign state to collect and account for the British postage on letters sent from the United Kingdom to any such state, it should be optional for a person sending such a letter to pay the whole amount of postage in advance or to pay the British postage only, as had hitherto been the custom, or to pay neither. The entire postage on letters from abroad might also be paid in one sum and the part due the foreign state was then handed over by the English Postmaster-General.[4] In the following year such a treaty was concluded with France, the English colonies also being included in the arrangement. It was agreed that each country should account to the other according to the method of reckoning postage of the country to which the payment was made, a settlement to be concluded every three months.[5]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century William Dummer entered into a contract to supply packet boats for use between England and the West Indies. For this service Dummer provided five boats, each one of 150 tons and carrying 50 men. Each was to make three round trips a year, thus giving fifteen sailings every twelve months from both England and the West Indies.[6] These boats were to make Falmouth their home port, but they often kept on to Plymouth, probably because it was a better place to dispose of their smuggled goods.[7] Poor Dummer was exceedingly unfortunate with his West India boats. The first one to sail was captured on her maiden trip. The receipts did not come up to his expect-

[1] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1836, xxviii, 6th rep., p. 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1836, xxviii, 6th rep., p. 5.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1836, xxviii, 6th rep., p. 7.
[4] 5 and 6 Wm. IV., c. 25.
[5] London *Times*, 1836, June 20, p. 5. In accounting to France for letters sent there postpaid, England agreed to consider as a single letter any enclosure or enclosures weighing not more than a quarter of an ounce, according to the French method.
[6] *Cal. T. P.*, 1702–07, p. 64.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

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ations. He had supposed that to double the receipts he had only to double the rates, but like other men before and after him he had to learn the effect of higher rates on correspondence.[1] In 1706 he wrote that it was a losing contract,[2] and in the same year the Government released him from the agreement and paid him for two of his lost packets.[3] From a total of fourteen boats provided for the packet service, he had lost nine. The Postmasters-General recommended that for the future the packets should leave and arrive at Bideford, which was less exposed to the enemies' privateers than either Falmouth or Plymouth.[4]

After Dummer's failure, no attempt was made by the Post Office to revive the service until 1745. In that year the Postmasters-General reported to the Treasury in favour of regular packets between Falmouth and some port in the West Indies. The report was agreed to, and orders were given for two new boats to be supplied and for the two boats between Lisbon and Gibraltar to be transferred there.[5] The agent at Falmouth was ordered to see that each boat sailed with its full complement of men, as the captains were accustomed to discharge some of the crew just before sailing and pocket their wages. He was also to make sure that each of the boats sailing from Falmouth for Lisbon, the West Indies, or North America was British built and navigated by British seamen. He must keep a journal, in which should be entered the time that he received and delivered mails and expresses, how the wind and tide served, when the boats arrived and departed, and any delay in sailing which might occur. The captains were ordered to make returns after each voyage of the number of men on board. The crew while on shore should receive their accustomed wages and "victuals" and, if any were discharged, a return was to be made of such discharge, the money due them being turned over to the pension fund. It had become customary for the captains not to pay the men while they were on shore and to retain the money owing them. Finally the agent was to see that the packet boats proceeded to the Roads the day before the mail was expected from London.[6] Packets had

[1] Joyce, pp. 79, 81.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1702–07, p. 29.
[3] *Cal. T. B. and P.*, 1742–45, pp. 705, 707.
[4] *Cal. T. P.*, 1702–07, p. 105.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1708–14, p. 45.
[6] *Jo. H. C.*, 1787, pp. 816, 817.

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already been employed to convey mails to and from Madeira and Brazil [1] and within the next few years others were hired to ply between Falmouth, Buenos Ayres,[2] Colombia, Mexico, San Domingo, and Cuba, and between the British West Indies, Colombia, and Mexico.[3]

In 1815, the Postmaster-General was given permission by Act of Parliament to establish sailing packets between the United Kingdom, the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, and that part of the East Indies embraced within the charter of the East India Company. Packet rates were also charged for letters carried by war vessels and by vessels of the company, but in the former case the consent of the Lords of the Admiralty for the use of their ships had first to be obtained. Letters to and from China must go by vessels of the company and no others. With the consent of the Commissioners of the Treasury or any three of them, the Postmaster-General might allow the regular sailing packets to import and export all goods, which might legally be imported or exported, but in the case of tea, only enough for the use of those on board should be carried.[4]

When Cotton and Frankland were appointed Postmasters-General in 1691, the following sailing packets were in commission.[5]

Between England and	Flanders,	2 boats.
	Holland,	3
	Ireland,	3
Between Scotland and Ireland,		2
At Deal for the Downs,[6]		2

In 1689, the King had ordered the boats between Dover and Calais to be discontinued until further notice. This was done "on account of the late discovery of treasonable designs against the Government" and the war with France. His Majesty "preferred that all interchange of letters with France should cease." [7]

[1] 48 Geo. III, c. 116.
[2] 5 Geo. IV, c. 10.
[3] 6 Geo. IV, c. 44.
[4] 55 Geo. III, c. 153.
[5] Letters were sent to the colonies by private vessels. The method used for sending letters to America was as follows. Masters of vessels bound for America used to hang up a bag in the coffee-houses, in which letters were placed. A fee of one penny was charged for a single letter and *2d.* for a double letter or parcel in excess of a single letter (*Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, p. 77).
[6] Thos. DeLaune, *Present State of London*, 1681, p. 343.
[7] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1689–90, p. 301.

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In 1744, the sailing packets of Great Britain and Ireland, excluding those employed in the domestic service, were as follows: four boats between Falmouth and Lisbon, four on the Harwich station, six between Dover and Calais or Ostend, two between Gibraltar and Lisbon, and two on the Minorca station. The use of sailing packets to Gibraltar and Minorca was made necessary by the war. From twenty to twenty-six additional men were added to each of the eighteen packets as a protection against the enemy, and the total additional yearly charge was £7045.[1] This is one of the items which made postal expenses run so high in time of war, to say nothing of the packets captured by the enemy. The three boats between Dover and Calais were sent to Harwich, Helvoetsluys, and Ostend for the time being.[2]

The practice of the Post Office until 1821 had been to contract for the supply of packet boats, paying only a nominal sum for their hire and allowing the contractors to have the receipts from passengers. In 1818 a private company established steamboats between Holyhead and Dublin, and the public preferred these to the sailing packets. The number of passengers by the government packets fell off nearly one half. Something had to be done at once, for, as the receipts from fares decreased, the contractors clamoured for higher pay. The steamboat company offered to carry the mails for £4 a trip and later for nothing, but the Post Office determined to have steam packets of its own.[3] Two, built by Boulton and Watt, under the inspection of the Navy Board, were placed on the Holyhead station in 1821, and these, as well as those introduced later on the other stations, were the property of the Crown.[4]

The fares by the steam packets at Holyhead were fixed at the same rates as those charged by the company's boats and these fares were somewhat higher than those formerly charged by the sailing packets. For instance, the fee for a cabin passenger had been one guinea, for a horse one guinea, and for a coach three guineas. These were now raised to £1 5*s*., £1 10*s*., and £3 5*s*. respectively. The new rates, which were so fixed in order not to expose the company to undue competition, had not been long

[1] *Cal. T. B. and P.*, 1742–45, p. 518.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1742–45, p. 523.
[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, xiv, p. 7.
[4] *Parl. Papers*, 1822, vi, 417, pp. 117 f.

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enforced before the Select Committee on Irish Communications reported against them, and the Post Office reduced them to the old figures.[1]

In 1822 steam packets were placed on the Dover station, in 1824 they were introduced at Milford, in 1826 at Liverpool and Portpatrick, and in 1827 at Weymouth.[2] At Liverpool also a private company had offered to carry the mails but the offer was refused. This refusal, as well as the refusal to accept the Holyhead Company's offer, was condemned in a report of the Commissioners.[3] The new Liverpool packets ran from Liverpool to Kingstown, the Holyhead packets from Holyhead to Kingstown and Howth.[4] In 1828 the steam packets owned by the Crown numbered eighteen. They were distributed as follows: four at Liverpool, two of 300, one of 301 and one of 327 tons, all of 140 horse power; six at Holyhead, varying from 230 to 237 tons, all of 80 horse power; four at Milford, varying from 189 to 237 tons, all of 80 horse power; two at Portpatrick of 130 tons and 40 horse power; and two at Dover of 110 tons and 50 horse power.[5] Two years later, three steam packets were added to the Weymouth station.[6] In 1836, the Post Office had in use twenty-six steam packets, one having been added at Liverpool, three at Dover, and an extra one was kept for contingencies.[7]

With the exception of the Dover service for a few years, the steam packets were always a financial loss to the Post Office. The total disbursements for the Holyhead, Liverpool, Milford, and Portpatrick stations from 1821 to 1829 were £681,648, the receipts for the same period being only £250,999.[8] From 1832 to 1837 the disbursements for all the steam packets were £396,669, receipts £180,167.[9] The Milford boats were the least productive of any. From 1824 to 1836, the expenditure for that station was £220,986,

[1] Joyce, pp. 384–85. In a debate in the House on the Holyhead rates, Parnell said that they limited the use of the steamboats to the rich (*Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., x, coll. 684–85).

[2] *Acc. & P.*, 1834, xlix, pp. 1, 156.

[3] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, pp. 22, 36, 40.

[4] *Acc. & P.*, 1826–27, xx, p. 6.

[5] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, xiv, app., no. 78.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1830, xiv, p. 72.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1836, xxviii, 6th rep., app., p. 28.

[8] *Acc. & P.*, 1834, xlix, p. 1; *Rep. Commrs.*, 1831–32, xvii, pp. 358–60.

[9] *Acc. & P.*, xlvi, 281.

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the receipts only £26,592. The Commissioners had pointed out that not only was the practice of building and owning its own boats a mistake on the part of the Post Office, but they were very badly managed. For example, the stores for the Holyhead station were obtained from the postmaster at Liverpool, who invariably charged too much for them.[1] At Portpatrick the goods were supplied and the accounts checked in a very irregular manner.[2] At Dover the supplies were ordered by the mates, engineers, etc., as they were needed and the bills paid by the Post Office. There was no control over these officers, the accounts were not examined, and the bills were not certified by the commanders. There was no proof that the goods were even delivered. The agent, who forwarded the bills, was not a seaman nor had he any knowledge of ships' stores.[3] At Weymouth, where there were three steam packets for Jersey and Guernsey, conditions were better. The agent was a practical seaman, the demands for supplies were examined by him before being granted, and were signed by him, by the commander, and by the engineers or whoever needed them. The Commissioners also protested against sending the Weymouth boats so far for repairs as Holyhead, which was the regular repair station of the Post Office. Apart from the steam packets stationed at Holyhead, Liverpool, Milford, Portpatrick, Weymouth, and Dover, all the other packets employed by the Post Office were hired permanently or temporarily.[4]

The Post Office was at no time entirely dependent upon its regular sailing packets for the carriage of the mails. The merchant marine of England had been increasing with her growing commerce, and provision was made in the acts of 1657 and 1660 for the carriages of letters by private vessels. By the latter of these acts the conveyance of letters to foreign countries had been restricted to English ships under a penalty of £100 for every offence. It was decided in 1671, on the occasion of the wreck of one of the regular Irish packets, that it would be better to use a Dutch-built ship on account of its being much more seaworthy in the choppy swell of the Irish sea. Accordingly an order-in-council was issued, allow-

[1] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1836, xxviii, pp. 14–16.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1836, xxviii, 6th rep., p. 18.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1836, xxviii, 6th rep., p. 6.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1836, xxviii, 6th rep., p. 8.

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ing a vessel built in Holland to be used, and providing for its naturalization.[1] By the act of 1660, letters arriving in private vessels were to be given to the postmaster at the port of arrival so that they might be forwarded to London to be despatched to their destination after being charged with the postage due. Masters of vessels were offered no inducement to deliver the letters to the postmaster nor was any liability incurred by neglecting to do so. The post farmers, however, agreed to pay a penny for every letter delivered by a captain on his arrival. This was the origin of ship letter money.[2]

No attempt had ever been made to collect postage on letters conveyed by private ships except for the distance which such letters might be carried by the regular posts within the kingdom.[3] In 1799 an act was passed under the following title: "An Act for the more sure conveyance of ship letters and for granting to His Majesty certain rates of postage thereon." The Postmasters-General were given authority by this act to forward letters and packages by other vessels than the sailing packets. On letters brought in by such vessels, *4d.* was to be charged for a single letter and so in proportion. This was to be in addition to the inland postage and *2d.* was to be paid to the master for every letter handed over by him to the Post Office. The net revenue so arising was to be paid into the Exchequer. No postage was charged on letters carried out of the kingdom by private vessels[4] until 1832, when permission was given to charge packet rates. It was forbidden to send letters by these ships except through the Post Office unless such letters concerned only the goods on board.[5] In 1835 that part of the act of 1711 forbidding letters to be sent out of the kingdom except in British ships was repealed.[6]

The sailing packets were ordinarily allowed to carry passengers and freight, for which fixed rates were charged. In case of trouble

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1671, p. 203. In 1793, owing to a scarcity of English vessels and as a war measure, permission was given to send English letters to Spain and Portugal by means of Spanish ships (33 Geo. III, c. 60).

[2] Joyce, p. 73.

[3] It is true that by the act of 1711, a penny was to be charged for every ship letter; but this was to go to the master of the ship.

[4] 39 Geo. III, c. 76. [5] 2 Wm. IV, c. 15. [6] 5 and 6 Wm. IV, c. 25.

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with any foreign power, the masters were generally forbidden to allow their packets to be used as passenger boats.[1] During King William's war, the Harwich-Helvoetsluys packets carried recruits free to the scene of activities.[2] They had also been guilty of bringing dutiable goods into the country and paying no duty on them. This made the customs officials indignant, especially as the Post Office authorities would not allow them to search the packets on their arrival. By an act passed in 1662, no ship, vessel, or boat ordinarily employed for the carriage of letters was allowed to import or export any goods, unless permission had been given by the customs officials, under a penalty of £100 to be paid by the master of the offending packet boat.[3] It had been agreed between Dummer and the Post Office that he should carry no more than five tons of merchandise outward bound nor more than ten tons when homeward bound. The Commissioners of the Customs in 1708 advised the Lord High Treasurer that if he gave licences to the packet boats to carry goods [4] it would be necessary to comply with the law and subject the boats to searchers, rules, and penalties as the merchantmen were. They proposed that the agreement made with Dummer be applied to all the packets. They pointed out that if this were done, all friction between the customs and Post Office might be avoided.[5] In 1732, the difficulty assumed a new form over the question as to the carriage of dutiable goods by mail. Diamonds had recently been discovered in Brazil and they were exported to England via Spain. It had also become customary to send fine laces by post. We, who have become used to intolerant customs' regulations, can hardly appreciate the indignation aroused by the desire of the customs' authorities to search the mails. It was the rule at that time for the Controller of the Foreign Office to lay a tax of 1 per cent upon packages which he thought had lace or diamonds in them. The customs officials seized twenty-

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1650, p. 540.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1691–92, pp. 29, 137.

[3] 13 and 14 Chas. II, c. 11.

[4] Goods were not supposed to be carried unless such a licence had been obtained. Some Jews, coming from Calais on the packet boat, had brought a few spectacles with them, on the sale of which they said that their support depended. The spectacles were confiscated (*Cal. T. B. and P.*, 1739–41, p. 61).

[5] *Cal. T. P.*, 1708–14, p. 74.

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one parcels of diamonds in a mail bag, coming from Lisbon in the packet *Hanover*. The Postmasters-General were very indignant and wrote to the Treasury that they "would not have it left to a customs' house officer to break open the King's mail, which has never been done before." [1] Evidently the customs officials had exceeded their authority and the matter was compromised by the appointment of a sub-controller of the Foreign Post Office to act under the authority of the Customs Commissioners and receive the duties on diamonds and other jewels and precious stones imported in the packet boats.[2] In a report of the Postmasters-General somewhat earlier, we are informed of a payment of £1087 made by them to the Receiver-General of the Customs. This amount covered four fifths of the gross duty on diamonds and laces, which had come by the sailing packets during four years, one fifth having been deducted for postage.[3]

By a section of the act of 1784, letters or packages from abroad suspected of containing dutiable articles were to be taken by the postmaster to a Justice of the Peace. He was to take an oath that he suspected that dutiable goods were contained in the letter or packet. In the presence of the justice he was then to cut a slit two inches long in the parcel to permit examination of the contents. If his suspicions seemed to be confirmed he might slit the cover entirely open and if anything dutiable were found it must be destroyed. The letter was then forwarded to the Commissioner of the Customs in order that proceedings might be taken against those implicated. If nothing was found, the letter was to be sent to the person to whom it was addressed, under the magistrate's cover, with no extra charge for postage.[4]

In one respect, the packet stations in England were conducted on divergent principles. The supplies for the Harwich packets were advanced directly by the Government through the Postmaster-General. When the War of the Austrian Succession broke out, a treasury warrant was issued for the supply of military stores and eight additional men for each of the Harwich boats.[5] At Falmouth,

[1] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1731–34, p. 223.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1731–34, p. 242.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1731–34, p. 234.
[4] 24 Geo. III, session 2, c. 37.
[5] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1742–45, p. 55.

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the agent supplied all necessaries. Neither plan was entirely free from objection. When the agent acted as victualler he naturally tried to make as much as possible out of his contract, and there were frequent complaints from the men on the Falmouth boats concerning the quality and quantity of the food. At Harwich, the drawbacks of the other method, under which the Post Office did its own victualling, were quite as marked. No bill for provisions represented what they had actually cost. A percentage was habitually added to the actual cost and this percentage went into the pockets of those by whom the goods had been ordered.[1]

The postal abuses which came to light in 1787 were more flagrant in connection with the packet service than in any other department of the Post Office. The Secretary himself was not only a large owner in the boats, but as agent he received 2½ per cent of the gross total expenditure. From 1770 to 1787, this had amounted to £1,038,133, from which he had received over £25,000. Besides this, his salary amounted to £1000 a year and there was an annuity of £100 attached to his office. He had become too old to perform his duties, but instead of being superannuated another person was appointed to assist him.[2]

The Sailors' Pension Fund was grossly mismanaged. Each sailor's monthly contribution had been raised from 10*d.* to 2*s.* and then 3*s.* After twenty years' service, the man who had kept up his payments was entitled to receive £4 or £5 a year. The names of dead people were retained on the list of pensioners, fictitious names were added, and there seems no doubt that the agent retained the money ostensibly paid out in their names.[3] The agent at Falmouth had a salary of £230 a year and £160 in perquisites, £100 of which were paid to the former agent's widow. The late agent had received £430 a year in perquisites in addition to the regular £390 less £40 for a clerk and an assistant postmaster, making £780 in all, certainly a comfortable salary for a packet agent at that time. The £430 was made up by an involuntary contribution of five guineas from each of the captains of the twenty-two packet boats and the wages of one man from each boat. The latter sum was obtained by dismissing the men, whose wages still continued to be

[1] Joyce, pp. 95 f. [2] *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, p. 5. [3] *Jo. H. C.*, 1787, p. 116.

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paid — to the agent. Smuggling had become by no means uncommon among the Falmouth boats, the carriage of the mails being considered of secondary importance. They often arrived when least expected, or they might not arrive for days at a time, although the wind and weather were favourable.[1]

Fares for passengers were not always collected, but a moderate payment to the captains would ensure a passage as they were allowed to carry their friends free and the payment readily secured the privilege desired. The agents also profited by the sale of passes.[2] There were more boats on the Falmouth station than necessary, and, although they ranged in size from 150 to 300 tons, the same number of men were employed on each. The Secretary of the Post Office, from whose report these facts about the packets are derived, proposed that three or four of the boats should be taken off, thus effecting a saving of £6000 or £8000. In case it should be considered expedient to employ regular packet boats to Quebec and Halifax, N. S., they might be placed on those stations. No deductions were made for the hire of boats when they were unemployed, either when being repaired or when under seizure for smuggling.[3]

The result of these exposures was a series of reforms started in 1793. By 1797 the Post Office was able to report that orders had been issued forbidding any official to own a sailing packet or have a share in any of them. Orders were given to pay the sailors regularly throughout the whole year. The 2½ per cent on all expenditure, formerly paid to the Secretary, was abolished. Finally all salaries were henceforth to be in lieu of every emolument.[4]

In 1793, the expenses for packet boats amounted to £45,666 a year. This was reduced in the following year to £36,940, but from 1795 expenses began to increase, owing to losses during the war and the necessity for placing the boats on a war footing.[5] In time of

[1] *Jo. H. C.*, 1787, pp. 815–16.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1787, pp. 815–16. Anthony Todd, Secretary of the Post Office, writing to Charles Cox in Harwich said that "several persons going from Helvoetsluys to Harwich, who are well able to pay full fare, have given money for half, free and poor passes, and larger sums have been taken for passes than are allowed by the Postmaster-General" (*Jo. H. C.*, 1787, p. 805).

[3] *Ibid.*, 1787, p. 205.

[4] *Fin. Rep.*, 1797, no. 7, pp. 52–65.

[5] *Ibid.*, no. 7, p. 131.

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peace, a Falmouth packet of 179 tons carried twenty-one men, including officers, at a total expenditure for men, interest, insurance, and wear and tear, of £1681.[1] In time of war, she carried twenty-eight men, all of whom were paid higher wages, and other expenses were also higher, bringing the total expenses for each packet to £2112 a year.[2] For a packet of seventy tons the expenses during peace and war were respectively £536 and £862.[3] It is not surprising then that the cost for all the packet boats had risen in 1796 to £77,599. The Falmouth boats were responsible for £60,444 of this, the rest being divided amongst the Dover, Harwich, Donaghadee, Milford, Weymouth, and Holyhead packets and the West India schooners.[4] The salaries paid to the agents in 1796 amounted to £3412. They were stationed at Lisbon, Falmouth, Yarmouth (instead of Harwich and Dover), Weymouth, Jamaica, Halifax, N. S., and Quebec. In Lisbon and the colonial towns, the agents acted also as postmasters.[5]

In 1827, all the packets sailing out of Falmouth were transferred to the Admiralty, in spite of Freeling's protest. The question had been discussed again and again during the war with France but why it was decided upon at this particular time is not clear. At the time of transfer, thirty packets were employed at Falmouth, carrying mails to and from Lisbon, Brazil, Buenos Ayres, the Mediterranean, America, the Leeward Isles, Jamaica, Colombia, and Mexico. In 1828, the number of packets at Falmouth had increased to thirty-eight brigs of war and sailing vessels and in 1833 to forty-one.[6]

The Admiralty had exceedingly bad luck with the Falmouth boats for the first seven years. During that time seven of them were lost; four were wrecked, one was supposed to have been burned, one was smashed to pieces by icebergs, and one was captured by pirates off Rio Janeiro.[7]

In 1837, the charge of all the packets and the powers and authori-

[1] *Fin. Rep.*, no. 7, p. 119. [2] *Ibid.*, no. 7, p. 118. [3] *Ibid.*, no. 7, pp. 122–23.
[4] *Ibid.*, no. 7, p. 117. [5] *Ibid.*, no. 7, p. 116.
[6] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, xiv, app., no. 78; *Acc. & P.*, 1834, xlix, p. 3; Joyce, pp. 398–99.
[7] *Acc. & P.*, 1834, xlix, p. 49. Three of the boats wrecked were on their way to or from Halifax, N. S.

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ties then existing in the Postmaster-General under any contract for the conveyance of mails were transferred to the Admiralty by act of Parliament.[1] The Post Office was still to retain the discretionary power of regulating the time of departure of the packets and of receiving the reports of the agents when the mail was delayed.[2] In the same year, but by a later act, the Postmaster-General was authorized to contract for the conveyance of letters by private ships between any places whatever, but such ships must be British. The rates were to be the same as the packet rates, but the owners, charterers, and consignees of vessels inward bound were allowed to receive letters free to the weight of six ounces, or twenty ounces in the case of vessels coming from Ceylon, the East Indies, and the Cape of Good Hope.[3] For every letter retained by the captain or any other person there was a penalty of £10. The captain was also liable to a penalty for refusing to take the letter bags, even when no contract had been signed.[4]

The control of the packets by the Admiralty after 1837 failed to produce the results anticipated. The power of authorizing contracts for the conveyance of the mails by water was actually vested in the Lords of the Treasury upon consultation with the Postmaster-General, the Colonial Secretary, and the Lords of the Admiralty with reference to the postal, colonial, or nautical questions involved, but as a matter of fact these officials did not always work in harmony. The mails continued to be carried by private vessels or war vessels not under contract, by packets belonging to the Crown, and by vessels under contract. Before the use of steam vessels the Government was able as a rule to make contracts for a short period and at comparatively little cost. Between England and the neighbouring countries (Ireland, France, and Belgium), government steam packets were employed. For the longer voyages it was considered advisable to induce commercial companies to build steam vessels by offering large subsidies for long periods. In 1853, a Parliamentary Committee reported in condemnation of the further use of government-owned packets on account of their expense and also of the payments to the owners of contract vessels in excess

[1] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 3.
[2] *Acc. & P.*, 1837–38, xlv, pp. 1, 2.
[3] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 34.
[4] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 36.

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of the actual cost of mail carriage. They pointed out, however, that exceptions might very well be made when for political or social reasons it seemed necessary to carry mails to places where commercial vessels did not go, or went very irregularly, or where high speed was desirable.[1] This report, in so far as it condemned the use of government-owned packets and the excessive subsidies paid to contractors, repeated the findings of an earlier committee published in 1849, which had in addition advised that the rule should be observed of calling for tenders in the most public way possible.[2] In 1852, the only service performed by the government packets was that between Dover, Calais, and Ostend. On the French service the night mails between Dover and Calais were conveyed by British packets and the day mails by French. Between Dover and Ostend there was a daily service, thrice a week by British, four times by Belgian packets. Of the six boats employed by the Admiralty, four were kept fully manned and two were spare steamers. The receipts did not equal the gross expenses.[3] Again in 1860, the year in which the control of the packets was transferred to the Post Office, we find a third Parliamentary committee repeating the recommendations of its predecessors so far as the subsidy question was concerned. Nothing was said about the government steamers, for in the meantime the principle of packet ownership had been abandoned.[4]

A general review of the packet services existing at the middle of the nineteenth century affords a very good example of the relative importance of these different systems of communication and of the principles on which the payment of subsidies was based. The inland packet service of the United Kingdom included, among others, the lines between Holyhead and Kingstown, Liverpool and the Isle of Man, Aberdeen and Lerwick, Southampton and the Channel Isles. This formed a necessary part of the inland postal service, and no attempt was made to meet expenses by levying a sea-transit postage. In the case of the Isle of Man the postage collected covered

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1860, xiv; *Acc. & P.*, 1852–53, xcv, 1660, pp. 1–7.
[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1849, xii, p. iii.
[3] *Acc. & P.*, 1852–53, xcv, 1660, p. 37.
[4] *Rep. Com.*, 1860, xiv, p. 17; 23 Vict., c. 46; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., clxi, col. 830; cxciv, col. 1281; cxcvii, col. 1818.

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the cost of the packets and of the land establishment of the Post Office in the island. The expenses of the Shetland packets by themselves exceeded the postage collected, and the Orkney postal expenses were also greater than the revenue.

The second class consisted of the packets plying between England and the colonies or between the colonies themselves, and included the lines to India, Australia, the Cape, the West Indies, and British North America. This class was and is by far the most important. Three-fourths of the whole annual subsidies paid by the Government for the packet service were paid to three great companies, the Peninsular and Oriental, the Royal Mail, and the Cunard Company. The first of these connected England with India and the Orient, the second with the West Indian colonies, and the third with the North American Provinces. The great cost involved in subsidizing these companies was excused on the ground of absolute necessity for a regular and rapid mail service between the mother country and her colonies. Of the lines furnishing communications with foreign countries, several were connected with and subsidiary to the colonial service, as the continuation of the Cunard line to the United States. The service to China was the most remunerative part of the system undertaken by the Peninsular and Oriental boats, and the same may be said of the foreign service of the Royal Mail Company. From a commercial point of view the Continental packets were perhaps the most important of all.[1]

The first contract with an individual steamship company was made in 1840 with the famous Cunard Company providing for the conveyance of mails between Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. In accordance with the recommendations of various committees, attempts were made later to place the Atlantic packet service upon a firmer financial basis so far as the loss to the Post Office was concerned. In 1868, the contract with the Cunard Company, which had been renewed at various times under somewhat different conditions, came to an end. The Conservative Government which was just going out arranged for two services a week with the Cunard Company for £70,000, and one a week with the Inman Company for £35,000. There was considerable opposition

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1852–53, xcv, 1660, pp. 37–43.

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to the agreement among the Liberal majority of the new Parliament, but it could not of course be repudiated. This contract came to an end in 1876, and a circular was addressed to the various steamship companies informing them that the government would hereafter send the American mails by the most efficient ships, payment to be made at the rate of *2s. 4d.* a pound for letters and *2d.* a pound for other mail matter, those being the rates fixed by the Postal Union Treaty and adopted by the American Government. The Inman and White Star Companies refused at first to have anything to do with the new system of payment, but eventually they fell into line. The system was in operation for a year at a cost of £28,000 in place of the old charge of £105,000. The Cunard, Inman, and White Star Companies then demanded double the previous rates on the ground that they were conducting the service at a loss, and an agreement with the Government was concluded for the payment of *4s.* a pound for letters and *4d.* for newspapers, etc. At the same time the old monopolistic conditions were virtually reëstablished, for rival steamship lines were excluded from the agreement.[1]

In 1886, the agreement with the Cunard, Inman, and White Star Lines came to an end. The Cunard and White Star Companies then made an offer precluding the use of the fast boats of other lines, but this was declined. Eventually an agreement was reached at a reduced cost, which gave the Post Office the right to send letters so directed by any other ships than those of the White Star or Cunard Companies. The amounts to be paid were measured by the actual weight of mail matter carried.[2] The payments to the Peninsular and Oriental Company were based at first entirely upon mileage covered, and reductions were made if the packets fell below a minimum speed agreed upon. This method was later changed to a payment based upon the amount of mail carried, and the subsidy was substantially reduced.[3]

A general review of the packet service in 1907 shows us that

[1] *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., ccxxxviii, coll., 1633–36.

[2] *3s.* a lb. for letters; *1s. 8d.* when carried by other lines (*Rep. Com.*, 1860, xiv, p. 5; 1868–69, vi, pp. iii–v; *Rep. P. G.*, 1887, pp. 4–5; *Acc. & P.*, 1887, xlix, 34, pp. 3–4; *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., cxxii, coll. 385–401).

[3] *Acc. & P.*, 1852–53, xcv, 1660, p. 59; 1887, xlix, 34, p. 7; *Rep. P. G.*, 1907, pp. 5–6.

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most of the contracts for the home packets are terminable on six months' notice, a few only on twelve months' notice. The Holyhead and Kingstown service is exceptional, not being terminable until 1917, or on twelve months' notice after 31st March, 1916. This is by far the most important of any of the home systems and costs £100,000, to be reduced to £80,000 in 1917. The contract for the conveyance of mails between Dover and Calais is terminable on twelve months' notice and cost £25,000 for the postal year 1906–07. The payments for the use of the other boats between the United Kingdom and Europe are comparatively small, amounting in 1906–07 to £3780 only, and all these contracts are terminable on six months' notice. The contracts for the conveyance of the mails to the two Americas are as a rule terminable on six or twelve months' notice, but an exception has been made in the case of the Cunard Company with whom and under peculiar circumstances a twenty years' agreement was made in 1902. In 1906–07 the cost of the conveyance of the mails between the United Kingdom and North and South America was £198,488. The African contracts are all terminable on three, six, or twelve months' notice, and amounted in 1906–07 to £32,988. The carriage of the mails to India, Australasia, and China for the year ending 31st March, 1907, cost £402,162, but this has since been diminished by a reduction in the subsidies to the Peninsular and Oriental Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.[1]

The total expenditure for packet boats increased enormously after 1840, and this increase in cost kept down the net revenue of the Post Office for many years after the introduction of penny postage. In 1830, the packet expenses amounted only to £108,305, in 1846, to £723,604, and in 1860, to £869,952. They reached the maximum point of £1,056,798 in 1869, and from that time until 1890, when they were £665,375, there has been on the whole a gradual diminution. During the year ending 31st March, 1892, they reached the sum of £701,081, for the postal year 1900–01 they were £764,804, and during the year 1905–06 they had diminished to £687,109.[2]

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1907, pp. 5–6, 52–53.

[2] *Rep. Commrs.*, 1830, xiv, app., p. 376; 1847, lxii, pp. 5–6; *Rep. P. G.*, 1868, p. 28; 1875, p. 39; 1901, app., p. 82; 1907, p. 95.

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CHAPTER VIII

RATES AND FINANCE

After de Quester had been appointed Foreign Postmaster-General, he published, in 1626, an incomplete set of rates from and to various places on the continent. His charges for "packets," and by packets he meant letters or parcels carried by a special messenger, were as follows: —

To the Hague £7.

To Brussels or Paris £10.

To Vienna £60.

The ordinary rates were: —

To or from any of the above places 30*s.*

To or from any part of Germany 6*s.*

From Venice for a single letter 9*d.*[1]

From Venice for any letter over a single letter 2*s.* 8*d.*

From Leghorn and Florence for a single letter 1*s.*

From Leghorn and Florence over a single letter 3*s.* an ounce.[2]

This system of rates, although crude, marks a distinct era in postal progress. It forms the foundation of the plan which was perfected a few years later by Witherings. De Quester also published a statement of the days of departure of the regular posts with foreign letters.[3] In the trial between Stanhope and de Quester over the question of who should be Foreign Postmaster-General, it came out in the evidence that Stanhope had been accustomed to receive 8*d.* for every letter to Hamburg, Amsterdam, and Antwerp.[4] This charge was rather in the nature of a perquisite than a legal rate and serves partly to explain why Stanhope was so anxious to retain the monopoly of the foreign post.

[1] The rate from Venice had been 16*d.* By a single letter is meant one piece of paper.

[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1625–26, p. 523.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1628–29, p. 538.

[4] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 48 (25).

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Witherings' rates for domestic postage, as fixed by Royal Proclamation in 1635, were as follows for a single letter: —

	d.
Under 80 miles	2
Between 80 and 140 miles	4
Over 140 miles	6
On the Borders and in Scotland	8
In Ireland	9

If there were more than one sheet of paper, postage must be paid according to the above rate for every separate sheet or enclosure. For instance, a letter or packet composed of two sheets was called a double letter and paid 4*d.* for any distance under 80 miles. A letter of three sheets was called a triple letter and paid 6*d.* if conveyed under 80 miles, and so in proportion.[1] In 1638, the rules concerning the imposition of rates were changed slightly. The rates themselves remained the same for single and double letters. Letters above double letters were to be charged according to weight as follows: —

Under 80 miles	6*d.* an ounce.
From 80 to 140 miles	9*d.*
Above 140 miles	12*d.*
For Ireland	6*d.* if over two ounces.[2]

This expedient must have been adopted from the difficulty in discovering the number of enclosures when there were more than two. It is impossible to say how long these rates continued, probably not later than Witherings' régime. During Prideaux' management the maximum postage on a single letter was 6*d.*, reduced later to 3*d.*[3]

The Council of State gave orders in 1652 for the imposition of the following rates for a single letter:—

	d.
Within 100 miles from London	2
To remoter parts of England and Wales	3
To Scotland	4
To Ireland	6[4]

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 57 (36).
[2] Joyce, p. 29.
[3] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 58 (37).
[4] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1651–52, p. 507.

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Whether these rates were actually collected is questionable. The postage which the farmers of the Posts were allowed to collect in the following year was fixed by the Council of State for single letters as follows: —

	d.
Under 80 miles from London	2
Above 80 miles from London	3
To Scotland	4
To Ireland	6

These rates are in effect lower than those of Witherings, for he had inserted a 3*d.* rate for letters delivered between 80 and 140 miles from London, had charged 4*d.* for all letters going farther than 140 miles, and had charged 8*d.* and 9*d.* for letters to Scotland and Ireland respectively. They were a little higher than those of 1652, for by them 2*d.* had carried a letter 100 miles.[1]

In 1657, the first act of Parliament was passed, fixing rates for letters and establishing the system for England, Ireland, and Scotland. The domestic rates were: —

		For a single letter	*Double letter*	*Per ounce*
In England	Within 80 miles from London	2*d.*	4*d.*	8*d.*
	Above 80 miles from London	3	6	12
	To or from Scotland	4	8	18
	To or from Ireland	6	12	24
In Ireland	Within 40 miles from Dublin	2	4	8
	Above 40 miles from Dublin	4	8	12

The foreign rates were: —

	For a single letter	*Double letter*	*Per ounce*
To Leghorn, Genoa, Florence, Lyons, Marseilles, Aleppo, Constantinople	12*d.*	24*d.*	45*d.*
To St. Malo, Morlaix, Nieuhaven	6	12	18
To Bordeaux, Rochelle, Nantes, Bayonne, Cadiz, Madrid	9	18	24
To Hamburg, Frankfort, and Cologne	8	16	24
To Dantzic, Leipsic, Lubeck, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Elsinore, Konigsburg	12	24	48[2]

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, p. 449.

[2] Scobell, *Collect.*, pt. ii, pp. 511–13. Inland letters containing more than two enclosures but weighing less than an ounce were charged according to the number of enclosures.

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These rates are considerably lower than those of Witherings and are essentially the same as those of 1653, except that the postage is fixed for letters to and from the continent. No provision is made for letters to and from any other part of the world but Europe. Since the government had not established any postal communication with Asia, Africa, or the Americas, it would have been unfair to demand postage on letters conveyed by merchant vessels to and from those places.[1]

The act of 1660 is generally referred to as bringing the Post Office under Parliamentary control and as the basis of the modern system. This is probably due to the fact that the act of 1657 was passed by a Commonwealth Parliament and signed by Cromwell. Whether its authors lacked the power to give it validity, they did not lack the brains to pass an excellent act, and although the Royalists saw fit, after the Restoration, to dub it the pretended act of 1657, they could not improve it and had the sense to leave it largely untouched. The first act had imposed rates from or to any place to or from London as a centre. It had been taken for granted that all letters passed to, from, or through the capital, and to all intents and purposes this was so. It was possible, however, for letters, technically called bye-letters, to stop short of London, and it was to provide for these that postage was to be reckoned from any place where a letter might be posted.

Scotland was no longer a part of England after the Restoration, so that by the act of 1660 rates were given to and from Berwick and for single letters were a penny less than they had been to Scotland under the earlier act. From Berwick the rate, within a radius of forty miles, was *2d.* for a single letter, and over forty miles, *4d.* As far as foreign postage was concerned, letters to the northern coast towns of Italy paid *3d.* less than the old rate for a single letter. Other rates remained the same. Alternative routes were sometimes offered. For instance, letters might be sent directly to northern Italy or they might go via Lyons, but in the latter case they cost *3d.* more. Again, there were many more continental towns to which letters might be sent and from which they might be received. Letters for Germany via Hamburg had to be postpaid

[1] Scobell, *Collect.*, pt. ii, pp. 511–13.

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as far as that city. The same was true of letters to southern France via Paris and of letters to northern Italy via Lyons. The highest rate paid for a single letter was 1*s.* to northern Italy, Turkey, and central and northern Germany. Merchants' accounts not exceeding one sheet of paper, bills of exchange, invoices and bills of lading, were to pay nothing over the charge of the letter in which they might be enclosed. The same rule was to hold for the covers of letters sent to Turkey via Marseilles. All inland letters were to be paid for at the place where they were delivered unless the sender wished to pay in advance.[1]

When the Scotch was separated from the English Post Office in 1695, rates were imposed by the Parliament of Scotland as follows:

	For a single letter
To Berwick	2*s.*[2]
Within 50 miles from Edinburgh	2
From 50 to 100 miles from Edinburgh	3
Above 100 miles from Edinburgh	4

Packages of papers were to pass as triple letters.[3] In 1701, when the Scotch Post was let out to farm, the English Postmasters-General advised that the farmers should be obliged to pay at Berwick the postage on English and foreign letters for Scotland, and an order in accordance with this advice was signed by the King. It was the custom to change the farmers every three years, which may have produced a larger revenue but was certainly not calculated to increase the efficiency of the office. The English Postmasters-General had great difficulty in collecting at Berwick the postage due them, and it is doubtful whether a large part was ever paid. The frequent changes in the farmers must have been an excellent means of allowing them to escape their debts to the English.[4]

It has been customary to point to the postage rates of 1660 as lower than any before the nineteenth century. This is true in a general way, but one limitation to the statement is generally overlooked. Before 1696 all posts ran to or from London, and it was not until well on in the eighteenth century that the system of cross

[1] 12 Chas. II, c. 35. [2] One shilling Scotch was equal to one penny English.
[3] Wm. III, 1st parl., 5th session (Scotland), c. 31.
[4] *Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, 48; 1702–1707, 101.

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posts was introduced. Bristol and Exeter are less than eighty miles apart, but a letter from Bristol to Exeter went to London first and from there to Exeter, travelling about 300 miles to reach a town eighty miles distant. Now by the act of 1660, the rate for distances above 80 miles was 3*d*. Thus the letter paid 3*d*. from Bristol to London and 3*d*. more from London to Exeter, 6*d*. in all. If there had been a direct post from Bristol to Exeter, and there was not until 1698, the postage would have been 2*d*. only. The possibility of such an anomaly as this must be kept in mind in considering the low rates of the seventeenth century.

In James the Second's reign, a Post Office had been established in Jamaica, and rates of postage had been settled not only in the island itself but between it and the mother country. This was a new departure, since at that time there were no packet boats to the West Indies. The rate between England and Jamaica was 6*d*. for a single letter, 1*s*. for a double letter, and 2*s*. an ounce. As the Crown was not at the expense of maintaining means of transport, this was a pure tax.[1] In 1704, the postage on a single letter from the West Indies was raised to 7½*d*., for a double letter 15*d*., but Dummer's packets were then in operation.[2]

In 1698, a system of posts had been established in the American colonies between the largest towns on the Atlantic coast. All that is known about the rates is that the charge for the conveyance of a letter between Boston and New York was 1*s*. and the post went weekly between those places.[3] Hamilton, the deputy manager, proposed that letters from England should be sent in sealed bags entrusted to the masters of ships. The bags were to be handed over to the postmaster of the port where the ship first touched and the captain was to receive a penny for each letter. He advised that the following rates should be adopted: —

[1] Joyce, p. 78.

[2] *Cal. T. P.*, 1702–07, 46.

	Single letter	*Double letter*	*Per ounce*
Rates to the islands were	9*d*.	18*d*.	32*d*.
In 1705 increased to	15	30	72
Rates from the islands in 1705	18	36	72

— Stow's *London*, bk. v, p. 400.

[3] Joyce, p. 111.

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Not exceeding 80 miles from New York	6*d.*
From 80 to 150 miles from New York	9
To and from Boston and New York, 300 miles	12
Jersey, 370 miles	18
Philadelphia, 390 miles	20
Annapolis, 550 miles	36
Jamestown, 680 miles	42
New York and Annapolis, 250 miles	24
Jamestown, 380 miles (with many dangerous places to cross by ferry)	30

These rates were said to be too high and were not adopted, "it being found that cheap postage greatly encourages letter writing, as is shown by the reduction in England from 6*d.* to 3*d.*"[1]

The preamble to the act of 1711 offered as an explanation of an increase in rates the necessity for money for the war and the prevention of private competition in carrying letters. It is plain that higher rates will, up to a certain point, increase proceeds, though not proportionately, but how increased rates can decrease competition is more difficult to explain. Witherings had found that the cheaper he made postage, the less fear was there from interlopers. It is possible that the framers of the bill had intended to use part of the increase in revenue for the support of searchers, but no such provision is contained in the act itself.[2] On the ground that a large revenue was necessary, no fault can be found with the increase. It is probably true that in course of time lower rates would have increased the product more than higher, but war and its demands wait for no man. The people who could write and who needed to write were in a small minority then, and their number could not for a long time be influenced by lower rates. What was needed at once was money and the only way to raise it by means of the Post Office was the one adopted.

The rates for single letters within England and between England and Edinburgh were increased by a penny for a single letter; for double letters and parcels in proportion. To Dublin the charge remained the same, and the rates within Ireland were not changed. In the act of 1660, the postage on letters delivered in Scotland had

[1] Joyce, p. 113; *Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, 77. [2] Joyce, p. 128.

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been reckoned from Berwick. Edinburgh was now made the centre and the rates were as follows: —

	For a single letter	*Per ounce*
From Edinburgh within Scotland	*d.*	*d.*
Not exceeding 50 miles	2	8
Above 50 and not exceeding 80 miles	3	12
Above 80 miles	4	16 [1]

The rates within Scotland were lower than those within England and Ireland. Scotland had a *2d.* rate for distances not exceeding fifty miles. England had no rate under *3d.*, except for the Penny Post. Ireland, too, had a *2d.* rate for distances not exceeding forty miles, but for distances from forty to eighty miles and over, the rate for Irish letters was *4d.*, while in England the rate was only *3d.* for distances not exceeding eighty miles. The distances which letters travelled within Scotland were shorter than in England and Ireland. As a rule the different rates for the three countries varied with their wealth and consequent ability to pay, the least being required from poverty-stricken Scotland. The new rates as compared with the old were for a single letter: [2] —

	1660	1711
For England		
Not exceeding 80 miles	*2d.*	*3d.*
Above 80 miles	3	4
Between London and Edinburgh	5	6
Between London and Dublin	6	6
Within Ireland		
Not exceeding 40 miles from Dublin	*2d.*	*2d.*
Above 40 miles from Dublin	4	4
Within Scotland (*Scotch Act, 1695*)		
Not exceeding 50 miles from Edinburgh	*2d.*	*2d.*
From 50 to 80 miles from Edinburgh		3
From 50 to 100 miles from Edinburgh	3	
Above 80 miles from Edinburgh		4
Above 100 miles from Edinburgh	4	

[1] Double letters were charged twice as much as single letters.

[2] When the rates for single letters only are given it is understood that double and triple letters paid two and three times as much respectively. Letters weighing an ounce or more paid a single letter rate for each quarter of an ounce.

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The act of 1660 imposed rates on letters in Scotland from Berwick as a centre. By that act rates had been fixed for distances not exceeding 40 miles and for distances over forty miles from Berwick, being 2*d.* and 4*d.* for single letters for the respective distances, so that by the act of 1711, the Scotch rates were lower than they had been in 1660 and slightly higher than those of 1695. When forty miles was made the lowest distance according to which rates were levied, it was thought and intended that 2*d.*, the rate for that distance, would pay for a single letter from Berwick to Edinburgh. As a matter of fact, the distance between the two places was fifty miles, so that the Scotch Act had estimated it better.

In the rates as given above, an exception is made in the case of letters directed on board ship or brought by it. For such letters one penny was charged in addition to the rates already given. This extra penny was charged because the postmaster in the place where the ship first touched was required to pay the master of the vessel one penny for every letter received. Foreign letters collected or delivered at any place between London and the port of departure or arrival of the ship for which they were destined or by which they had come, must pay the same rate as if they had left or arrived in London.

As far as foreign post rates were concerned they were all from 1*d.* to 3*d.* higher than they had been by the act of 1660. The lowest foreign rate for a single letter, 10*d.*, was paid between London and France, and London and the Spanish Netherlands. To Germany and Northwestern Europe, through the Spanish Netherlands, the rate was 12*d.*, to Italy or Sicily the same way 12*d.*, postpaid to Antwerp, or 15*d.* via Lyons. The same rates held for letters passing through the United Provinces. To Spain or Portugal via the Spanish Netherlands or the United Provinces or France, postpaid to Bayonne, the rate was 18*d.* for a single letter, and the same price held when letters were conveyed directly by sailing packets.

By the same act of 1711 rates were for the first time established between England and her colonies and within the colonies themselves. The postage for a single letter from London to any of the West India Islands was 18*d.*, to New York 12*d.*, and the same from those places to London. Between the West Indies and New York

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the rate was 4*d*. In the colonies on the mainland, the chief letter offices were at New York, Perth Amboy, New London, Philadelphia, Bridlington, Newport, Portsmouth, Boston, Annapolis, Salem, Ipswich, Piscataway, Williamstown, and Charleston. The postage was 4*d*. to and from any of these places to a distance not exceeding sixty miles and 6*d*. for any distance between sixty and 100 miles. Between New York, Perth Amboy, and Bridlington, the rate was 6*d*.; between New York, New London, and Philadelphia 9*d*.; between New York, Newport, Portsmouth, and Boston 12*d*.; between New York, Salem, Ipswich, Piscataway, and Williamstown 15*d*.; between New York and Charleston 18*d*.; the Post Office was to pay nothing for crossing ferries.

There had always been trouble in collecting the rates on bye and cross post letters. These letters did not pass through London and hence the officials at the General Post Office had no check on the money due. By a clause in the act, the postmasters were ordered under a penalty to account for the receipts from all these letters. The postage on letters which did not pass to, through, or from London was fixed according to the inland charges, varying with the distances travelled. Finally, the postage on all inland letters was to be paid on delivery unless the sender wished to pay in advance, or in the case of the Penny Post, or unless such letters should be directed on board any ship or vessel or to any person in the army.

From the receipts from postage, £700 a week was to be paid into the Exchequer for the purpose of carrying on the war. The Accountant-General was to keep account of all money raised, the receipts themselves going directly to the Receiver-General and being paid into the Exchequer by him. One third of the surplus over and above the weekly payment of £700 and £111,461 (the amount of the gross receipts of the duties arising by virtue of the act of 1660) were to be disposed of by Parliament. In making this provision, Joyce thinks that the Chancellor of the Exchequer confused gross and net product.[1] As a matter of fact there was no such surplus as was anticipated by the Chancellor, but it does not follow that he made the mistake of which he was accused by Cornwallis

[1] Joyce, p. 145.

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and Craggs, an accusation in which Joyce evidently concurs. He erred simply in supposing that expenses would remain the same.[1]

The act of 1711 in prescribing the rate of postage for the carriage of "every single letter or piece of paper" enacted that a "double letter should pay twice that rate." The merchants contended that a double letter was composed of two sheets of paper if they weighed less than an ounce and their reasoning was logical. They argued from this that a letter enclosing a pattern or patterns, if it weighed less than one ounce, should pay only as a single letter. Actions were brought against the postmasters by the merchants for charging more than they considered was warranted and the merchants won every case. The lawyers also threatened legal proceedings for the charge of writs when enclosed in letters. The Postmasters-General hastened to Parliament for relief. The merchants heard of this, and petitions were sent to the House of Commons from "clothiers, dealers in cloth, silk, and other manufactured goods," asking that when samples were enclosed in a single letter the rate should remain the same provided that such letter and sample did not exceed half an ounce in weight.[2] Their efforts were fruitless. The following provisions were inserted in a tobacco bill then before Parliament and passed in 1753: "that every writ etc. enclosed in a letter was to pay as a distinct letter and that a letter with one or more patterns enclosed and not exceeding one ounce in weight was to pay as a double letter."[3] As a matter of fact all the rates collected after 1743 by virtue of the act of 1711 were illegal, for the act itself had died a natural death in the former year by that clause which provided for the revival of the rates of 1660 at the end of thirty-two years.

A postal act was passed in 1765, slightly changing the home, colonial, and foreign rates. The cession of territory in North America had made necessary a more comprehensive scheme of postage rates there. The conclusion of the Seven Years' War had made it possible to offer a slight reduction in postage. In Great Britain the following rates were published for short distances for a single letter: —

For Great Britain — not exceeding one post stage 1*d.*
For England alone — over one and not exceeding two stages 2*d.*

[1] 9 Anne, c. 11. [2] *Jo. H. C.*, 1745–50, pp. 751–2. [3] 26 Geo. III, c. 13, secs. 7, 8.

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The rates for all other distances remained unchanged. A stage, as a rule, varied from ten to twelve miles in length, so that every post town in England could now boast a modified form of penny postage, with the exception in most cases of delivery facilities.

The changes in colonial rates were generally in the shape of substituting general for special rules. The rate from any part of the British American Dominions to any other part was fixed at *4d.* for a single letter when conveyed by sea. The act of 1711 had given the postage from and to specially named places. This method had become inapplicable with the growth in population among the old and the increase in new possessions. The rate for a single letter from any chief post office in the British American Dominions to a distance not exceeding sixty miles, or for any distance not exceeding sixty miles from any post office from which letters did not pass through a chief post office, was placed at *4d.*, from sixty to 100 miles *6d.*, from 100 to 200 miles *8d.*, for each additional hundred miles *2d.* The effect of this act was to continue the same rates for inland postage in British America, while rates were provided for distances over 100 miles. The postage between England and the American colonies remained at *12d.* for a single letter. In the case of the West Indies, there was a decrease of *6d.* A clause of the act provided that the postage on letters sent out of England might be demanded in advance.[1]

Postage rates were increased steadily from 1784 for twenty-eight years, culminating in the year 1812 with the highest rates that England has ever seen. Every available means to raise the revenue necessary to maintain her supremacy was resorted to, and the Post Office was compelled to bear its share of the burden. In 1784 another penny was added to the rates for single letters and additional rates for double and triple letters in proportion.[2] Three

[1] 5 Geo. III, c. 25. The principle of payment in advance was not popular. A man in England writing to his brother in Virginia in 1764 says, "Very often of late I have been so foolish, I should say unfortunate previously to pay for the letters coming to you. . . . To my great concern I have been since assured that such letters never go forward but are immediately thrown aside and neglected. I believe I wrote to you three or four times this last winter by this method and am since informed of this their fate. You may form a great guess of the truth of it by or by not receiving them" (*Notes and Queries*, 4th ser., xii, p. 125). [2] 24 Geo. III, sess. 2, c. 37.

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years later an act was passed, fixing the postage for the conveyance of a single letter by sailing packet from Milford Haven to Waterford at 6*d.* over and above all other rates. It was provided by the same act that the rates between London and Ireland via Milford should not exceed the rates via Holyhead.[1]

In 1796 the rates for letters conveyed within England and Wales, Berwick, to and from Portugal, and to and from the British possessions in America, as established by the acts of 1711, 1765, and 1784, were repealed and the following substituted for a single letter: —

Within England, Wales and Berwick.	*d.*
Not exceeding 15 miles from place where letter is posted	3
From 15 to 30 miles etc.	4
30 60	5
60 100	6
100 150	7
Over 150 miles, etc.	8
Within Scotland.	
In addition to rates in force	1

The old system of reckoning by stages was thus abolished, probably on account of the uncertainty as to the length of any particular stage and the variations and changes which were being constantly made. This change was made for England and Wales only, and the old system of reckoning by stages was still retained in Scotland. Letters from and to the colonies had formerly paid no postage over the regular shilling rate for a single letter and proportionately for other letters. Now they were to pay the full inland rate in addition. A single letter from the West Indies would now pay the shilling packet rate plus the rate from Falmouth to London, 1*s.* 8*d.* in all. The same rates and the same rule held for letters to and from Portugal. A single letter from Lisbon had formerly paid 1*s.* 6*d.* on delivery in London. It would now pay 1*s.* 8*d.*

This act was not to affect letters to and from non-commissioned officers, privates, and seamen while in active service, who were al-

[1] 27 Geo. III, c. 9. In 1767 a rate of 2*d.* for a single letter was established between Whitehaven (Cumberland) and the Port of Douglas (Isle of Man) (7 Geo. III, c. 50).

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lowed to send and receive letters for one penny each, payable in advance. The revenue arising from the new and the unrepealed rates was to be paid to the Receiver-General and be by him carried to the Consolidated Fund. The increase from the additional postage was estimated at £40,000 a year and was to be used to pay the interest on loans contracted the preceding year.[1]

When sailing packets were established between Weymouth and the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, the packet rates and the rates between the islands themselves were fixed at *2d.* for a single letter. Permission was also given to establish postal routes in the islands, and to charge the same postage for the conveyance of letters as in England. The surplus was to go to the General Office and all postal laws then in force in England were to be deemed applicable to the two islands.[2]

By the same act which gave the Postmasters-General authority to forward letters by vessels other than the regular sailing packets, rates were fixed for the carriage of such letters. For every single letter brought into the kingdom by these vessels, *4d.* was to be charged. The Postmasters-General might order such rates to be payable in advance or on delivery. This was in addition to the inland postage, and for every letter handed over to the Post Office, the captain was to receive *2d.* The revenue arising from this act was payable to the Exchequer.[3]

In 1801 the Post Office was called upon again to make a further contribution to the Exchequer to help meet the interest on new loans. The following were the new rates for a single letter: —

Within Great Britain by the General Post

		d.
Not exceeding 15 measured miles		3
Above 15 but not exceeding 30 measured miles		4
30	50	5
50	80	6
80	120	7
120	170	8
170	230	9
230	300	10

[1] 37 Geo. III, c. 18. [2] 33 Geo. III, c. 60. [3] 39 Geo. III, c. 76.

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	d.
For every 100 miles above 300 miles an additional rate of	1
Where the distance above 300 miles did not amount to 100 miles an additional rate of	1
Where the distance above 300 miles exceeded 100 miles and for every excess of distance over 100 miles an additional rate of	1

By the act of 1796 a uniform rate of 8*d.* for a single letter had been paid for distances over 150 miles. The new act not only imposed extra rates for all distances over 150 miles but it decreased the distances above 30 miles for which the old postage would have paid. For instance, a 6*d.* rate had carried a single letter 100 miles, a 7*d.* rate 150 miles. They now carried only 80 and 120 miles respectively.

On letters to and from places abroad, "not being within His Majesty's Dominions," an additional rate of 4*d.* for a single letter was imposed.[1] In London, where a penny had been charged for the conveyance of letters by the Penny Post, 2*d.* was now charged. An additional rate of 2*d.* for a single letter was imposed upon letters passing between Great Britain and Ireland via Holyhead or Milford. The Postmasters-General were given authority to convey letters to and from places which were not post towns for such sums for extra service as might be agreed upon. Merchants' accounts and bills of exchange which, when sent out of the kingdom or conveyed into it, had not formerly been charged postage over the letters in which they were enclosed, were now to be rated as letters.[2]

In 1803, the following rates were imposed within Ireland for a single letter: —

	d. (*Irish*)[3]
Not exceeding 15 Irish miles	2
From 15 to 30 Irish miles	3
30 50	4
50 80	5
Exceeding 80 Irish miles	6

[1] When the temporary peace of Amiens was concluded in 1802, the rates for single letters from London to France were reduced to 10*d.*, from London to the Batavian Republic to 12*d.* (42 Geo. II, c. 101).

[2] 41 Geo. III, c. 7.

[3] The Irish penny was of the same value as the English penny.

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The postage on letters arriving in Ireland for the distance travelled outside Ireland was ordered to be collected by the Irish Postmaster-General and forwarded to London. An additional penny was imposed upon Dublin Penny Post letters crossing the circular road around Dublin.[1]

In 1805, for the third time within ten years, the Exchequer fell back upon the Post Office for an increase of revenue estimated at £230,000.[2] There were added to the rates as already prescribed — 1*d.* for a single letter, 2*d.* for a double letter, 3*d.* for a triple letter, and 4*d.* for a letter weighing as much as one ounce, for all letters conveyed by the Post in Great Britain or between Great Britain and Ireland. The postage on a single letter from London to Brighton was thus raised from 6*d.* to 7*d.*, from London to Liverpool from 9*d.* to 10*d.*, and from London to Edinburgh from 12*d.* to 13*d.* Twopenny Post letters paid 3*d.* if sent beyond the General Post Delivery limits, while newspapers paid 1*d.* On every letter passing between Great Britain and a foreign country 2*d.* more was to be paid. An additional penny was charged for every single letter between Great Britain and the British American Dominions via Portugal, and between Great Britain, the Isle of Man and Jersey and Guernsey.[3] In the same year the Irish rates were also increased by the imposition of an additional penny upon each single letter with corresponding changes in the postage on double and triple letters. The Dublin Penny Post was left untouched, its boundaries being defined as contained within a circle of four miles radius, with the General Post Office building as the centre. Every letter from any ship within Irish waters was charged a penny in addition to the increased rates.[4]

Still the demand was for more money to help replenish an exhausted treasury. An additional penny was added for the conveyance of a single letter more than twenty miles beyond the place where the letter was posted within Great Britain and between Great Britain and Ireland. For the conveyance of a single letter between Great Britain and any of the colonies or to any foreign country an

[1] 43 Geo. III, c. 28.
[2] *Parl. Deb.*, 1st ser., iii, col. 550.
[3] 45 Geo. III, c. 11.
[4] 45 Geo. III, c. 21.

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additional *2d.* was required. These additional rates did not apply to letters to and from Jersey or Guernsey, or to and from any non-commissioned officer, soldier, or sailor.[1] Samples weighing no more than one ounce were to pay *2d.* if enclosed in a letter, if not enclosed, *1d.* As this is the highest point to which postage rates in England have ever attained, it may be interesting to give the rates resulting from this act in tabular form as far as the postage for inland single letters was concerned.[2]

		d.
Not exceeding 15 miles		4
Above 15 but not exceeding 20 miles		5
20	30	6
30	50	7
50	80	8
80	120	9
120	170	10
170	230	11
230	300	12
300	400	13
400	500	14
500	600	15
600	700	16
700 miles		17

In 1810, an additional penny (Irish) was added to the rates then in force in Ireland, with the exception of the penny rate on the Dublin Penny Post Letters.[3] Three years later the rates and distances for Ireland were changed again. As compared with the old rates they were as follows, both tables being in Irish miles and Irish currency and for single letters only: —

[1] Single letters written by or to non-commissioned officers, privates, and seamen must be on their own business, and if sent by them must bear their own signatures and the signature of their superior officer with the name of their regiment or ship (46 Geo. III, c. 92).

[2] 52 Geo. III, c. 88.

In 1806, the rate for a single letter between Falmouth and Gibraltar was fixed at *21d.*, between Falmouth and Malta *25d.*, between Gibraltar and Malta *6d.* (46 Geo. III, c. 73).

In 1808, the rate for a single letter between Falmouth and Madeira was fixed at *18d.*, between Falmouth and Brazil *29d.* (48 Geo. III, c. 116).

[3] 50 Geo. III, c. 74.

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1810	d.	1813	d.
Not exceeding 15 miles	4	Not exceeding 10 miles	2
From 15 to 30 miles	5	From 10 to 20 miles	3
30 50	6	20 30	4
50 80	7	30 40	5
Exceeding 80 miles	8	40 50	6
		50 60	7
		60 80	8
		80 100	9
		Over 100 miles	10

The rates of 1813 were lower for distances not exceeding forty miles, higher for distances over eighty miles. On the whole there was little change, but the later rates were probably more easily borne as they were lower for short distances.[1] The next year the rates and distances for Ireland were changed again, the result being an increase both for short and for long distances. The results are shown in the following table in Irish miles and Irish currency and for a single letter:[2]—

Not exceeding 7 miles		2d.
Over 7 and not exceeding 15 miles		3
15	25	4
25	35	5
35	45	6
45	55	7
55	65	8
65	95	9
95	125	10
125	150	11
150	200	12
200	250	13
250	300	14
For every 100 miles over 300 miles		1

In 1814 the postage on a single letter brought into the kingdom

[1] 53 Geo. III, c. 58.

[2] 54 Geo. III, c. 119.

In 1813 an additional half-penny was demanded on all Scotch letters "because the mail coaches now paid toll in that country." So at least a correspondent to the *Times* says (London *Times*, 1813, June 21, p. 3).

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by ships other than the regular packets was raised from 4*d.* to 6*d.* in addition to the regular inland rates. The rate for letters sent out of the kingdom by these vessels was fixed at one third the regular packet rates.[1] An exception was made in the case of letters carried by war vessels or by vessels of the East India Company to and from the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, and that part of the East Indies embraced in the charter of the company. The rates by these vessels were to be the same as the regular packet rates, 42*d.* for a single letter between those places and England, and 21*d.* for a single letter between the places themselves. Newspapers were charged 3*d.* an ounce between England, the Cape, Mauritius, and the East Indies. The rate for a single letter conveyed in private vessels not employed by the Post Office to carry mails was 14*d.* from England to the Cape or the East Indies, and 8*d.* from the Cape or the East Indies to England. The company was allowed to collect rates on letters within its own territory in India, but the Postmasters-General of England might at any time establish post offices in any such territory. The company was to be paid for the use of its ships in conveying letters.[2]

By the Ship Letter Act of 1814, no letters were to be sent by private ships except such as had been brought to the Post Office to be charged. The directors of the East India Company had protested against this section of the act. It is true that they were allowed to send and receive letters by the ships of their own company, but in India there was a small army of officials in their service whose letters had hitherto gone free. For that matter it had been the custom for the company to carry for nothing all letters and papers which were placed in the letter box at the East India House.[3] Petitions were presented against an attempt on the part of the Post Office to charge postage on letters to and from India when conveyed by private vessels.[4] The company refused to allow its vessels to be

[1] 54 Geo. III, c. 169. Enacted for Ireland the following year (55 Geo. III, c. 103).

[2] 55 Geo. III, c. 153. This act, although repealed for Great Britain by 59 Geo. III, c. 111, still remained in force in Ireland (5 and 6 Wm. IV, c. 25).

[3] London *Times*, 1814, Oct. 8, p. 3; 1815, Jan. 19, p. 3.

[4] *Parl. Deb.*, 1st ser., xxx, col. 766; xxxi, col. 220.

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used as packet boats or even to carry letters at all. It was in consequence of all this opposition that the act of 1815 was passed, giving more favourable treatment to letters to and from India. By this act no person sending a letter to India was compelled to have it charged at the Post Office and the masters were compelled to carry letters if the Postmasters-General ordered them. The company now withdrew all opposition and even refused to accept any payment for the use of their vessels in conveying letters.[1] Notwithstanding the favourable exception made in the case of letters to and from the East Indies, there was still discontent over the high rates charged by the Post Office for the conveyance of letters by the regular packet boats and by private vessels, when carrying letters entrusted to the Post Office.[2] In 1819 the sea postage on any letter or package not exceeding three ounces in weight from Ceylon, Mauritius, the Cape, and the East Indies was placed at 4*d.* If it exceeded three ounces in weight, it was charged 12*d.* an ounce. The sea postage on letters and packages to Ceylon, etc., not exceeding three ounces in weight, was placed at 2*d.* If the weight was more than three ounces, the charge was 12*d.* an ounce. The postage on letters and packages from England was payable in advance. Newspapers were charged a penny an ounce.[3]

By an act passed in 1827 it was provided that henceforth all rates for letters conveyed within Ireland should be collected in British currency. The rates themselves and the distances remained the same as had been provided by the act of 1814. The postage collected on letters between the two kingdoms was henceforth to be retained in the country where it was collected. The rates for letters passing between the two kingdoms were assimilated with the rates prescribed for Great Britain by the act of 1812. In addition to the land rates, 2*d.* was required for the sea passage to and from Holyhead and Milford and to this 2*d.* more was added for the use of the

[1] Joyce, p. 363.

[2] The *Calcutta Monthly* complained that the new rates had rendered correspondence less frequent. "The so-called packet boats are often two or three months slower than private vessels" (London *Times*, 1818, Oct. 30, p. 3).

[3] 59 Geo. III, c. 111; London *Times*, 1820, Jan. 24, p. 3.

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Conway and Menai Bridges.[1] Between Portpatrick and Donaghadee the postage was 4*d.* for a single letter, between Liverpool and any Irish port 8*d.*, but no letter sent via Liverpool paid a higher rate than if sent via Holyhead.[2] An additional halfpenny was also demanded on every single letter passing between Milford Haven and Waterford, to pay for improvements.[3]

In 1836, England and France signed a postal treaty by which the rates on letters between the United Kingdom and France or between any other country and the United Kingdom through France were materially reduced.[4] On such letters the method of

[1] 7 and 8 Geo. IV, c. 21. The postage between Liverpool and Dublin for a single letter was 13*d.*, made up as follows: —

Inland postage to Holyhead	9*d.*
For the Conway Bridge	1*d.*
" " Menai "	1*d.*
Sea postage	2*d.*
	13*d.*

[2] In 1820, the sea rate between Portpatrick and Donaghadee had been raised by 2*d.* for a single letter, between Liverpool and the Port of Douglas by 4*d.* (1 Geo. IV, c. 89; 3 Geo. IV, c. 105).

[3] 7 and 8 Geo. IV, c. 21; 1 and 2 Geo. IV, c. 35, secs. 19–20; 6 Geo. IV, c. 28.

[3] 6 and 7 Wm. IV, c. 5.

[4] *Acc. & P.*, 1837, l. 106. Rates on foreign letters before, and after the French treaty: —

Between England and	*Before*	*After*	*Between England and*	*Before*	*After*
France	14*d.*	10*d.*	Denmark, Germany	20*d.*	20*d.*
Italy, Turkey, Ionian Isles	23	19	Gibraltar	34	34
Spain	26	19	Malta, Ionian Isles, Greece, Egypt	38	38
by packet	26	26			
Portugal via France	26	19	Brazil	42	42
by packet	30	30	Buenos Ayres	42	41
Germany via France	20	14	Madeira	31	31
Switzerland	20	14	Mexico, Havana, Colombia	36	27
Holland	16	16			
Belgium	16	16	San Domingo	26	27
Russia, Prussia, Norway, Sweden	20	20	United States and foreign West Indies	26	26

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reckoning postage differed from the English rule and was as follows: One sheet of paper not exceeding an ounce in weight and every letter not exceeding one quarter of an ounce were single letters. Every letter with one enclosure only and not exceeding an ounce in weight was a double letter. Every letter containing more than one enclosure and not exceeding half an ounce was a double letter. If it exceeded half an ounce but not an ounce in weight, it was a triple letter. If it exceeded an ounce, it paid as four single letters and for every quarter of an ounce above one ounce it paid an additional single letter rate.[1] The sender of a letter from Great Britain to France had the option of prepaying the whole postage, British and foreign, or the British alone, or neither.[2]

In 1837, an act of Parliament was passed, consolidating previous acts for the regulation of postage rates within Great Britain and Ireland, between Great Britain and Ireland, and between the United Kingdom and the colonies and foreign countries. The rates within Great Britain remained the same as those established by the act of 1812, including the additional half penny on letters conveyed by mail coaches in Scotland. In Ireland the rates existing since 1814 still held and between Great Britain and Ireland the rates established by 7 and 8 Geo. IV, c. 21.

The rates for letters between the United Kingdom and foreign countries through France and those conveyed directly between the United Kingdom and France remained tne same as had been agreed upon by the Treaty of 1836. Some of the more important of the other rates were as follows: —

To Italy, Sicily, Venetian Lombardy, Malta, the Ionian Islands, Greece, Turkey, the Levant, the Archipelago, Syria, and Egypt through Belgium, Holland, or Germany, 20*d.* for a single letter. Between the United Kingdom and Portugal, 19*d.* for a single letter.

	Single letter
To or from Gibraltar	23*d.*
To or from Malta, the Ionian Islands, Greece, Syria, and Egypt	27*d.*

[1] This followed to a certain extent the French system of charging postage, which depended more upon weight and less upon the number of enclosures than the English method.

[2] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 34.

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	Single letter
Between Gibraltar (not having been first conveyed there from the United Kingdom) and Malta, the Ionian Islands, Greece, Syria, or Egypt [1]	*8d.*
Between the United Kingdom and Madeira	*20d.*
Between the United Kingdom and the West Indies, Colombia, and Mexico	*25d.*
Between the United Kingdom and Brazil	*31d.*
Between the United Kingdom and Buenos Ayres	*29d.*
Between the United Kingdom and San Domingo	*15d.*
Between the British West Indies and Colombia or Mexico	*12d.*

Letters between the United Kingdom and Germany, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, and Norway were charged in addition the same postage as if they had been sent from or to London. Letters from and to France paid no additional postage. All letters to and from non-commissioned officers, privates and seamen while in actual service were still carried for one penny each, payable in advance, but letters sent by them from Ceylon, the East Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape were charged an additional *2d.* payable by the receiver.[2]

After the transferrence of the packet boats to the Admiralty in 1837, the Postmaster-General was authorized to charge regular packet rates for the conveyance of letters by such ships as he had contracted with for such conveyance. He might also forward letters by any ships and collect the following rates for each single letter: —

When the letter was posted in the place from which the ship sailed except when sailing between Great Britain and Ireland	*8d.*
If posted anywhere else in the United Kingdom	*12d.*
Between Great Britain and Ireland in addition to inland rates	*8d.*
For a single letter coming into the United Kingdom except from Ceylon, the East Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape in addition to inland rates	*8d.*

[1] In 1838, it was enacted that the postage on a single letter (not from the United Kingdom or going there) between any two Mediterranean ports or from a Mediterranean port to the East Indies should be *6d.* via the Red Sea or Persian Gulf. The Gibraltar rate remained the same (1 and 2 Vict., c. 97).

[2] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 34.

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For letters from Ceylon, the East Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape in addition to inland rates —	
If not exceeding 3 ounces in weight	4*d.*
If exceeding 3 ounces in weight	12*d.* an oz.
For letters delivered to the Post Office to be sent to Ceylon, the East Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape in addition to all inland rates —	
If not exceeding 3 ounces in weight	2*d.*
If exceeding 3 ounces in weight	12*d.* an oz.[1]

The end of high postage rates was now at hand. In 1839, the Treasury was empowered to change the rating according to the weight of the letter or package,[2] and they proceeded to do so in the case of letters from one country to another passing through the United Kingdom, between any two colonies, between any South American ports, and between such ports and Madeira and the Canaries.[3] Parliament followed up the good work in 1840 by enacting that in future all letters, packages, etc. should be charged by weight alone, according to the following scheme: —

On every letter or package, etc. —	
Not exceeding ½ ounce in weight, one rate of postage.	
Exceeding ½ ounce but not exceeding 1 ounce,	2 rates of postage.
1 " " " " 2 ounces,	4 " " "
2 ounces " " " 3 "	6 " " "
3 " " " " 4 "	8 " " "

For every ounce above four ounces, two additional rates of postage, and for every fraction of an ounce above four ounces as for one additional ounce. No letter or package exceeding one pound in weight was to be sent through the Post Office except petitions and addresses to the Queen, or to either House of Parliament, or in such cases as the Treasury Lords might order by warrant.[4]

[1] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 34. [2] 2 and 3 Vict., c. 52.

[3] *Acc. & P.*, 1841, xxvi, 53, pp. 1–7.

[4] Additional exceptions were made later in the case of

1. Reissuable country bank notes delivered at the General Post Office in London.
2. Deeds, legal proceedings and papers.
3. Letters to and from places beyond the seas.
4. Letters to and from any government office or department (or to and from any person having the franking privilege by virtue of his office). *Acc. & P.* 1841, xxvi, 53, p. 4.

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On all letters not exceeding a half-ounce in weight transmitted by the Post between places in the United Kingdom (not being letters sent to or from places beyond the seas, or posted in any post town to be delivered within that town) there was charged a uniform rate of one penny. For all letters exceeding a half-ounce in weight, additional rates were charged according to the foregoing scheme, each additional rate for letters exceeding one ounce in weight being fixed at *2d.*[1]

The rates for colonial letters were also adjusted according to weight as follows: Between any place in the United Kingdom and any port in the colonies and India (except when passing through France) for a letter not exceeding half an ounce in weight, *1s.* Between any of the colonies through the United Kingdom, *2s.* If such letters exceeded half an ounce in weight, they were charged additional rates according to the table already given, the rate for a letter not exceeding half an ounce being taken as the basis.

The rates for letters to and from foreign countries were much the same as they had been before the passage of this act, except that instead of the initial charge being made for a single letter, it was now reckoned for a letter not exceeding half an ounce in weight. The rates for letters to and from France were graded according to the distance they were carried in England, the lowest rate for a letter not more than half an ounce in weight being *3d.* to Dover or the port of arrival, the highest rate being *10d.* to any place distant more than fifty miles from Dover.[2]

The franking privilege may reasonably be considered in connection with the history of postal rates, nor should its effect in reducing the revenue of the Post Office be neglected. The Council of State gave orders in 1652 that all public packets, letters of members of Parliament, of the Council, of officers in the public service, and of any persons acting in a public capacity should be carried free. This is the first record that we have concerning the free carriage of members' letters, a privilege which later gave so much trouble and was so much abused.[3] The next year the Post Office farmers agreed to carry free all letters to and from members of Parliament pro-

[1] Double rates were charged when the postage was paid on delivery.

[2] 3 and 4 Vict., c. 96.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1651–52, p. 507.

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vided that letters written by such members as were not known by their seals should be endorsed, "These are for the service of the Commonwealth," and signed by the members themselves or their clerks.[1] Nothing was said in the act of 1660 about the conveyance of the letters of members of Parliament and they were carried free only by act of grace. The House of Commons had passed a clause of the bill providing for the free conveyance of the letters of members of their own House. This had exasperated the Lords, who, since they could not amend the clause so as to extend the privilege to themselves, had dropped it.[2] In 1693, the attention of Cotton and Frankland was called to the manner in which franking was being abused. Men claimed the right to frank letters to whom the Postmasters-General denied it, and members of Parliament were accused of bad faith in the exercise of their privilege. The custom had arisen of enclosing private letters in the packet of official letters. A warrant was issued in 1693 to the effect that in future no letters were to go free except those on the King's affairs, and the only persons to send or receive them free were the two principal Secretaries of State, the Secretary for Scotland, the Secretary in Holland, the Earl of Portland, and members of Parliament, the latter only during the session, and for forty days before and after, and for inland letters alone. Each member was to write his name in a book with his seal so that no one might be able to counterfeit his signature.[3]

We learn from Hicks' letters that it was customary for clerks in the Post Office at London to send gazettes to their correspondents in the country free of charge. These gazettes or news letters were supplied by the Treasury and, as *2d.* or *3d.* apiece was paid for them by the recipients, the privilege was greatly esteemed.[4] The Deputy Postmaster-General wished to abolish the privilege, but Hicks himself, who was one of the favoured officials, was quite indignant at the suggestion.[5] The principle was bad, but as the receipts for gazettes formed a necessary part of the clerks' salaries, Hicks can-

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, p. 449.
[2] *Parliamentary History of England*, iv (1660–88), col. 163.
[3] *Cal. T. P.*, 1557–1696, p. 281.
[4] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1731–34, pp. 208, 210, 218, 268.
[5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1667, p. 248.

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not be blamed for protesting against abolition without compensation. James II expressed a desire that the practice should be discontinued, but when it was shown to him that the salaries of the clerks must be raised if his wishes were obeyed, his proposition was promptly withdrawn.[1]

The abuses of the privilege of franking were very pronounced during the eighteenth century. The system of patronage which the members of Parliament then exercised made them reluctant to offend any of their constituents, who might entrench upon their peculiar privileges. Members' names were forged to letters and they made no complaint. Letters from the country were sent to them to be re-addressed under their own signatures. The Postmasters-General admonished them more than once, but, as a rule, the members disclaimed all knowledge of abuses. Men were so bold as to order letters to be sent under a member's name to coffee-houses, where they presented themselves and demanded the letters so addressed. In 1715, on receiving renewed complaints from the Postmasters-General, it was ordered by the House that henceforth no member should frank a letter unless the address were written entirely in his own hand. This was expected to prevent members from franking letters sent to them by friends. It was also ordered that no letter addressed to a member should pass free unless such member was actually residing at the place to which the letter was addressed. In the third place, no member was to frank a newspaper unless it was entirely in print. This was to prevent the franking of long written communications passing as newspapers, for the members of Parliament in sending and receiving letters free were restricted to such as did not exceed two ounces in weight, but they were not so restricted in the case of newspapers.[2] According to the Surveyor's report, the loss from the ministers' franks in 1717 was £8270 and from the members' franks £17,470.[3] The loss from franking was proportionately much greater in Ireland than in England. In 1718 the Irish Parliament sat only three months, in 1719 nine months, and in Ireland as in England, members of Parliament received and sent their letters free only during the session and forty days before

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1666–67, p. 386.
[2] *Cal. T. P.*, 1714–19, p. 287.
[3] *Jo. H. C.*, 1714–18, p. 303.

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and after it. The following is part of the report submitted by the Postmasters-General to the Lords of the Treasury for these two years: —

	1718	1719
Gross Produce from Letters	£14,592	£19,522
Charge of Management and Members' Letters	11,526	18,768
Net Produce from Letters [1]	3,066	754

Under the charges of management is included the charge for carrying members' letters as reckoned proportionately to the charge for the letters which paid, together with the actual charge for the pay letters. The net produce during the three months' session was £3006, during the nine months' session only £753. In 1734 the old orders about the maximum weight of two ounces and the requirement for the whole superscription to be in the member's own writing were repeated in a royal proclamation. In addition it was ordered that any letters sent under cover to any member of Parliament or high official of state, to be forwarded by him, should be sent to the General Post Office to be taxed.[2] It could hardly be expected that this order would be obeyed, for there was no method of enforcing it.

In 1735, the House of Commons instituted an enquiry into the whole question of franking and summoned various Post Office officials before them to give evidence. An estimate was laid before them of the amount lost each year by carrying franked letters. This estimate was obtained by weighing the franked letters at intervals during the session of Parliament, and comparing their weight with the weight of the letters which paid postage. As the total revenue from the latter was known, the amount which was lost on the former was guessed. The House expressed very little confidence in the estimated amounts, and certainly it was a rough way of attaining the object aimed at, but perhaps they were prejudiced from the strength of the case against them.[3] Expressed in yearly averages, the amounts by which the revenue was reduced by franking were: —

1716–19	£17,460	1725–29	32,364
1720–24	23,726	1730–33	36,864

[1] *Cal. T. P.*, 1720–23, p. 77. [2] *Jo. H. C.*, 1732–37, p. 393. [3] *Ibid.*, 1732–37.

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The system of ascertaining forged franks and of discovering enclosures was as follows: a Supervisor of the Franks charged all letters, franked by a member's name, coming from any place, when he knew that the member was not there. Very often by holding them in front of a candle, he could see enclosures inside directed to other people. If he was in doubt he generally charged the letter, for if it should pay, all well and good, and if he had made a mistake, the amount was refunded to the member. The Supervisor had noticed that the number of franked letters had increased with every session of Parliament, and some of the ex-members also attempted to frank letters. The evidence of the Supervisor, especially his description of the manner in which he attempted to discover enclosures, was exceedingly distasteful to the House. The members themselves were to blame for many of the abuses attendant upon the system, and yet they contended that they were the unwilling victims of others. A resolution was adopted that it was an infringement upon the privileges of the knights, citizens, and burgesses chosen to represent the people of Great Britain in Parliament, for any postmaster, his deputies or agents to open or look into any letter addressed to or signed by a member of Parliament, unless empowered so to do by a warrant issued by one of the Secretaries of State. In addition no postmaster or his deputies should delay or detain any letter directed to or by any member unless there should be good reason to suppose that the frank was a counterfeit.[1]

The restrictions adopted to curtail the abuse of the franking privilege had but little effect. A regular business sprang up for selling counterfeit franks. The House of Lords ordered one person accused of selling them to come before the bar of the House for examination, but he failed to present himself.[2] Another confessed before the Upper House that he had counterfeited one of the Lords' names on certain covers of letters showed to him and had then sold them. He expressed sorrow for the offence, which necessity had driven him to commit. He was sent to Newgate.[3] The abuses of the

[1] *Jo. H. C.*, 1732–37, p. 476.
[2] *Jo. H. L.*, 1736–41, p. 259.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 529.

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franking system were so patent[1] that Allen was told that he might withdraw from his contract to farm the bye and cross post letters on three months' notice being given.[2]

The revenue from the Post Office was surrendered by the Crown at the beginning of George the Third's reign in exchange for a Civil List from the Aggregate Fund as it was then called.[3] While the Post Office remained in the hands of the King, it was only by special grant on his part that the members of Parliament had been allowed to send and receive letters free. Accordingly in 1763, an act was passed for the purpose of giving parliamentary sanction to the privilege. This act repeated the principal points in the King's proclamation and in the Parliament's previous resolutions on the subject. All letters or packets sent to or by the King, the ministers and the higher Post Office officials were to go free. The ministers might appoint others to frank their letters, whose names must be forwarded to the Postmaster-General. Those sending letters free must sign their names on the outside and themselves write the address. No letters to or from any member of Parliament should go free unless they were sent during the session or within forty days before or after, and the whole superscription must be in the member's own hand or directed to him at his usual place of residence or at the House. All letters in excess of two ounces in weight must pay postage. Printed votes, proceedings in Parliament, and newspapers should go free when sent to a member or signed on the outside by him, provided they were sent without covers or with covers open at the ends. The privileges of franking votes, proceedings in Parliament, and newspapers, were continued to the clerks in the Post Office and in the Secretaries of State's offices. The Postmasters-General and their deputies were given authority to search newspapers which had no covers or covers open at the ends and to charge them if there were writing or enclosures in them. Finally, any person who counterfeited a member's name on any letter or

[1] One man in five months counterfeited 14,400 franks of members of Parliament. Counterfeits of names of 27 members were shown. A regular trade in buying and selling them had sprung up (*Jo. H. C.*, 1761–64, p. 998).

Several Lords certified that their names had been counterfeited. Lord Dacre's name had been counterfeited 504 times (*Jo. H. L.*, 1760–64, p. 534).

[2] *Cal. T. B. & P.*, 1739–41, p. 450.

[3] Joyce, p. 189.

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package for the purpose of avoiding the payment of postage, was guilty of felony and liable to transportation for seven years.[1]

The year following the passing of this act, the House of Commons called for returns relating to the franking system. Besides the members of Parliament, the ministers, and the Post Office officials, to whom the franking privilege had been granted by the King's warrant and by the late act, almost all who were in any way connected with the Government claimed the right to send or receive letters free, even to the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms. The amount which newspapers would have paid if there had been no franking privilege was first given for the week ending March 13, 1764.

Members'	*States'*	*Post Office Clerks'*
£465	£310	£1055

These amounts were obtained by weighing the newspapers and, as this was the manner in which they would have been rated, the results may be considered as fairly correct. The idea being to estimate the loss from members' and states' franks only, the franking by Post Office clerks does not enter into the following calculation. It was judged from the figures given above that the Post Office carried free every year enough newspapers franked by members and state officials to produce £40,000 if they had been taxed at the ordinary rates.[2] An attempt to arrive at the same result in another way was also made. The sum total which would have been paid on all members' and ministers' letters, newspapers, and parcels arriving at or departing from London in 1763 was £140,000. Of this amount £85,000 would have been paid on all mail leaving London, and £55,000 on all mail arriving in London. The difference in favour of the outgoing mail was judged to be due to the newspapers, all of which were printed in London and sent to the country. This would give a loss of £30,000 on newspapers, and £110,000 on letters.[3]

Returns were also submitted, showing the gross amount of the inland postage for Great Britain and Ireland, including the amount which the franked letters and papers would have paid if they had all been charged, the actual gross product and the difference be-

[1] 4 Geo. III, c. 24. [2] *Jo. H. C.*, 1761–64, pp. 1000–1001. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 999.

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tween the two. This difference would, of course, be the estimated charge on all the free matter. These figures are given from 1715 to 1763. Roughly speaking, in fifty years franked letters and papers increased 700 per cent while pay letters increased only 50 per cent. In 1715 one fifth as many free letters and newspapers as those which paid went through the mail. In 1763 there were eleven twelfths as many free letters and papers.[1] It will be seen that the assumption is that the postage which this free matter might have paid represented the loss suffered by the Post Office. Now this is not so, because it did not cost the Post Office so much to convey letters and papers as the ordinary rates would have paid them. In the second place the Postal authorities considered the £140,000 as so much actually lost, whereas if charges had been enforced on the free matter, a much smaller amount would have been sent. This is entirely apart from the rough and ready manner in which the figures were obtained. Enough was shown, however, to prove that the franking system was a burden to the country and an imposition upon the Post Office.

In Ireland, Parliament met as a rule only during the even years or if it met every year, the sessions in the odd years were very short. For the five even years from 1753 to 1762, the expenses averaged for each year £3306 over the receipts, while during the five odd years, the receipts were greater than the expenditures by a yearly average of £2249. These general results held good for every individual odd or even year for the period for which returns were given.[2]

Attempts continued to be made by members of the House of Commons to diminish the abuses arising from franking. There had been some misunderstanding as to whether they were entitled to have ship's letters delivered free to them. Of course they were exempt from the inland postage on such letters, but for every letter brought into the country by vessels other than packets, the master was paid one penny and this penny was collected from the person to whom the letter was delivered. The members finally agreed to pay the extra penny.[3]

Acts were now introduced to enable the Commander-in-Chief,

[1] *Jo. H. C.*, p. 999. [2] *Ibid.*, 1761–64, p. 1001. [3] *Ibid.*, 1780–82, p. 537.

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the Adjutant-General, and the Controller of Accounts of the Royal forces to receive and send letters free. Both bills passed.[1] It is some consolation that the Lord Chancellor and Judges failed to obtain the franking privilege although a bill was introduced in the Commons in their behalf.[2]

It was enacted in 1784 that a member must write on his free letters not only his name and address but also the name of the post town from which they were to be sent and the day of the month and the year when they were posted.[3] The object of this restriction could be easily evaded by enclosing postdated letters to their constituents but, after the passage of this resolution, a considerable decrease resulted in the number of free letters to and from members.[4] When the Irish was separated from the English Post Office, the privilege of franking newspapers to Ireland was taken away and a rate of one penny a newspaper was imposed, payable in advance. This meant a loss to the clerks in the Secretaries' offices but this was made good to them by an addition of £1000 a year to their salaries.[5]

In 1795, the members of Parliament made another attempt to limit their own as well as the free writing proclivities of others. The maximum weight of a free letter to or from a member was lowered from two ounces to one. No letter directed by a member should go free unless the member so directing it should be within twenty miles of the place where it was posted either on the day on which it was posted or the day before. No member should send more than ten or receive more than fifteen free letters a day. Votes and proceedings in Parliament when addressed to or by members of Parliament were exempted from the provisions of this Act.[6]

[1] 22 Geo. III, c. 70; 23 Geo. III, c. 69. [2] *Jo. H. C.*, 1790–91, p. 468.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1784–85, p. 383. The Lords also agreed to this resolution (*ibid.*, p. 411; 24 Geo. III, sess. 2, c. 37).

[4] For the years 1783 and 1784, the number of free letters arriving in London, exclusive of the state's letters, averaged over 800,000 a year and those sent from London averaged over 1,000,000. In 1785, they had fallen to 514,000 and 713,000 respectively (*Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Rep. Com.*, ii, 222, p. 95).

[5] 24 Geo. III, c. 6; *Jo. H. C.*, 1795–96, p. 588.

[6] 35 Geo. III, c. 53.

After 1786 the number of franked letters had gradually increased until checked by this act. In 1795 the number of franked letters delivered in London was 1,045,000,

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The restrictions upon the franking privilege enjoyed by members of Parliament were re-enacted in 1802 with some additions. The number of free letters which a member might receive and send in one day having been limited to twenty-five, it was decided that these twenty-five so excepted from the payment of postage should be those on which the charges were the highest, provided that none of them exceeded an ounce in weight. The high officials of state, the clerks of Parliament, certain clerks of the Commons and Lords, the Treasurer and Paymaster of the Navy, the Lord Chancellor, certain officials in Ireland, and two persons appointed by the Postmaster-General of Ireland were allowed to send letters free.[1] The members and clerks of both Houses were allowed to send newspapers free provided that they were enclosed in covers open at both ends. The same rule held for votes and proceedings in Parliament.[2] The same franking privileges were extended to Irish officials.[3]

From 1806 to 1819 there was a large extension of the franking privilege to various officials. During that time sixteen statutes and parts of statutes were enacted in behalf of various persons from the Lord High Chancellor to the Controller of the Barrack's Department and the Commissioners of the parliamentary grant for building churches. Sir Robert Buxton, a member of Parliament, thought that it would be well for his fellow members to give up their privilege in order to help the finances of the country. Windham disagreed on the ground that it kept up communications between a member and his constituents and encouraged literary correspondence which would otherwise decline. Pitt justified it, in that it enabled members to carry on the important business of their constituents and did not result in much loss to the state.[4]

the number sent from London 1,195,000. In 1796, the inward and outward free letters amounted to 737,000 and 787,000 respectively. In 1797 the numbers were 696,000 and 721,000. These restricting acts of 1784 and 1795 had a more important effect than Joyce leads us to suppose (*Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Rep. Com.*, ii, 222, p. 95).

[1] Those officials in the General Post Office who had no franking privilege were reimbursed the amount of postage paid by them on inland single letters (*Rep. Commrs.*, 1837, xxxiv, 8th rep., app., no. 2). [2] 42 Geo. III, c. 63. [3] 43 Geo. III, c. 28.

[4] *Parl. Deb.*, 1st ser., iii, col. 570. The following are a few of the statutes enacted which extended franking: 46 Geo. III, c. 61; 50 Geo. III, c. 65, sec. 19; c. 66; 51 Geo. III, c. 16, sec. 17; 52 Geo. III, c. 132, sec. 16; c. 146, sec. 11; 53 Geo. III, c. 13; 54 Geo. III, c. 169; 55 Geo. III, c. 1, sec. 10; c. 60, secs. 41–42; 56 Geo. III, c. 98, sec. 24.

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It had always been customary to charge letter rates for the conveyance of newspapers to foreign countries and to the colonies. Members of Parliament, however, had the privilege of franking newspapers within the United Kingdom, the clerks of the Foreign Office franked them to foreign countries, and the Secretary of the Post Office franked them to the colonies. In 1825 it was enacted that members need no longer sign their names to newspapers franked by them, or give notice of the names of the places to which they intended to send them.[1] This virtually provided for the free transmission of newspapers within the United Kingdom. At the same time it was provided that the rate for newspapers, votes and parliamentary proceedings should be 1½*d.* each to the colonies, payable in advance. Newspapers from the colonies were charged 3*d.* each, payable on delivery. Such newspapers must be posted on the day of publication, must contain no writing, and must be enclosed in covers open at both ends.[2] Two years later the charge for votes and parliamentary proceedings to and from the colonies was fixed at 1½*d.* an ounce. Newspapers brought from the colonies by private vessels were to be charged 3*d.* each, the same as the packet rate,[3] but in 1835 colonial newspapers by private vessels were allowed to come in for a penny each, and the same rate was charged for English newspapers sent to the colonies by private vessels. By the same act the postage on newspapers passing between the United Kingdom and any foreign country which charged no inland rate for their conveyance was fixed at a penny each. If an inland rate was charged, the postage was to be 2*d.* for each newspaper plus the foreign rate.[4]

During the following year, all the regulations concerning the conveyance of newspapers, votes, and proceedings in Parliament etc. were embodied in one act. Within the United Kingdom all newspapers which had paid the stamp duty were to go free except those which were sent through the Twopenny Post and delivered by it,

[1] 6 Geo. IV, c. 68, sec. 10.

[2] 6 Geo. IV, c. 68; London *Times*, 1825, June 11, p. 3; July 29, p. 2.

[3] 7 and 8 Geo. IV, c. 21.

[4] 5 and 6 Wm. IV, c. 25.

Before the passage of this act newspapers passed free by the packets and posts to and from Hamburg, Bremen, and Cuxhaven (London *Times*, 1834, Oct. 30, p. 2).

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not having passed by the General Post, and except those posted and delivered within the same town. In both of these cases one penny was charged. To and from the colonies no rate was demanded when newspapers were sent by the regular packets. If sent by private vessels one penny was payable, which went to the master. The rate to and from foreign countries was fixed at *2d.* for each paper, but if a foreign state agreed to charge no postage on English newspapers, no postage should be charged on the newspapers of such foreign state, when brought to England by the packet boats. If brought by private vessels, a penny was payable for each paper, to go to the master. All newspapers, in order to receive the advantage of these low rates or to go free, had to be posted within seven days after publication and to contain no writing except the name and address of the person to whom they were to be sent. In addition the newspaper must have no cover or one open at both ends.[1]

The following additions and changes in the regulations for the carriage of newspapers were made in 1837. One penny was to be paid for their conveyance by private vessels between different parts of the United Kingdom. Between the colonies and foreign countries through the United Kingdom, newspapers should go free if conveyed by the packets and should pay a penny each if conveyed by private vessels. Parliamentary proceedings conveyed between the colonies and the United Kingdom, if sent by packet boats and not exceeding one ounce in weight, were charged 1½*d.* each. When in excess of one ounce they paid 1½*d.* for each additional ounce. Pamphlets, magazines and other periodical publications for the colonies, if not exceeding six ounces in weight, paid 12*d.* when carried by the packets. For every additional ounce, 3*d.* was charged. Bankers' re-issuable notes were carried at one quarter the regular postage.[2] Patterns, with no writing enclosed and not exceeding one ounce in weight, paid a single letter rate.[3] Any newspaper which had been posted in violation of any regulation for the

[1] 6 and 7 Wm. IV, c. 25.

[2] In Great Britain re-issuable notes of country banks paid in London were conveyed by the post to the issuing bank at one quarter the regular rates for letters, but parcels of notes had to exceed six ounces in weight and contain no other matter (5 Geo. IV, c. 20).

[3] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 34.

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conveyance of newspapers was charged three times the regular letter postage.[1]

Franking and the privilege of sending and receiving letters free from postage did not at any time extend to letters liable to foreign postage except in the case of public despatches to and from the Secretaries of State and British Ambassadors.[2] The owners, charterers and consignees of vessels inward bound were allowed to receive letters free from sea postage to the maximum of six ounces for each man, but in the case of ships coming from the East Indies, Ceylon, Mauritius, and the Cape, the maximum was twenty ounces.[3] Within the kingdom, writs for the election of members of the House of Commons and for those Scotch and Irish peers who were elected, were allowed to go free.[4] All persons who were allowed to frank letters within the Kingdom were grouped in ten classes. Members of Parliament were placed in the first class and their letters were subject to the old restrictions as to number,[5] superscription, name of post town, date, and place of residence. They might also receive petitions free, provided that each did not exceed six ounces in weight. They might send free printed votes and proceedings in Parliament.

Officials of both Houses of Parliament were in the second class. They were subject to the same restrictions as the first class, except that the number of their letters was not limited and each letter might weigh two ounces.

The third class was composed of members of the Treasury Department and the Postmaster-General and his secretaries. Their franking privilege was unlimited as to the weight and number of letters nor were they required to insert the name of the post town or the date.[1]

The fourth class, composed of heads of departments, might send and receive letters with no limit as to number or weight.

[1] 7 Wm. IV. and 1 Vict., c. 36.

[2] 5 and 6 Wm. IV, c. 25.

[3] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 34.

Maximum increased to thirty ounces by 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 25.

[4] 53 Geo. III, c. 89; 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 32.

[5] Wallace, the postal reformer, declared that other members had been in the habit of receiving more than fifteen free letters in a day and that, too, with Freeling's consent (*Parl. Deb.*, 3d series, xxiv, col. 1001).

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The fifth class, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland and the Irish Surveyors, had unlimited franking rights within Ireland. All the letters of these five classes were subject to the following restrictions with the exception of the third class. The whole superscription of the letters sent must be in the hand of the privileged person, with his name and the name of the post town from which the letters were sent together with the date, and on that date or the day before, the writer must be within twenty miles of the place where the letters were posted.

The other five classes were made up of subordinate members of departments, clerks, secretaries etc. when writing or receiving letters on official business. Every such letter had to be superscribed with the name of the office and the seal and name of the writer.[1]

It appeared from a report of a committee appointed to investigate postal affairs that the total number of franks had increased from 3,039,000 in 1810 to 4,142,000 in 1820; 4,792,000 in 1830 and 5,270,000 in 1837. Of these, members of the two Houses were responsible for 2,028,000; 2,726,000; 2,814,000 and 3,084,000 at the above dates respectively.[2] In concluding their report the Committee recommended the abolition of Parliamentary franking.[3] This advice was followed and improved upon two years later when franking and the privilege of sending or receiving letters free were abolished, except in the case of petitions to the Queen or Parliament not exceeding 32 ounces in weight.[4]

No further reduction in inland postage rates was adopted until the net revenue of the Post Office had pretty well recovered from the blow received by the adoption of penny postage.[5] Such reduction was finally granted in 1865, applying only to letters weighing more than one ounce each, the increases in weight being graduated by half ounces with a penny for each additional half ounce instead of *2d.* for each additional ounce as before. Corresponding reduc-

[1] 7 Wm. IV. and 1 Vict., c. 35.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, 2d rep., app., p. 109. [3] *Ibid.*, xx, 3d rep., p. 62.

[4] 3 and 4 Vict., c. 96.

Recent attempts by certain members of Parliament to revive the franking privilege have fortunately been unsuccessful (*Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., lxxxi, col. 1407; civ, col. 360).

[5] But in 1861 the registration fee was reduced from *6d.* to *4d.* and a double fee charged for compulsory registration (*Rep. P. G.*, 1862, pp. 9–10).

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tions were made at the same time in the book post and the pattern and sample post, and were made applicable to correspondence with British North America and the British possessions in Europe.[1] In 1870, when the impressed newspaper stamp was finally abolished, the rate on prepaid newspapers was reduced to a halfpenny each whether sent singly or in packages, but no package was to be charged higher than the book post rate. Unpaid newspapers were charged a penny for each two ounces or fraction thereof. The book post rate was reduced at the same time to a halfpenny for each two ounces or fraction thereof. The rate for patterns and samples, which had formerly been *2d.* for the initial four ounces, was altered to the existing book post rate with a maximum of twelve ounces only. In 1871 the inland letter rate was fixed at a penny for the initial ounce, a halfpenny for the next ounce and for each additional two ounces, and the sample and pattern post was incorporated with the inland letter post. A separate sample and pattern post was reëstablished in 1887, only to be incorporated for a second time with the letter post ten years later.[2] An additional charge for re-directed letters was made when the re-direction necessitated a change from the original delivery, but the charge was such only as they would be liable to if prepaid. An exception was made in the case of letters redirected to sailors or soldiers, no additional charge being then made, provided that the rate was not a foreign one. This privilege was later extended to commissioned officers and the exemption extended to foreign rates as well.[3] In 1891 all charges for the redirection of letters were abolished, followed three years later by a like abolition in the case of all other postal matter, and in 1900 the charge for notice of removal and re-direction after the first year was reduced from £1 1*s.* to 1*s.* for the second and third and 5*s.* for subsequent years.[4]

With an increase in the number of valuable articles carried by post and better arrangements for their safe keeping, it was found possible to reduce the registration fee from 11*d.* to 6*d.*, then to 4*d.*

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1866, p. 12.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1870, pp. 3–5; 1897, p. 5; 1896, p. 2; 1898, pp. 1–2.
[3] 3 and 4 Vict., c. 96; 10 and 11 Vict., c. 85; 23 and 24 Vict., c. 65.
[4] *Rep. P. G.*, 1892, p. 8; 1894, p. 2; 1895, p. 4; 1901, p. 4.

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and eventually to *2d.* At the time of the first reduction, a rule was issued for the compulsory registration by the Post Office of all letters unquestionably containing coin, for the sake of letter carriers and others rather than the protection of the public. The Post Office did not at the time of the first reduction hold itself responsible for the full value of the contents of a lost registered letter but was accustomed to remunerate the sender where the contents were proved, were of moderate amount, and the fault clearly lay with the Post Office. In 1878 it agreed to make good up to £2 the value of the contents of any registered letter which it lost, stipulating in the case of money that it had been sent securely and in one of its own envelopes. Compulsory registration by the Post Office was also extended to include uncrossed cheques and postal orders to which the name of the payee had not been appended.[1]

An inland parcel post was not established in England until 1883. An initial rate of *3d.* was imposed for the first pound, increasing by increments of *3d.* to *1s.* for the seventh pound. Later the maximum weight was increased to 11 pounds, the maximum charge to *1s. 6d.* In 1905 a further reduction followed on parcels weighing more than four pounds.[2]

The use of postcards was first permitted in England in 1870, a charge of a halfpenny a dozen being made in addition to the stamp. In 1875 this additional charge was increased to a penny a dozen for thin cards, *2d.* for stout cards. In 1899 these prices were reduced to a penny for ten stout cards, a halfpenny for ten thin ones, and the latter began rapidly to displace the former. Private post cards were first allowed to pass through the post in 1894 for a halfpenny each, and two years later the charge on unpaid inland post cards was reduced from *2d.* to a penny.[3] At the same time that the use of post cards was allowed, a half penny post was introduced for certain classes of formal printed documents.[4]

In 1884 the scale of postage applicable to inland letters between two and twelve ounces in weight was continued without limit. The resulting rates were as follows: for the first ounce, one penny;

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1862, pp. 9–10; 1879, p. 13; 1897, p. 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1896, p. 3; 1882, p. 3; 1906, p. 1.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1896, p. 2; 1889, p. 2; 1897, p. 5; 1895, p. 18.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1903, p. 5.

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for two ounces, 1½*d.*; for all greater weights, a halfpenny for every two ounces plus an initial penny. On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the late Queen's accession to the throne, further decreases were announced in the postage on inland letters. The weight carried by the initial penny was extended from one to four ounces, the postage for heavier letters increasing as before at the rate of a halfpenny for each additional two ounces.[1]

The decrease in postage for inland matter was accompanied by lower rates for colonial and foreign letters. Although the proposal of the Marquis of Clanricarde to establish a definite shilling[2] rate for all colonial letters was not immediately adopted, it was not long before even lower rates were accepted. The Marquis' plan was communicated to the Treasury Lords in 1850 purely on Imperial grounds, "to strengthen the ties between the colonies and the mother country." Rates other than those on letters were even then far from excessive. Newspapers, for instance, often passed free or they were charged a penny each either in England or the colony, but not in both. Parliamentary proceedings paid but one penny, sometimes 2*d.* per quarter-pound, books 6*d.* per half-pound. A few years later a 6*d.* letter rate was adopted for all parts of the Empire except India, the Cape, Mauritius, and Van Diemen's Land. In 1857 the 6*d.* rate per half-ounce was extended to all the colonies and in 1868 to the United States. In the following year this rate was lowered to 3*d.* for letters to the United States, Canada and Prince Edward Island.[3] In 1890 this rate in the case of most of the colonies, and some foreign countries, was still further reduced to 2½*d.*, partly no doubt on account of the crusade which Mr. Heaton had undertaken for penny postage within the Empire.[4] In 1898 his penny aspirations were realized for all the important colonies with the exception of the Australasian and South African, and in 1905 these too fell into line and were joined by Egypt and the Soudan.[5] In 1907, the experiment was tried of charging the comparatively nominal sum of one penny a pound on British newspapers,

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1885, p. 14; 1898, pp. 1–2.

[2] Even at this time (1850) the shilling rate was the rule.

[3] *Acc. & P.*, 1852–53, xcv., 204, pp. 2–3; *Rep. P. G.*, 1855, pp. 36–37; 1858, p. 20; *Rep. Com.*, 1868–69, vi, p. iv; *Rep. P. G.*, 1871, app., p. 29; 1870, pp. 6–7.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1891, p. 6; app., p. 39.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1899, p. 7; 1906, p. 1.

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magazines, and trade journals for Canada, duly registered for the purpose, when sent by direct Canadian packet. This rate is less than the cost but the loss is diminished by the fact that the Dominion Government relieves the British Post Office of the whole cost of ocean transit by the Canadian subsidized lines.[1]

In 1863 arrangements were made with the principal European countries for a marked reduction in letter postage rates. With France a rate of 8*d.* or 10*d.* for a quarter of an ounce, according to the country in which the postage was paid, had existed. This was reduced to 4*d.* payable in either country. With Italy and Spain the existing rates of 1*s.* 1*d.* and 10*d.* respectively for a quarter of an ounce were reduced to 6*d.* The Belgian sixpenny half-ounce rate was made 4*d.*, and with the German Postal Union the rate was reduced from 8*d.* to 6*d.* for a half-ounce letter. In general these were prepaid rates.[2] The first Postal Union meeting at Berne in 1874 reduced still further the old rates and simplified the rules for the settlement of postal payments between the subscribing nations. A uniform rate for prepaid letters of 2½*d.* the half ounce was agreed to, 5*d.* for an unpaid letter. Post cards were charged at half the rate of a prepaid letter, newspapers a penny for four ounces, printed papers (other than newspapers), books, legal and commercial documents, and samples of merchandise a penny for two ounces.[3] In 1891 the uniform letter rate existing among those countries in Europe which were members of the Postal Union was extended, so far as the United Kingdom was concerned, to all parts of the globe. On the first of October, 1907, a further reduction was made when the unit of weight for outward foreign and colonial letters was raised from half an ounce to an ounce, and the charge on foreign letters for each unit after the first was reduced from 2½*d.* to 1½*d.*[4]

Shortly after acquiring the money order business from the managing proprietors, the Post Office reduced the rates of commission to 3*d.* for orders not exceeding £2 in value, and 6*d.* for orders above £2 but not over £5, the latter sum being at that time the maximum. In 1862 the issue of orders for larger sums was allowed at the following rates: 9*d.* when not in excess of £7, and 12*d.* between

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1907, pp. 4–5.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1875, p. 13.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1864, p. 21; 1859, pp. 19–20.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1892, p. 8; 1906, pp. 1–2.

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£7 and £10. On the first day of May, 1871, a further reduction was made and the following scale of charges announced: for sums under 10*s.*, a penny; between 10*s.* and £1, 2*d.*; between £1 and £2, 3*d.*, and an additional penny for each additional pound to the £10 limit. It was found, however, that the low rate of a penny for small orders did not pay, and a decision was reached to raise the rate for these small orders and provide a cheaper means for their remittance by post. In pursuance of this policy the rate for orders under 10*s.* was increased to 2*d.*, for orders between 10*s.* and £1 to 3*d.*, and in 1881 the following rates were announced for postal notes: a halfpenny for notes of the value of 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.*; a penny for notes of the value of 2*s.* 6*d.*, 5*s.* and 7*s.*, 6*d.* and 2*d.* for notes costing 10*s.*, 12*s.* 6*d.*, 15*s.*, 17*s.* 6*d.*, and 20*s.* In 1884 a new series of postal orders was issued, the 12*s.* 6*d.* and 17*s.* 6*d.* notes being dropped and new notes issued of the value of 2*s.*, 3*s.*, 3*s.* 6*d.*, 4*s.*, 4*s.* 6*d.*, 10*s.* 6*d.* for a penny each and the rate on the 15*s.* and 20*s.* notes was reduced to 1½*d.* In 1903 still others were introduced with the result that a postal order may now be obtained for every complete 6*d.* from 6*d.* to 20*s.* and for 21*s.* and broken sums to the value of 5*d.* may be made up by affixing postage stamps. Finally, in 1905, the poundage on postal notes for 2*s.* and 2*s.* 6*d.* was reduced from 1*d.* to a halfpenny, and on postal orders for 11*s.* to 15*s.* inclusive from 1½*d.* to 1*d.* In 1886 the money order rates were reduced as follows: —

		d.
On sums not exceeding	£1	2
	£2	3
	£4	4
	£7	5
	£10	6

These rates were in their turn altered as follows on February 1, 1897: —

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

Upon the representation of the Friendly Societies, which send a good many small orders, these rates were changed in May of the same year to the following: —

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		d.
For an order	not exceeding £1	2
	exceeding £1 but not over £3	3
	exceeding £3 but not over £10	4

And finally in 1903 the maximum amount of a money order was raised from £10 to £40 and the following rates established: [1] —

			d.
For sums not exceeding £1			2
For sums above	£1 but not exceeding £3		3
	£3	£10	4
	£10	£20	6
	£20	£30	8
	£30	£40	10

In addition to the reductions in rates which have been outlined above, other changes have been made which have resulted in certain cases in a saving to the transmitter of a money order. The charge for correcting or altering the name of the remitter or payee of an inland order has been reduced to the fixed sum of a penny. The fee payable for stopping payment of an inland order was fixed at 4*d.*, and this was made to cover the issue of a new order if the request was made at the time of stopping payment. A penny stamp need no longer be affixed to a money order when payment is deferred and payment may be deferred for any period not exceeding ten days.[2]

The issue of telegraph money orders, commenced in 1889 as an experiment, was in 1892 extended to all money order offices which were also telegraph offices. The limit imposed was £10, the rates being

		d.
On orders not exceeding	£1	4
	£2	6
	£4	8
	£7	10
	£10	12

There was an additional charge of at least 9*d.* for the official telegram, authorizing payment, which was sent in duplicate. When several orders were sent at the same time and the total amount

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, pp. 26–32; 1897, pp. 10–11; 1904, pp. 11–12; 1906, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1897, pp. 10–11.

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did not exceed £50, only one official telegram was sent and paid for. The above rates were lowered in 1897 to 4*d.* for sums not in excess of £3, and 6*d.* for sums from £3 to £10 with a minimum charge of 6*d.* for the official telegram of advice.[1] At the present time inland telegraph money orders may be issued for the same amounts as ordinary inland money orders and at the same rates, plus a fee of 2*d.* and the cost of the official telegram.

During the Crimean War, the Army Post Office was authorized to issue money orders at inland rates and the system was extended to Gibraltar and Malta. In 1858 a proposition advanced by Canada for the interchange of money orders was favourably received by the Home Government, and in the following year provision was made for their issue between the United Kingdom and Canada at four times the inland rates, to a limit of £5. In 1862 the system was extended to all the colonies, the rates being the same as those already agreed upon with Canada except in the case of Gibraltar and Malta where they were three times the inland rates, and the maximum was increased to £10. In 1868 a money order convention was concluded with Switzerland, the rates being the same as those for inland orders, and in 1869 a similar agreement was made with Belgium, but in 1871 the rates for both countries were increased to three times the inland rates upon the same terms as those prevailing with other parts of Europe. In 1880 colonial rates were reduced to the same level, and in 1883 the following changes were adopted:

		d.
On orders not exceeding	£2	6
	£5	12
	£7	18
	£10	24

These were superseded in 1896 by the following rates: —

		d.
On orders not exceeding	£2	6
	£6	12
	£10	18

By 1903 most foreign countries and some of the colonies had agreed to a further reduction of rates and to a £40 limit. In 1905

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, pp. 30–32.

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the poundage on foreign money orders not exceeding £1 in value was diminished from 4*d*. to 3*d*.[1]

There is no record of the yearly expenses of the Government for the maintenance of the posts until the accession of James I.[2] There are many instances of the issue of warrants for the payment of the posts but it is not known how long a period they were intended to cover.[3] There was no systematic financial method in dealing with this phase of the postal question. The postmen remained unpaid for years at a time. After sufficient clamour, part of the arrears would be met, but it is impossible to say how much of the sum paid was for current expenses and how much for old debts.[4] It might be supposed from the fact that they received fixed daily wages that some idea might be obtained of the cost of management. But their wages often remained unpaid and the number of postmen varied, as new routes were manned or old routes discontinued, so that any figures for the period before the seventeenth century would be mere guesses.

Until 1626[5] our knowledge of the finances of the Post Office is concerned with expenses only, for there was no product, gross or net, for the state. In 1603, the cost of the posts was £4150 a year.[6] This was the year of James the First's accession, and to this is probably due the fact that payment was made for an entire year. Then there comes a break of several years' duration. In 1621, arrears for the half year ending March 31, 1619, were paid. They amounted to £917. For the next two years the yearly expenses averaged £2984. The total expenses for the financial year ending in March, 1621, were £3404. All the posts to Berwick received 92*s*. a day, to Dover 17*s*. 6*d*., to Holyhead 36*s*. 8*d*. and £130 a year for a sailing packet, to Plymouth 25*s*. a day. The wages for each post-

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, pp. 28–30; 1897, pp. 10–11; 1904, p. 11; 1906, p. 1.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 48 (25).

[3] *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, ii, pp. 1444–51–53–57–58–60–62–63–66–72; *A. P. C.*, 1547–50, pp. 111, 278, 307, 319, 413; 1552–54, pp. 74, 137, 402.

[4] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1623–25, pp. 55, 285; 1628–29, p. 184; 1629–31, pp. 379, 440.

[5] The proceeds from de Quester's rates, which went into effect from this year, may possibly have gone to the Post Office. After Witherings' rates were announced in 1635, they certainly did.

[6] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1603–10, p. 9.

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master varied from 1*s.* 8*d.* to 4*s.* 4*d.* a day. In addition there was an expenditure of £50 for extraordinary posts and 5*s.* a day to the paymaster.[1] In 1625, the ordinary expenses were about £4300 a year.[2] It is disappointing not to be able to make any more definite statements concerning the financial operations of the Post Office before 1635, but the unbusinesslike system under which it was conducted must take the blame.

Our ideas of the financial operations of the Post Office from 1635 to 1711 are somewhat clearer than during the preceding period. We know that Witherings' aim was to make the system self-supporting. It had probably not entered into his head that it might ever be anything more. After the sequestration of the position of Postmaster-General to Burlamachi, he was called upon to render an account of the financial proceedings of the Post Office during the short period that he was in charge.[3] He reported that from August 4, 1640, to December 25, 1641, the receipts had been £8363 and the expenditure £4867. £1400 of the balance had been paid to the Secretary of State and "of the remaining £2000, those that keep the office are to be considered for their pains and attendance." This is rather vague but the report shows that the Post Office was self-supporting only six years after Witherings' reforms had been adopted.[4] Prideaux reported at an early period in his régime that, with the exception of the Dover road and the Holyhead packet, the posts paid for themselves.[5] After the Post Office was farmed, there can be no doubt as to the total net revenue, but it is impossible to say how much the farmer made over and above the amount of his farm or how large his expenses were. Manley paid the state £10,000 a year and is said to have made £14,000 during the six years that he farmed the Posts.[6] In 1659 the rent was raised to £14,000[7] a year, and in 1660 there was a further advance to £21,500.[8] Of this £21,500 the Duke of York received £16,117 and the rest was spent largely in paying pensions and for a few minor

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 43 (21).
[2] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 12, app., pt. 4, p. 472.
[3] *Cal. T. P.*, 1697–1702, p. 289.
[4] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1641–43, p. 213.
[5] *Jo. H. C.*, 1648–51, p. 385.
[6] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1653–54, p. 365.
[7] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 15, app., pt. 1, p. 97.
[8] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 76 (53).

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expenses such as the payment of the Court Postmaster.[1] By the act of 1663, the net Post Office revenue was settled upon the Duke of York and his male heirs, with the exception of about £5000 a year, that being the amount of the pension charges on the revenue.[2] Certain deductions were made from the sum total of rent due, on account of the loss to the farmer from the activity of the interlopers, and the deficit was ordered to be made up from some other branch of the royal revenue.[3]

After James II took his involuntary departure from England, his pecuniary interest in the Post Office ceased. In 1690, an act of Parliament was passed, making the receipts from the Post Office payable into the Exchequer. They were to be used among other things to pay the interest on £250,000 borrowed to carry on the war.[4] From 1690 to 1710, the gross receipts rose from about £70,000 to £90,000 a year, no consideration being taken of the ups and downs caused by the French wars.[5] Complaint was made by the Lords that a large part of the postal revenue was wasted in paying pensions.[6] The Duchess of Cleveland received £4700 a year and William's Dutch General, the Duke of Schomberg, £4000 a year. Poor William Dockwra, the only one of the lot who had ever done anything for the Post Office, was at the end of the list with only £500 a year, terminable in 1697.[7] The sum total of money payable in pensions from the post revenue in 1695 was £21,200. The packet boats at the same time cost £13,000, and but £10,000 was spent for salaries and wages. The net revenue in 1694 was £59,972, the gross being about £88,000.[8]

During the eighteenth century the postal revenue still continued to be burdened with the pensions of favourites, deserving and undeserving. Queen Anne asked Parliament to settle £5000 a year upon the Duke of Marlborough and his heirs. The House of Commons replied that they very much regretted that they could not do

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1661–62, pp. 122, 245. [2] 15 Chas. II, c. 14.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1663–64, p. 598.
[4] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 13, app., pt. 5, p. 81.
[5] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 13, app., pt. 5, p. 362.
[6] Hist. MSS. Com., *Rep.*, 13, app., pt. 5, p. 406.
[7] Hist. MSS. Com., *House of Lords*, i, pp. 84–87.
[8] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, app., p. 93 (66).

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so for the Post Office was already paying too much in pensions. Probably the real reason for their refusal was the fact that the Duke and the war party were becoming unpopular. However, the Queen granted him the pension for her own life as she had a legal right to do. In 1713, the total amount of pensions payable from the postal revenue was £22,120. Before the act of 1711 was passed, the Scotch Office had paid £210 to each of the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. This continued to be granted after the two Offices were united.[1]

Our knowledge of the financial operations of the Post Office during the eighteenth century is much more extensive than during the seventeenth, owing to the reports made by the Post Office officials to the Parliamentary committees, appointed to enquire into abuses. The reports are all signed by the Accountant-General or his deputy, and are therefore as trustworthy as anything which can be obtained. They show that during the first half of the century, or more explicitly from 1717 to 1754, there was a very small annual increase in gross product, with an actual decrease in net product, and of course an increase in expenditure. In round numbers the average yearly gross product for the years 1725–29 was £179,000, the net product for the same period being £98,000 and the expenses of management £81,000. For the five years from 1750 to 1754, the average annual gross product was £207,000, net product £97,000, and expenses £110,000. It is not surprising that there was no increase worthy of the name in the gross product, for the period under consideration was a time of stagnation, an intermediate stage just before the dawn of the industrial revolution. The actual decrease in net product or, what amounts to the same thing, the increase in expenses of management, is due largely to the abuse of the franking privilege, the large amounts received in fees and emoluments, the extraordinary way in which the packet service was mismanaged, and the losses and increased expense due to war. Enough has been said about all but the last of these causes. The Post Office suffered most during war from increased expenses and direct losses in connection with the sailing packets. The placing of these upon a war footing involved considerable increased cost.

[1] *Cal. T. P.*, 1708–14, p. 20.

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In the second place, extra boats were used for political purposes in addition to those regularly employed, and it was customary for the Post Office to make good to the owners all damages inflicted by the enemy. From 1725 to 1739, the expenses of the Post Office averaged £80,000 or £90,000 a year. Then came the War of the Austrian Succession, when the expenses averaged £105,000 per year from 1745 to 1749. The five following years being a period of peace, the average annual expenses were £110,000, while the Seven Years' War brought them up to £147,000. It may be thought that expenses should become normal again when war has ceased, but it has generally proved to be the rule that although peace brings a decrease, yet the expenditure does not fall quite so low as before the war.

From 1755 to the end of the century there is a marked rise both in gross and net receipts and a comparative diminution in expenses. The gross average annual product from 1755 to 1759 was £228,000, from 1790 to 1794 it was £602,000. For the five years from 1755 to 1759 the average yearly net product was £81,000, from 1790 to 1794 it was £375,000, while expenses had risen for the same periods only from £147,000 to £227,000. The following table shows the average yearly increase or decrease in gross product, expenses, and net products for the six five-year periods from 1765 to 1794. The increases or decreases are given in the form of percentages, each five-year period being compared with the preceding period.[1]

	Gross product	*Expenses*	*Net product*
1765–69	17% increase	22% decrease	76% increase
1770–74	11 "	27 increase	unchanged
1775–79	12 "	30 "	"
1780–84	19 "	37 "	"
1785–89 [2]	21 "	21 decrease	90% increase
1790–94	24 "	14 increase	30% "

The net product from both the Scotch and Irish Posts was remitted to England. These receipts did not amount to much as compared with those from the English Post. Earl Temple, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in writing to Grenville in 1784, said that the

[1] For the gross product, net product, and expenses for each year, see Appendix, pp. 243, 244, 245, Tables I, II.

[2] Rates were increased in 1784.

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Irish post "had never paid £8000 a year clear of expenses."[1] In 1796, the gross product was £26,949 and the expenses of management £8718. Of the net product, £6651 were retained, being placed to the credit of Great Britain for returned and missent letters and for the £4000 which the Irish Post was entitled to receive in lieu of the receipts from the Holyhead packet boats. The remaining £11,579 were sent to the general Post Office. The Scotch Posts did considerably better. The gross product in 1796 was £69,338, the expenses of management £14,346, for returned letters £1206, and the net product sent to the General Office was £54,265.

The time had long since passed when the London-Dover road was the most important in the kingdom and when the receipts from foreign exceeded those from inland letters. As late as 1653, when contracts were called for from those wishing to farm the posts, the amount offered in one instance was almost as great for the foreign as for the inland post. The average annual gross product from the foreign post for the period 1785–89 was £61,431, the expenses £32,169 and the net product £29,262. For the period from 1790 to 1794 there was a small increase to £65,497 for gross product, £34,277 for expenses, and £31,200 for net product.[2]

The receipts from the London Penny Post were never an important factor in postal finance but it had always paid for itself and given a reasonable surplus. Its importance was due more to its social value in affording a cheaper letter rate and a speedier postal service than the General Post. The average yearly gross product from 1785–94 was £10,508, expenses £5177, and net product £5331. After Johnson had improved it so much, it produced a yearly average gross product from 1795 to 1797 of £26,283. Expenses averaged £18,960 and net product £7323.

In the seventeenth century the receipts from bye and cross post letters amounted to very little. So little was expected from them that no provision was made for checking the postage on them. It was taken for granted that all letters would pass to, from, or through London. In 1720 they brought in only £3700. Allen had

[1] Hist. MSS. Com., *Dropmore*, i, p. 179.
[2] *Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Rep. Com.*, ii, 222, p. 93.

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done much to increase the revenue, but it was not until the last part of the eighteenth century that the increase was at all marked. From 1780 to 1784, the average annual gross product was £77,911, expenses £12,346 and net product £65,565. From 1785 to 1789, these had increased respectively to £104,817, £11,589, and £93,228, and from 1790 to 1794 to £140,974, £15,030, and £125,944. The small expense for these letters is explained by the fact that the separate department for bye and cross post letters was debited with only a portion of the total cost, the larger part being carried by the general establishment.[1]

The financial history of the Post Office from the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1838 is a rather depressing record.[2] From 1805 until 1820 both the gross and net receipts had increased steadily although not rapidly, but for the remainder of the period the revenue was practically stationary. During the five-year periods, 1820–24 and 1830–34, there had been a decrease in gross receipts, and during the latter of these periods the net receipts had been kept a little ahead of the five-year period 1815–19 only by a decrease in expenditure.

The annual gross receipts from Scotland had increased from £117,108 during the period 1800–04 to £204,481 during the period 1830–34, the annual net receipts for the same periods being £98,156 and £149,752. The relatively large increase in expenses from £18,952 to £54,729 had been due largely to the payment of mail coach tolls after 1814, amounting to something under £20,000 a year.[3] Ireland started with a smaller gross revenue, £92,745 a year during the period 1800–04, but a larger annual expenditure £64,368,[4] and comparatively small net receipts of £28,377. Gross receipts, expenses, and net receipts had increased slowly throughout the first thirty-four years of the nineteenth century with the exception of the period 1820–24. For the five years from 1830 to 1834 inclusive they amounted to £244,098, £108,898, and £135,200 respectively.[5]

[1] *Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Rep. Com.*, ii, 222, p. 91.

[2] See Appendix, p. 246, Table III; p. 247, Table IV.

[3] See Appendix, p. 248, Table V.

[4] Ireland had paid for mail coach tolls from the first and this partly explains the relatively high expenditure.

[5] See Appendix, p. 248, Table V.

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The increases in rates in 1801, 1805, and 1812 had not produced the desired and expected results. The increase in 1801 had been estimated to produce £150,000 but results showed that this estimate was too large by £35,000. In 1805, the additional penny had resulted in an increase of only £136,000, inclusive of any natural increase of revenue, although it had been estimated to produce £230,000. The third increase in rates in 1812 proved even less productive. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he expected it to produce £200,000. As a matter of fact the revenue increased only £77,892 in amount. The fact of the matter was that rates were already so high that an increase only led to greater efforts to evade the payment of postage. As a system of taxation the Post Office had become rigid. It could yield no more with postage as high as it had been forced by the acts of 1801 and 1805. But, considered primarily as a taxing medium, and it had been considered as such for 200 years, it could hardly be called a failure. We flatter ourselves that our idea of the Post Office is broader in its scope and more utilitarian in its object but we have the good fortune to live several generations after 1840. What England demanded was revenue and still more revenue, and a postal system which could produce £70 net for every £100 collected had some excuse for its existence.

Rowland Hill has pointed out that from 1815 to 1835 the population had increased from 19,552,000 to 25,605,000 while the net revenue from the Post Office had remained practically stationary. He said nothing, however, about the industrial depression of the country during that period nor of the political and economic crisis through which England was passing. He referred to the great increase in the postal revenue of the United States during the same period; on the one hand, a nation with immense natural resources and a population doubling itself every generation, and on the other hand, a people inhabiting two small islands, making heroic efforts to recover from a most burdensome war.

With the introduction of penny postage the gross revenue of the Post Office fell from £2,390,763 in 1840 to £1,359,466 in 1841, and did not fully recover from the decreased postage rates for twelve years. The cost of management, on the other hand, increased only

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from £756,999 in 1840 to £858,677 in 1841. But the financial loss is shown most plainly in the falling off in net revenue from £1,633,764 to £500,789. If we exclude packet expenses, and such was the practice until 1858, the net revenue did not again reach the maximum figure of high postage days until 1862. Including packet expenses we find that the net revenue did not fully recover until the early seventies. The average yearly gross revenue for the period from 1841–45 was £1,658,214, expenditure £1,001,405, and the net revenue £656,809. These all increased steadily and on the whole proportionately until 1860, the average yearly figures for the preceding five years being £3,135,587, £1,785,911, and £1,349,676. In 1858 the packet expenses are included under cost of management and their enormous increase from the beginning of the century sadly depleted the net revenue. It seems more advisable, however, not to include them until 1860 when the packets passed from the control of the Admiralty to that of the Post Office. The average gross revenue for the years 1861 to 1865 was £4,016,750, expenditure (including packets) £3,013,389, and net revenue £1,003,341. During the next quarter of a century these increased to £6,326,141, £4,019,423, and £2,306,718 respectively, exclusive of telegraph receipts and expenditures. For the five years ending 31st March, 1906, the average gross revenue was £15,926,905, expenditure £11,156,292, and net revenue £4,770,613.[1]

[1] See appendix, pp. 249, 250, 251, Table VI; p. 252, Table VII.

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CHAPTER IX

THE QUESTION OF MONOPOLY

THE question of the state's monopoly and the opposing efforts of the interlopers to break this monopoly resolves itself into a consideration of the way in which private letters were carried, for the public letters were entirely at the disposal of the state to be dealt with as it saw fit. From the sixteenth century there were several ways in which private letters might be conveyed. Within the kingdom they might be sent by the common carriers, friends, special messengers, or the Royal Posts. Letters sent abroad were carried by the Royal Posts, the Merchant Adventurers' Posts, the Strangers' Posts, and the Merchants' Posts while they lasted. The fact that private letters were conveyed by the Royal Posts is generally expressed in rather indefinite terms or by references to proclamations, but that they were actually so conveyed is entirely beyond doubt.[1] In 1585 a certain Mr. Lewkenor informed Walsingham that the post just landed had brought many letters directed to merchants, besides those for the Court and Government. He asked whether he might open those letters which were directed to suspected merchants.[2] This reference is of course to letters coming from abroad. The same holds true of inland letters, for in 1583 Randolph, the Postmaster-General, wrote to Walsingham, enclosing the names of those "who charge the posts with their private letters and commissions at a penny the mile." [3]

In 1591 the first proclamation affirming the government monopoly in the foreign posts was issued. All persons except the Postmaster-General and his deputies were forbidden "directly or indirectly to gather up, receive, bring in or carry out of this realm any letters or packets," the only exceptions being in the case of the

[1] G. Roberts, *Social History of the Southern Counties of England*, 1856, p. 508; Joyce, p. 4.
[2] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1581–90, p. 131.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1581–90, p. 228; 1598–1601, p. 427; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, p. 4.

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despatches of the principal Secretaries of State, of Ambassadors, and others sufficiently authorized. An appendix to the same proclamation commanded all mayors, bailiffs, sheriffs, justices, etc., and especially all searchers to be on the watch for men coming into or going out of the realm with packets or letters. In this last part of the proclamation we can see why it was thought necessary to restrict the carriage of letters to and from foreign countries to the Royal Posts. It was done that the Government might be able to discover any treasonable or seditious correspondence. This did not always remain the object of the state in restricting competition but was succeeded later by other and different motives. In order that there might be no doubt about the whole question, the Postmaster-General received word from the Council to inform the London merchants, foreigners as well as British subjects and all others whom it might concern, that they should no longer employ any others to carry their letters than those legally appointed in accordance with the terms of the proclamation.[1]

In 1602 the first order concerning the despatch of private letters within the kingdom was issued to the Royal Posts. "The Posts for the Queen's immediate service"[2] were allowed to carry only state despatches, directed by members of the council, the Postmaster-General and certain officials. Such despatches when sent by the regular posts were to be forwarded immediately. The letters of all other persons allowed to write by post must wait for the regular departure of the postmen. In the orders to the posts issued in 1609, the first article reads as follows: "No pacquets or letters shall be sent by the Posts or bind any Post to ride therewith but those on Our special affairs."[3] The first part of this is certainly strong but it is modified by the succeeding clause "nor bind any Post to ride therewith." Evidently he might if he wished, and he would probably hesitate longer over a state packet for the conveyance of which he was never assured of anything than over a private letter for which he was certain of his pay.

It was the custom after 1609 to follow the appointment of every

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, p. 4; app., p. 36 (14).

[2] By "Posts for the Queen's immediate service" was probably meant the special messengers attached to the Court.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547–65, pp. 215–77; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, app., p. 42 (20).

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new Postmaster-General with a proclamation assigning him and his deputies the sole privilege of carrying all letters and reading anathema upon all interlopers.[1] Thus King James favoured Stanhope, his Postmaster-General, with a grant of monopoly.[2] On de Quester's appointment as Foreign Postmaster-General a proclamation was issued, forbidding any but his agents from having anything to do with foreign letters.[3] In spite of the improvements which he inaugurated, we find him asking the King a few years later to renew his patent of monopoly and his request was granted.[4] He was evidently suffering from competition. But the Merchant Adventurers' Posts were not yet dead and their Postmaster, Billingsley, abetted by the House of Commons,[5] gave de Quester so much trouble that he was imprisoned by the Council's order.[6]

In the meantime the postmen on the London-Plymouth road had petitioned the Council that they alone should carry the letters and despatches of the merchants over their road. They said they had so improved the service between London and Plymouth that letters were now despatched between the two cities in three days and an answer might be received within one week from the time of first writing. Their complaint was against a certain Samuel Jude, who had undertaken the conveyance of the London merchants' letters. Jude himself acknowledged this, but said that he had never meddled with the "through" post by which he meant the travellers' post.[7]

So long as the Royal Posts did not give satisfaction, competition was inevitable. Under Witherings they had improved so much that what competition there was, received no support from the London merchants. In 1633 they addressed a petition to the King, praying that he would protect Witherings from some strangers in London,

[1] Letters carried by a friend or special messenger or a common carrier were excepted.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, app., p. 42 (20).

[3] *Ibid.*, 1591–94, p. 401. [4] *Ibid.*, 1627–28, pp. 511–22.

[5] The House had already shown its interest in postal affairs by summoning postmasters before the Committee of Grievances in 1624 (*Jo. H. C.*, 1547–1628, pp. 689–774).

[6] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1628–29, p. 177. [7] *Ibid.*, 1625–49, p. 367; 1629–31, p. 200.

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who had set up posts of their own. They pointed out how he, acting with some foreign postmasters, had set up packet posts, travelling day and night. By means of these, letters were conveyed between London and Antwerp in three days, while the messengers needed from eight to fourteen days to travel the same distance.[1] The common carriers were giving trouble in the despatch of inland letters at the same time that competition in the foreign posts was attracting attention.[2] It was their custom to send their carts on ahead while they lingered to collect letters. After the collection they hastened on, leaving their carts behind, and delivered the letters on the way. It was provided that no carrier should stay longer than eight hours in a place after his cart had left it, or arrive in any place eight hours ahead of it.[3] As long as their speed was governed by that of their lumbering carts over the wretched roads, no fear was felt that their competition would prove troublesome.

With the growing strength of Parliament, more and more opposition was made to the grants of monopoly and their enforcement. In 1642 the House of Commons passed a resolution "affirming that the taking of the letters from the several carriers and the several restraints and imprisonments of Grover, Chapman, Cotton, and Mackerill are against the law." The House proceeded to state that these several persons should have reparation and damages from Coke, Windebank, and Witherings.[4] Four years later a report was made by Justices Pheasant and Rolls on Witherings' patent.[5] They held that the clause of restraint in the grant to Witherings was void.[6] This decision was quite in accordance with the views of Parliament when they opposed the King and all his works. But after Parliament had obtained control of the Posts, "the President and Governors of the Poor of the City of London" proposed to the Common Council that the City should establish a postal system in order to raise money for the relief of the poor in London. A committee was appointed to inform Warwick, Prideaux, and Witherings

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1633–34, p. 39. [2] *Ibid.*, 1637–38, pp. 22, 171, 177, 183.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1637–38, p. 193; *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, app., p. 58 (37).
[4] *Jo. H. C.*, 1640–42, p. 722.
[5] These were the same judges who had decided in favour of Stanhope's patent in Stanhope *v.* Witherings.
[6] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, app., p. 67 (42).

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of their intention. At the same time an attempt to lay a petition before Parliament on the question failed. Counsel's advice was sought and obtained in favour of the undertaking and in 1650 the Committee received orders to settle the stages. At the end of six weeks they had established postal communications with Scotland and other places. Complaint was made to Parliament, and the Commons passed a resolution "that the office of Postmaster, inland and foreign, is and ought to be in the sole power and disposal of the Parliament." The same year the city posts were suppressed.[1]

Oxenbridge and his friends who had set up posts of their own gave Prideaux and Manley the hardest fight that any Postmaster-General ever had to encounter from interlopers. Joyce says that Oxenbridge had acted as Prideaux' deputy.[2] If this is so, he was soon up in arms against his superior. In accordance with the judicial decision that the clause in Witherings' patent giving him a monopoly of the carriage of letters was void, Oxenbridge, Blackwall, Thomson, and Malyn had undertaken the private conveyance of letters and had set up posts of their own. Prideaux had charged 6*d.* for each letter and had organized weekly posts from and to London. Oxenbridge charged only 3*d.* and his posts went from and to London three times a week. Prideaux then did the same and set up posters announcing that the interlopers' posts would be stopped. His agents assaulted Oxenbridge's servants and killed one of them. He also stopped his rival's mails on Sundays but allowed his own to proceed as on other days. In addition to his regular tri-weekly mails, Oxenbridge provided packet boats for Ireland and intended to settle stages between London and Yarmouth and the other places named by the Council of State.[3] To proceed in Oxenbridge's own words: "Suddenly contracts were called for. We offered £9100 a year through Ben Andrews, £800 more than was offered by Manley, yet Colonel Rich allowed Manley to take advantage of an offer made by Kendall then absent and not privy to it for £10,000 a year. Consideration had been offered by Council, but Manley had broken into our offices, taken letters, and had forbidden us from

[1] Chas. Knight, *London*, 1842, iii, p. 276; R. R. Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, 1894, pp. 322–23.

[2] Joyce, p. 29.

[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1653–54, pp. 22–24, 372. See p. 33, note.

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having anything to do with the post." An order of the Council of State, bearing the same date as the grant to Manley, was sent to Oxenbridge and his friends, informing them that Manley had been given the sole right to the inland and foreign letter offices.[1] This did not end the controversy, for six months later we find Oxenbridge and Thomson complaining that a monopoly in carrying letters had been given to Manley. They claimed that all who wished should be allowed to carry letters at the ordinary rates.[2]

Of all the interlopers up to the middle of the seventeenth century, Oxenbridge had proved himself by far the ablest. From the point of view of the legal decision of 1646 and the position of Parliament before 1640, his position was unassailable. With the present policy of the Post Office in view, his actions will probably be condemned by the majority. But in 1650 conditions were entirely different. Before 1635 the state had either tacitly allowed the carriage of private letters to the profit of the postmen or had officially taken over such carriage; but in this case it was largely for the purpose of keeping in touch with the plots of the times. For 200 years after 1635 the idea was to make money from the conveyance of private letters. The effects of Oxenbridge's efforts were certainly beneficial if we are to believe his own story. Prideaux had been forced to cut his rates in half in order to meet competition. The credit for this must lie with the interloper rather than with the monopolist.

At the same time that Oxenbridge was giving so much trouble, letters were being carried by private hands in Bury, Dover, and Norwich. The offenders were summoned before the council for contempt and severely reprimanded.[3] Petitions came from Thetford and Norwich complaining that their messenger had been summoned to present himself before the Council within twenty-four hours and had to travel 100 miles within that time, an impossibility in the opinion of the petitioners.[4] As late as 1635, Prideaux, the Attorney-General, gave his opinion that Parliament's monopolistic resolution of that year affected only the office of Postmaster-General and not the carrying of letters.[5] Perhaps this was only a

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1652–53, p. 456. [2] *Ibid.*, 1653–54, p. 372.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1653–54, p. 177. [4] *Ibid.*, 1653–54, p. 25. [5] *Ibid.*, 1652–53, pp. 109–110.

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bit of spite on his part after Manley had succeeded to his old position.

The usual monopolistic powers, hitherto granted by proclamation, were embodied in the first act of Parliament, establishing the postal system for England, Ireland, and Scotland in 1657. The Postmaster-General was given the sole power to take up, carry and convey all letters and packets from and to all parts of the Commonwealth and to any place beyond the seas where he might establish posts. He alone was to employ foot posts, horse posts, and packet boats. Some exceptions were made to these general rules. Letters were allowed to be conveyed by carriers so long as they were carried in their carts or on their pack-horses. The other exceptions were in the case of letters of advice sent by merchants in their ships and proceeding no farther than the ships themselves, and also in the case of a letter sent by a special messenger on the affairs of the sender, and in the case of a letter sent by a friend. Penalties were attached for disobedience to this part of the act, one half of the fine to go to the informer.[1] The same provisions were enacted almost word for word in the act of 1660, with the addition that letters might be carried by any one between any place and the nearest post road for delivery to the postman.[2]

After the restoration and for some months before the act of 1660 was passed, Bishop had acted as farmer of the posts. In the absence of any law on the subject, the King's proclamation granting a monopoly[3] to Bishop was freely disregarded.[4] Competing posts to and from London sprang up, lessening the receipts which he would otherwise have obtained from the carriage of letters. It was calculated that during the three months before these interlopers could be suppressed Bishop lost £500 through them, and orders were given to allow him an abatement in his rent to that amount.[5]

In 1663 a certain Thomas Ibson attempted to come to an agreement with the postmasters on the Holyhead road. He wished to

[1] Scobell, *Collect.*, pt. ii, pp. 511–13.
[2] 12 Ch. II, c. 35.
[3] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1660–61, p. 475.
[4] In 1659 a book was published by John Hill, entitled *A Penny Post — A vindication of the Liberty of every Englishman in carrying merchants and other men's letters against any restraints of farmers of such employments* (*Notes and Queries*, 6th ser., xi, p. 37).
[5] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, app., p. 82 (57).

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have the privilege of horsing travellers and made an offer to the postmasters to take charge of the post houses if they would allow him to proceed. He told them that they should make an attempt to have their salaries restored to their old value by Bishop, who had raised so much from them by fines and lowering their salaries. The Postmaster-General told his deputies that if they dared to treat with the "would-be" interloper he would dismiss them, and the whole thing fell through.[1] At the same time a warrant was issued by the Council to mayors and other officials to search for and apprehend all persons carrying letters for hire, without licence from the Postmaster-General.[2] Nevertheless interloping did not cease, as is shown by the complaints from the postmasters.[3]

In the proclamation following the appointment of O'Neale as Postmaster-General in 1663, it was ordered that no one should dare to detain or open a letter not addressed to himself unless under a warrant from one of the Secretaries of State. An exception was made in the case of letters carried by unauthorized persons. Such letters should be seized and sent to the Privy Council. In later proclamations it was provided that they might be sent also to one of the Secretaries of State in order that the persons sending or conveying them might be punished.[4]

After Lord Arlington's appointment as Postmaster-General, he addressed a petition to the Duke of York complaining "that carriers, proprietors of stage coaches and others take upon themselves to collect letters to an incredible number and on some stages double what the post brings." On account of this he pointed out to His Royal Highness that a considerable part of his revenue was lost. This was quite true since the Post Office had ceased to be farmed and the whole net revenue went to the Duke.[5] This was followed the same year by a proclamation forbidding any one to collect or carry letters without the authority of the Postmasters-General. Carriers were forbidden to convey any letters which were not on matters relating to goods in their carts. Shipmasters must carry no letters beyond the first stage after their arrival in England with the

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1663–64, pp. 8, 18.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1663–64, p. 145.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1663–64, p. 402.
[4] *Rep. Com.*, 1844, xiv, 601, app., p. 88 (61).
[5] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1668–69, p. 285.

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exception of the letters of merchants and owners. Searchers were appointed to see that the proclamation was enforced.[1] It was even proposed to suppress all hackney coaches, the principal reason given being that they decreased the value of the Duke's monopoly by carrying multitudes of letters.[2]

It is a curious and interesting fact that for a short time London had a Half Penny Post, established in 1708 by a Mr. Povey in opposition to the regular Penny Post. The idea was much the same as that of Dockwra's although Povey seems to have been a far more belligerent individual than his forerunner in the work. The Postmasters-General tried to come to some compromise with him but he would not listen to them. Finally legal action was brought against him, based on the monopoly granted by the act of 1660. Povey lost the suit and his project fell through.[3] His was the last attempt to organize a regular system of competing posts. During the remainder of the eighteenth century, improvements in postal communications disarmed much of the former opposition. Considerable damage was received from the superior speed with which letters might be sent by coaches but, after they were adopted by the Post Office, matters naturally adjusted themselves. Private vessels continued to convey letters which had not paid the rates prescribed in such cases by the act of 1711, but this breach of the law was tolerated by the Post Office.[4]

Before the nineteenth century, opposition to the government monopoly had taken the form of competing systems of communication, started primarily for the sake of making money and at the same time vindicating the principle of competition. During the first forty years of the nineteenth century there was no opposition to the Post Office as a monopoly. The wide-spread dissatisfaction was due to the exorbitant rates of postage and this dissatisfaction expressed itself in attempts to evade these rates but, with the exception of individual messengers and carriers, there was no competing system of postal communication established. Opposition took the form of evasion of postage payments by legal and illegal means. The various exceptions to the government monopoly con-

[1] *Cal. S. P. D.*, 1668–69, p. 376. [2] *Ibid.*, 1672–73, p. 64.
[3] Knight, *London*, 1842, iii, p. 282; Joyce, pp. 121–23. [4] Joyce, p. 329.

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tinued unchanged[1] until still further modified in 1837. The additional modifications were in the case of commissions and returns, affidavits, writs and legal proceedings, and letters sent out of the United Kingdom by private vessels.[2] The penalty for infringing upon the postal monopoly was placed at £5 for every offence or £100 a week if the offence was continued.[3]

During the official postal year from July 1831 to July 1832, there were 133 successful prosecutions for illegally sending and conveying letters. The fines collected amounted to £1635, the costs paid by defendants to £1085. The prosecutions were generally for a few letters only and the great majority of the cases were brought in Manchester. In the case of forty-one additional actions, the Postmaster-General did not enforce the penalties, certain explanations having been given.[4] Rowland Hill thought that the conveyance of letters by private and unauthorized people was very widespread and the Solicitor of the Post Office agreed with him.[5]

The reports of the Committee appointed to enquire into the condition of the Post Office and to hear the opinions of officials and the public concerning the introduction of Penny Postage disclosed an amazing state of affairs. The opinion that evasion of postage was more or less general had been held by the public for some time as well as by a few of the Post Office officials[6] but, after the evidence upon the question was published, there was no longer any doubt that the views of the public were correct. Some difficulty had been anticipated that men who had violated the law of the land would prefer not to confess their misdeeds before a Parliamentary Committee. They were accordingly assured that any evidence given would not be used against them, and the names of some were expressed by letters only, when the reports were published.

The means by which postage rates were evaded may be conveniently grouped under two main heads, legal and illegal. The most

[1] 9 Anne, c. 10; 42 Geo. III, c. 81; 46 Geo. III, c. 92; 53 Geo. III, c. 58; 5 Geo. IV, c. 20.

[2] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 33. [3] 7 Wm. IV and 1 Vict., c. 36.

[4] *Acc. & P.*, 1834, xlix, 19, pp. 2–7.

[5] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, pp. 17, 23.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, questions 234, 2883, 4692, 10870–74; rep. 1, app., pp. 427, 431, 433; rep. 2, p. 32.

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common methods of evading postage in whole or in part by legal means were: —

By the use of Parliamentary and Official franks.[1]

By enclosing invoices and other communications in goods.[2]

By the use of codes and signals expressed by sending particular newspapers or, when something in the nature of news or reports was to be communicated to many, an advertisement or report was printed in a newspaper and the newspapers were sent.[3]

By means of a letter or package sent to a mercantile house with many letters on one sheet of paper for other people. These were delivered by messengers. Money was sometimes sent in the same way.[4]

Many factors in Ireland had circulars printed, which went free, as newspapers. Their correspondents were distinguished by numbers and opposite the numbers were printed the communications for each particular person.[5]

The majority of letters which paid no postage or only partial postage were sent illegally, most of them by carriers. "A. B." said that in 1836 his mercantile house sent 2068 letters by post and 5861 by other means, principally by carriers, for one penny each.[6] "C. D." testified that carriers called once or twice a day at his house and that they received from 100 to 150 letters a week from him. Sometimes the carriers delivered the letters on foot, sometimes they went by coach.[7] "E. F.'s" letters were carried by newsmen, who distributed the local newspaper.[8] "G. H.," a carrier from Scotland, said that there were six others working with him and that they delivered about 700 letters and parcels a day, for which they received *1d.* or *2d.* each.[9] Letters were also illegally conveyed: —

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 3452, 3754–56, 4330–33, 4152, 6059, 6204, 6971, 8051, 9122–30, 10481, 5486–92–95, 4934–45, 5536, 3953, 6174–87. By this means Dr. Dionysius Lardner sent and received the greater part of an extensive literary correspondence (qs. 5487–96).

[2] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 3206–07, 3368–69, 3516–45, 3872, 4080, 4116–17, 4906, 5434, 6895, 7740, 7742–50, 7242–48. [3] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 3923, 6683, 7419–23.

[4] *Ibid.*, qs. 3212–13, 3924–28, 3377–81, 3879–82, 4504, 6928, 7867–82, 5613–18, 4074. 4873–90, 3520, 7327. [5] *Ibid.*, rep. 1, 9, p. 427. [6] *Ibid.*, qs. 2265, 2279.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 2697, 2699, 2703. [8] *Ibid.*, qs. 4229.

[9] *Ibid.*, qs. 5125–26. In Walsall not 1-50 part of the letters sent to and from neighbouring places went by post (qs. 5681–5789).

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By "free-packets," containing the patterns and correspondence of merchants, which the coachmen carried free except for the booking fee of 4*d*.[1]

In warehousemen's bales and parcels.[2]

In weavers' bags, especially near Glasgow. These were bags containing work for the weavers, sent by and returned to the manufacturers.[3]

By "family-boxes." Students at college in Glasgow and Edinburgh were accustomed to receive boxes of provisions, etc., from home. The neighbours made use of them to carry letters.[4]

By coachmen, guards, travellers and private individuals.[5]

By vans, railways, stage-coaches, steamboats, and every conceivable means.[6]

By writing in newspapers, sometimes with invisible ink or by enclosing accounts or letters in them.[7]

About half of the letters and parcels sent to the seaports for transmission to foreign parts by private ships did not go through the Post Office,[8] and this practice was more or less winked at by the authorities.[9] The letters from Liverpool for the United States numbered 122,000 a year, but only 69,000 of these passed through the Post Office.[10]

Since the Post Office has adopted the policy of charging low uniform rates of postage there has been no concerted attempt to infringe upon its monopoly. The dissatisfied do not now attempt to establish competing posts nor to evade the payment of the legal rates. Any pressure which may be brought to remedy real or supposed grievances takes the form of an attempt to influence the department itself. It is true that a private messenger service was established for the delivery of letters, but the promoters of that service seem to have been unaware of the fact that they were acting in violation of the law, and a satisfactory agreement with the department was soon concluded. As a matter of fact, it is a question

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx, qs. 4195–96, 4205.
[2] *Ibid.*, qs. 3550, 4065, 4194, 6947.
[3] *Ibid.*, qs. 5257–59.
[4] *Ibid.*, qs. 5265.
[5] *Ibid.*, qs. 6716, 10371.
[6] *Ibid.*, qs. 6514.
[7] *Ibid.*, qs. 497, 3008, 5525–26, 5329, 5186–88, 5983, 8962, 10,021; app. to part 2, p. 34.
[8] *Ibid.*, pt. 1, pp. 195–99, 204–30, 346, 351, 431.
[9] *Ibid.*, pt. 1, pp. 195–99.
[10] *Ibid.*, pt. 1, p. 364.

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whether succeeding governments have not been too subservient in granting the demands of certain sections of the people, notably in connection with the telegraph and telephone systems and the question of guarantees. The position of a government which has abandoned the principle that any extension of services or change in postal policy shall be based upon present or anticipated financial success must necessarily be a difficult one.

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CHAPTER X

THE TELEGRAPH SYSTEM AS A BRANCH OF THE POSTAL DEPARTMENT

PREVIOUS to the acquisition of the telegraphs by the state, the different telegraphic companies carried on their business in comparative harmony, a harmony which was occasionally disturbed by the entrance into the field of competition of new claimants for the confidence of the public. By far the most important of these companies in 1855 were the Electric and International, and the British and Irish Magnetic, controlling between them about 8500 miles of line and having 600 stations open to the public. During the succeeding ten years, by the growth of the old companies and an increase in the number of the new, the number of miles of line increased to 16,000, of telegraph stations to 2040. The number of public messages sent in 1855 was a little more than one million, in 1860 nearly two millions, and in 1865 over four millions and a half. The rates for a message of twenty words varied from 1*s.* for a distance under fifty miles, plus 1*s.* for each additional fifty miles, to 4*s.* for a distance over 150 miles and 5*s.* to Dublin, including free delivery within half a mile from the telegraph office.[1]

In 1860 a competing company, the London District Telegraph Company, started operations in the Metropolitan District, and offered a low rate of 6*d.* a message. In the following year a far more dangerous rival, the United Kingdom Telegraph Company, announced that henceforth it would charge a uniform shilling rate irrespective of distance. Four years later both of these companies fell into line, forced according to some by the unfair tactics of their competitors, according to others by the utter impossibility of making both ends meet, while charging a uniform rate irrespective of distance. The tariff agreed to in 1865 was as follows: —

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1867–68, xli, 202, pp. 43, 73, 74.

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For a distance not exceeding 100 miles	1*s.*
from 100 to 200 miles	1*s.* 6*d.*
beyond 200 miles	2*s.*

Between Great Britain and Ireland from 3*s.* to 6*s.*

In some cases these rates applied only to wires of a single company, and, where a message was transmitted over the wires of two or more companies, an additional charge was made. Special rates were offered for press messages, the news being supplied by the agency of the intelligence department of the telegraph companies.[1]

The earliest proposal for government ownership of the telegraphs seems to have originated with Thomas Allan, the same Allan who was later instrumental in establishing the United Kingdom Telegraph Company. In 1854 he submitted arguments to the government through Sir Rowland Hill in favour of the change, arguments which met with the approval of Lord Stanley, the President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. Ricardo, formerly Chairman of the International Electric Telegraph Company, and ex-member for Stoke. Two years later Mr. Barnes, an official in the Post Office Department, submitted to my Lords a plan "for the establishment in connection with the Post Office of a comprehensive scheme of electric telegraphs throughout the kingdom." In 1866, Lord Stanley, as Postmaster-General, in a letter to the Lords of the Treasury called their attention to the fact that the question of the propriety of the assumption by the government of the telegraphic systems of the Kingdom had been revived in the previous year by the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, and still more recently the proposition had been embodied in a petition from the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom. As he himself had for many years been in favour of such a change and found his opinion shared by more than one important body of public men, he directed Mr. Scudamore[2] to report whether, in his opinion, the telegraphs could be successfully operated by the Post Office, whether such operation would result in any advantages to the

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1867–68, xli, 202, pp. 87–88, 126; *Rep. Com.*, 1867–68, xi, 435, pp. 31, 68.

[2] Receiver and Accountant-General of the Post-Office.

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public over the present system by means of private companies, and whether it would entail upon the department any large expenditure beyond the purchase of existing rights.[1]

The report presented by Mr. Scudamore was strongly in favour of the control of the telegraphs by the Post Office, and is especially interesting in furnishing an abstract of the evils which the people considered that the companies were inflicting upon them. The most important of these evils, real or imaginary, were as follows: —

Exorbitant charges and a resulting failure to expand on the part of the system.

Delay and inaccuracy in the transmission of messages.

Failure to serve many important towns and communities.

Inconvenient situation, in many places, of the telegraph office, it being often at a considerable distance from the business centre of the town, especially when in the railway station.

Inconveniently short periods that offices are open in many places.

Wasteful competition between the companies.

The strongest argument against the existing condition was rather a result of competition than private ownership. In the more populous centres the companies very often had their telegraph offices at a very short distance from each other, being so situated as to compete for the public patronage, while other and more outlying portions of the town were quite unserved. The latter were thus made to suffer in order that favoured portions might enjoy the somewhat doubtful boon of competition. In order to show the failure to extend telegraphic facilities, Mr. Scudamore compiled a list of towns in England and Wales having an individual population of two thousand or more. In his own words "So far as telegraphic accommodation is concerned, while thirty per cent of the whole number of places named . . . are well served, forty per cent are indifferently served, twelve per cent badly served, and eighteen per cent, having an aggregate population of more than half a million persons, not served at all." By combining the telegraphic business with the postal service, there seemed every reason to suppose that its advantages could be more widely extended, the hours

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1867–68, xi, 435, p. 108; *Acc. & P.*, 1867–68, xli, 202, p. 7.

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of attendance increased, charges reduced, and facilities given for the transmission of money orders by telegraph.

Mr. Scudamore proposed to open telegraph offices in all places which had a population of 2000 and upwards and which already had money-order offices. All other post offices were empowered to receive telegrams, which were to be sent by post to the nearest telegraph office for transmission. The charge was to be made uniform at 1*s.* for twenty words and 6*d.* for each additional ten words, or part thereof. He judged that the whole of the property and rights of the telegraph companies might be purchased for a sum within £2,400,000, and £100,000 more would have to be spent in the extension of the service. His estimate for gross annual product was £676,000; annual charge, £81,250; working expenses, £456,000; surplus, £138,750.[1] Finally, his reply to Lord Stanley's question was in effect that the telegraph system might be beneficially worked by the Post Office, that there would be advantages thus obtained over any system of private ownership, and that the Post Office would have to bear no expense not amply covered by the revenue.[2] In fairness to Mr. Scudamore, it should be remembered that his original low estimate of the probable cost of the telegraph companies did not include Reuter's and other important companies. In addition, the strict monopoly conferred in 1869, with the necessary accompaniment of the purchase of all inland telegraph companies, entirely upset his original estimates. Finally, the decision to include the public telegraph business of the railways and the excessive price paid to the railway and telegraph companies should not be forgotten in contrasting the estimated price with that eventually paid for the acquisition of the telegraph systems in the United Kingdom.[3] Mr. Grimston, the Chairman of the Electric and International Telegraph Company, contended that the extension of telegraphic facilities to any considerable number of small towns and villages would involve a loss to the state by greatly increasing working expenses, that village post-

[1] In another place his estimate for gross revenue was £608,000; annual charge £105,000 on a purchase price of £3,000,000 with expenses for improvement; working expenses £425,000, and surplus £77,750 (*Acc. & P.*, 1867–68, xli, 202, pp. 145–47).

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 7–39.

[3] *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., ccxxviii, col. 215; cxcii, coll. 747–751.

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masters and postmistresses were totally unable to work the telegraphs, and that consolidation could be effected more advantageously by the companies themselves.[1]

In 1868, the Postmaster-General was given authority by act of Parliament to purchase the undertakings of the telegraph companies and also the interests of the railways in the conveyance of public messages, together with a perpetual way-leave for telegraphic purposes over the properties of the railway companies. Any telegraph company, with the authority of two thirds of the votes of its shareholders, was empowered to sell to the Postmaster-General all or any portion of its undertaking. When the Postmaster-General had acquired the property of any telegraph company, he must also, upon the request of any other company, purchase its undertaking, this privilege being extended also to the railways so far as telegraphs operated by them for transmitting public messages were concerned. The price paid for the Electric and International, the British and Irish Magnetic, and the United Kingdom Telegraph Companies was fixed at twenty years' purchase of their net profits for the year ending 30th June, 1868. In the case of the United Kingdom Telegraph Company additional sums were to be paid for the Hughes type-printing patent, for the estimated aggregate value of its ordinary share capital as determined by its highest quotation on any day between the 1st and 25th days of June, 1868, for compensation for the loss of prospective profits on its ordinary shares, and any sum that might be determined as loss for its attempt to establish a uniform shilling rate. Every officer or clerk of the companies who had been in receipt of a salary for not less than five years or of remuneration amounting to not less than £50 a year for not less than seven years, if he received no offer from the Postmaster-General of an appointment in the telegraphic department of the Post Office equal in the opinion of an arbitrator to his former position, was entitled to receive an annuity equal to two thirds of his annual emolument if he had been in service twenty years, such annuity to be diminished by one twentieth for every year less than twenty. Those entering the service of the Postmaster-General were entitled to

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1867–68, xli, 202, p. 131.

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count their past continuous years of service with the companies as years in the service of the Crown.

For the most part all the telegraph apparatus belonging to the railway companies and all belonging to the telegraph companies on the railway lines necessary for the private business of the railways were handed over to the railways by the Postmaster-General free of charge. He was given the use, from telegraph stations not on the railway lines, of all the wires of the telegraph companies on the lines employed exclusively in the public telegraph business. The railways might affix wires to the posts of the Postmaster-General on the line, and in like manner he might require the railways to affix wires to their own posts for the use of the Post Office or erect new posts and wires. Finally the railways were required to act as agents of the Postmaster-General, if required, for receiving and transmitting messages. The railways as a rule succeeded in driving a very sharp bargain with the Government for the purchase of their interests in the public telegraph business. The price paid was twenty years' purchase of the net receipts from public telegrams reckoned for the year ending 30th June, 1868, plus twenty times the increase in net receipts for the three preceding years or for such shorter period as the business of transmitting public telegrams had been undertaken. In addition, compensation was made for the rents, etc., payable to the railways by the telegraph companies, for the unexpired period of their respective agreements, for the right of way obtained by the Postmaster-General over the lands of the railways, for the loss of power on the part of the railways to grant way-leaves, for the value of the railways' reversionary interests (if any) in the transmission of public messages on the expiration of the agreements with the telegraph companies, and for any loss the railways might suffer in working their telegraph business as a separate concern. Finally the Postmaster-General was required to convey free of charge to any part of the United Kingdom all messages of the railways relating to their own private business.[1] The act empowering the Postmaster-General to purchase the undertakings of the telegraph companies did not confer upon the Post Office a monopoly in the transmission

[1] 31 and 32 Vict., c. 110.

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of telegrams, Mr. Scudamore himself declaring that such a monopoly was neither desirable nor did the Post Office wish it. The second act, however, declared that no telegraphic messages, except those sent from or to any place outside of the United Kingdom, should be transmitted by any telegraphic company for gain unless the company was in existence on the 22d of June, 1869, and was not for the time being acquired by the Postmaster-General, who should be required to purchase its undertaking upon demand.[1]

Mr. Scudamore's original estimate of the cost of acquisition of the telegraphs fell far short of the final expenditure; although it must be remembered that, when he proposed £2,500,000 as sufficient, he did not anticipate items of expense which later vastly increased the cost. Before the committee which reported in 1868 he advanced his original estimate to £6,000,000, and in the following year to £6,750,000, of which he considered about two thirds to be of the nature of good-will. The telegraph companies when first approached asked for twenty-five years' purchase of their prospective profits, and the Government offered to buy at the highest price realized on the Stock Exchange up to the 25th of May, with an addition of from 10 to 15 per cent for compulsory sale. The cost of the leading companies, based upon twenty years' purchase of the net profits for the year ending 30th June, 1868, was as follows: For the Electric and International, £2,933,826; for the British and Irish Magnetic, £1,243,536; for Reuter's, £726,000; for the United Kingdom Electric, £562,000; and for the Universal Private, £184,421, — a total of £5,650,047. Separate bargains followed with many smaller companies. The acts of 1868 and 1869 granted £8,000,000, for the purpose of purchasing the undertakings of the companies and the interests of the railways; £6,640,000 were spent in purchases, and £1,560,000 in renewals and extensions between 1868 and 1872.[2] The claims for compensation on the part of some

[1] 32 and 33 Vict., c. 75.

[2] *Rep. Com.*, 1867–68, xi, 435, p. 162; 1868–69, vi, 348, p. 11; 1867–68, xi, 435, p. 217; 1873, xxxix, 316, pp. 762–64; 1873, vii, 290, p. 95; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., cxcii, coll. 747–751, 1303–04.

According to figures furnished by Mr. Fowler in a speech in the House of Commons in 1868, the value of the capital and the debentures of the Electric and International at that time was £1,240,000 while the capital value of the British and Irish Magnetic

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of the railways were very excessive. The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway asked for £1,129,814, with interest, and £1 per wire per mile a year for all wires erected upon its right of way by or for the Post Office. By the terms of the award they obtained £169,197 and 1*s.* per mile per wire. The Great Eastern Railway presented a claim for £412,608, with interest, and £1 per mile per wire. Their claim was reduced to £73,315 and an annual payment of £200 for way-leave. In all, the capital sum of £10,880,571 was expended by the Government, necessitating an annual interest payment of £326,417, charged, not on the Post Office vote, but on the Consolidated Fund.[1]

When the Post Office acquired the telegraphs, a uniform rate was introduced of 1*s.* for twenty words or part thereof and 3*d.* for each additional five words or part thereof, exclusive of the names and addresses of sender and receiver, which were transmitted free. Delivery was free within a radius of one mile from the terminal telegraphic office, or within the limit of the town postal delivery when it contained a head office and the postal delivery extended more than a mile from it. Beyond the above limits the charge did not exceed 6*d.* per double mile or part thereof. When special delivery was not required beyond the free delivery, the message was sent free by the next ordinary postal delivery. The newspapers succeeded in having incorporated within the act a clause prohibiting a higher charge for press messages than 1*s.* for every one hundred words transmitted between 6 P.M. and 9 A.M., or 1*s.* for every seventy-five words between 9 A.M. and 6 P.M. when sent to a single address, the charge for the transmission of the same telegram to each additional address to be not greater than 2*d.*[2] On the day of transfer the Post Office was able to open about a thousand postal telegraph offices and nineteen hundred offices at railway stations where the railways dealt with the public messages as agents of the Postmaster-General. On the 31st of March, 1872, the system comprised more than five thousand offices (including nineteen hundred

was £534,000; of Reuter's Company, £266,000; of the United Kingdom Electric, £350,000, and of the London and Provincial, £65,000 (*Parl. Deb.* 3d ser., CXCV, coll. 747–751).

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1876, p. 10; *ibid.*, 1883, p. 9. [2] 31 and 32 Vict., c. 110.

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at railway stations), twenty-two thousand miles of line, with an aggregate of eighty-three thousand miles of wire, and more than six thousand instruments. A decided increase in the number of messages was the result. During the first year after the transfer there were nearly ten millions of messages, the second year twelve millions, and the third year fifteen millions, or more than double the number transmitted in 1869. The period from 1872 to the adoption of a sixpenny tariff in 1885 was one of steady progress. The number of new offices opened was not numerous, the increase having been only one thousand, but the improvements in existing connections were marked and the number of messages transmitted had increased to thirty-three millions. The new tariff rate was 6*d.* for twelve words or less, with a halfpenny for each additional word, but the old system of free addresses was abolished. Under the old tariff each figure was charged at a single rate. Under the new schedule five figures were counted as one word. A large proportion of telegrams were brought within the minimum sixpenny rate, while the average charge, which had been 1*s.* 1*d.* in 1885, was reduced to 8*d.* in 1886. The number of messages increased from thirty-three millions in 1884–85 to fifty millions in 1886–87. Four cables between France and England and one between France and the Jersey Isles were purchased by the governments of the two countries, two by the Belgian and English governments, two between Holland and England, and one between Germany and England, by the governments of the countries interested.[1]

Following the adoption of a uniform sixpenny rate the department has granted other facilities to the public, which, though popular enough, have undoubtedly tended to place the working of the telegraphs upon a less secure financial basis. In 1889, the issue of telegraphic money orders was begun as an experiment, and in the same year was extended to all head and branch post offices in the United Kingdom.[2] Two years later the Post Office ceased to require the repayment of the capital outlay on telegraph extensions made under guarantee, and the rural sanitary authorities were empowered to defray the cost of such extensions in places within

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1895, app., pp. 33–35; 1889, p. 13.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1890, p. 7.

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their districts.[1] For the six preceding years the average annual number of guaranteed telegraph offices was seventy-seven, and during the next five years the average annual number increased to 167. As part of the Jubilee concessions in 1897, the guarantors were required to pay only one half of the deficiency, with the result that during the following two years the average annual number of guaranteed telegraphic offices increased to 290. At the same time the free delivery limit was extended to three miles and a reduction was granted in the porterage charges beyond that distance. Finally, in 1905, the guarantee was reduced to one third of the loss incurred, the delivery charge being fixed at 3*d*. a mile for the distance beyond the three-mile limit, instead of the distance from the office of delivery.[2]

In 1896, the main routes from London having become crowded, especially by the telephone trunk lines, the principle of underground lines between the most important centres was sanctioned by the department. London and Birmingham were first connected, and the line was ultimately extended through Stafford to Warrington, where it joined existing underground wires between Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester. By 1905, underground wires were laid as far north as Glasgow through Carlisle, to be extended later to Edinburgh. At Manchester a junction was effected with a line passing through Bradford to Leeds. During the same year underground lines were completed from London to Chatham and from London westward toward Bristol, with the intention of extending it into Cornwall in order to secure communication with the Atlantic and Mediterranean cables.[3]

In 1875, England joined the other important European powers in a telegraphic agreement which went into effect in January of the following year. By this agreement each of the contracting parties agreed to devote special wires to international service, government telegrams to have precedence in transmission and to be forwarded in code if desired. Private telegrams could also be sent in code between those countries which allowed them, and the

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1892, p. 20; 54 and 55 Vict., c. 46.
[2] *Rep. P. G.*, 1900, p. 15; 1898, p. 19; 1906, pp. 1, 15.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1900, p. 15; 1902, p. 13; 1905, app., p. 99; 1906, p. 16.

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signatory powers agreed to pass them in transit, but each country reserved to itself the privilege of stopping any private telegram. For the purpose of making charges, any country might be divided into not more than two zones, and each of the signatory powers owed to the others an account of charges collected.[1] So far as foreign telegrams were concerned, the use of manufactured expressions in place of real words gave rise to considerable trouble in view of the fact that such combinations were difficult to transmit. In 1879, the languages which might be used for code words were reduced by common consent to English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and Latin. At the same time the use of proper names as code words was prohibited. This did not remove the evil, as the roots of words in one language with terminations in another were used. An official vocabulary was compiled by the International Telegraph Bureau, to become obligatory in 1898, but its publication in 1894 aroused considerable opposition, as many of the words were dangerously alike, and in 1896 the decision of the Paris Conference of 1890, by which the official vocabulary was to become compulsory for European telegrams in 1898, was rescinded. It was also decided that an enlarged vocabulary should be published by the International Bureau, but, owing to the action of the English delegates, the official vocabulary was not made compulsory at the meeting of the International Telegraph Conference in 1903, although artificial words were allowed if pronounceable in accordance with the usages of any one of the eight languages from which the ordinary code words might be selected. It was also decided to admit letter cipher at the rate of five letters to a word, and several countries agreed to lower their charges for the transmission of extra-European telegrams, the English delegates contending that the rates for such telegrams should be made the same as the rates for European telegrams.[2] In 1878, negotiations with the German and Netherland Telegraph Administrations resulted in a charge of 4*d.* a word being fixed as the rate between the United Kingdom and Germany and 3*d.* a word between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1876, lxxxiv [c. 1418], pp. 116–119.
[2] *Rep. P. G.*, 1904, pp. 15–22.

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In 1885, the following reductions in rates were announced :—[1]

To Russia	from 9*d.*	to 6½*d.* a word.
Spain	6*d.*	4½*d.*
Italy	5*d.*	4½*d.*
India	4*s.* 7*d.*	4*s.*

to be followed six years later by still greater reductions: —

To Austria	from 4½*d.*	to 3*d.* a word.
Hungary	4½*d.*	3*d.*
Italy	4½*d.*	3*d.*
Russia	6½*d.*	5½*d.*
Portugal	5½*d.*	4½*d.*
Sweden	5*d.*	4*d.*
Spain	4½*d.*	4*d.*
Canary Isles	1*s.* 7½*d.*	10*d.*

the minimum charge for a telegram being 10*d.* in all cases. The transmission of foreign money orders by telegraph was inaugurated in 1898 by the opening of an exchange with Germany and its extension shortly afterward to the other important European countries.[1]

In 1892, an attempt was made, curiously suggestive of Marconi's discovery, to transmit telegraph messages without a direct wire. The experiment was conducted between the island of Flat Holm in the Bristol Channel and the mainland, a distance of three miles. A wire was erected on the mainland parallel with one on the island, and, by means of strong vibratory currents sent through the former, signals were transmitted and messages exchanged. Three years later and before the practical value of the Flat Holm experiment had been substantiated, Mr. Marconi arrived in England to submit his plans to the Post Office. A private wire from Poldhu to Falmouth was provided for him on the usual rental terms, and it was announced that the Post Office would act as his agent for collecting messages to be transmitted by wireless telegraphy when he had proved the feasibility of his project. At the international con-

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1897, pp. 40–42; 1879, p. 21; 1886, p. 10; 1892, p. 19; 1900, p. 10.

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gress on wireless telegraphy held in Berlin in 1903 it was recommended that shore stations equipped with wireless apparatus should be bound to exchange messages with ships at sea without regard to the system of wireless telegraphy employed by the latter, that the rate of charge for the shore station should be subject to the approval of the state where it was situated, the rate of the ship to the approval of the state whose flag it carried, and that the working of wireless stations should be regulated so as to interfere with other stations as little as possible. In order to enable the Government to carry out the decision of the congress and to place wireless telegraphy under its control for strategic purposes, an act was passed in 1904 making it illegal to instal or work wireless telegraphic apparatus in the United Kingdom or on board a British ship in territorial waters without the licence of the Postmaster-General. The act was to be operative for two years only, but before its expiration, was extended until the 31st of December, 1909, before which it might again be renewed. Arrangements were also made for the collection and delivery of the telegrams of the Marconi Company by the post offices throughout the country. The company charges its usual rate, 6*d.* a word, and the Post Office in addition charges the ordinary inland rate.[1] The international agreement providing for compulsory communication between shore stations and ships was signed in 1906 in spite of the protests of the Marconi Company, Sir Edward Sassoon, and others, who contended that the agreement was unfair to the company and a mistake on the part of the Kingdom, "which was thus giving up advantages obtained by the possession of the best system of wireless telegraphy in the world." The majority of the countries represented were also in favour of compulsory communication between ship and ship, but this was successfully negatived by Great Britain and Japan. In 1908, Mr. Buxton was able to announce in the House that the relations between the Post Office and the Marconi Company "are now of the most friendly kind," and that they have accepted and adopted the principle of intercommunication. In the preceding year two experimental stations were started by the

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1893, pp. 19–22; 1903, pp. 15–18; 1905, pp. 16–18; 4 Edw. VII, c. 24; 6 Edw. VII, c. 13.

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Government which will enable the department to extend its operations quite independently of the companies.[1]

From a financial point of view, government ownership and control of the telegraphs in the United Kingdom has not been a success. In addition, the Telegraph Department, for some time previous to 1874, had been drawing upon the balance in the possession of the Post Office, a balance which was required to be invested for other purposes and whose expenditure for the use of the telegraphs had not been authorized by Parliament. Mr. Goldsmid, in introducing a motion for the appointment of a committee of enquiry, alluded to this error on the part of the department, to the excessive price paid for the telegraphs, and complained that the telegraph system was not being operated on a paying basis. His motion was withdrawn, but an agreement was reached with the department by the appointment of a committee, with Mr. Playfair as chairman, "to inquire into the organization and financial system of the Telegraph Department of the Post Office." The committee in their report commented unfavourably upon the unnecessarily large force, the cumbrous organization, and the far from economical management of some of the divisions of the department, advised that an attempt be made to remedy these faults, and that press messages be charged a minimum rate of 1*s.* each, and not at the rate of 1*s.* for each seventy-five or one hundred words obtained by adding together separate messages requiring separate transmission. This suggestion with reference to press messages was adopted, promises were made at the same time to diminish the force, and a scheme was submitted for the reorganization of the department.[2]

The number of telegrams for the year ending 31st March, 1887, the year following the sixpenny reduction, was 50,243,639; for the year 1891–92 it had increased to 69,685,480. In 1896–97 the number was 79,423,556 and in 1899–1900 the total was 90,415,123. During the next three years there was a reduction, followed in

[1] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., clxxix, coll. 841–858; cxcii, col. 1116, London *Times*, 1906, Nov. 5, p. 5; 1907, July 1, p. 14.

[2] *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., ccxxviii, coll. 172 f.; *Rep. Com.*, 1876, xiii, 357, pp. i–xiii, 147, 240.

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1902–03 by an increase to 92,471,000. Since 1902–03 the number has again fallen off, the figures for 1906–07 being only 89,493,000.[1] It is rather difficult to make definite statements about the telegraph finances on account of the lack of uniformity in presenting the accounts since 1870. Under gross revenue is now included the value of services done for other departments, but this was not always the rule. The expenditure of other departments for the telegraph service may or may not be included under ordinary telegraphic expenditure. Net revenue may also be increased or a deficit changed to a surplus by deducting the expenditure for sites, buildings, and extensions from ordinary expenditure. Finally, the interest on capital is not charged on the Telegraph Vote, and so is not included under expenditure. In 1871, 1880, and 1881 there seem to have been surpluses over all expenditure, including interest on capital. Excluding interest from expenditure, the net revenue decreased from £303,457 in 1871 to £59,732 in 1875, when the pensions to officials of the telegraph companies were first charged to the Telegraph Vote. With an increased net revenue of £245,116 in 1876, following the report of the committee of investigation, the department did very well from a financial point of view, until 1884, when the net revenue fell to £51,255, and in 1887 there was a deficit of £84,078, due to the fact that expenses were increasing at a greater rate than receipts. The sixpenny reduction seems to have made but little change in the financial situation, the gross revenue increasing from £1,755,118 in 1884–85 to £1,855,686 in 1886–87, the expenditure for the same years being £1,731,040 and £1,939,734. The net revenue began to recover in 1888–89, and averaged about £150,000 a year during the four years ending March 31, 1892. During the fiscal years 1894 and 1895 there were deficits, then a slight recovery from 1896 to 1900 and a succession of deficits from 1901 to 1905. The interest on stock, £214,500 in 1870, increased steadily to £326,417 in 1880, at which figure it remained until 1889, when a reduction in the rate of interest from 3 per cent to 2¾ per cent lowered the amount payable to £299,216. In 1903, there was a further reduction to £278,483.[2]

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1891, app., p. 40; 1901, app., p. 57; 1907, app., p. 61.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1881, app., p. 53; 1891, app., p. 66; 1901, app., p. 83; 1905, app., p. 99.

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The financial loss experienced by the Government in operating the telegraphs has naturally produced considerable interest in this phase of the question. Mr. Blackwood, the Financial Secretary of the Post Office, in his evidence before the committee, considered that the financial control and oversight of the department were inadequate and that the department was over-manned. On the other hand, he was of the opinion that many expenses were met by revenue expenditure which should have been charged to capital. Mr. Baines, the Surveyor-General, among other causes of the financial deficiency, called attention to the shorter hours and longer annual leave of the telegraph staff as government employees, the higher standard of efficiency established by the Post Office, and the prevalence of much overtime work as a result of the maintenance by the companies, just before the transfer, of an inadequate staff.[1] The fact that the yearly increase in messages continued to diminish after 1879 is commented on by the Postmaster-General in 1884 as due to the stagnation of trade, the competition of the telephones, and the rapidity of the letter post. Mr. Raikes called attention to the large number of telegrams on the business of the railways which were transmitted for nothing. By an agreement with several of the railway companies to send, as a right instead of a privilege, a fixed number of messages containing a fixed number of words, this increase was checked. In 1892, the following comment is found in the Postmaster-General's Report: "This stagnation of business, viewed in connection with an increased cost in working expenses, is a matter for serious consideration, and necessarily directs attention to that part of the business which is conducted at a loss," the reference being to the increased number of press messages transmitted at a nominal charge. When in 1868 the newspaper proprietors succeeded in obtaining the insertion in the Telegraph Act of special rates for the transmission of press messages, no condition was laid down that copies, in order that they might be sent at the very low charges there enumerated, should be transmitted to the

[1] Between 1870, when the telegraphs were taken over by the state, and 1873, the number of employees was more than doubled, although, during the same period, the number of messages — not including news messages — increased only from ten to fifteen millions (*Rep. Com.*, 1876, xiii, 357, pp. 18, 90, 232, 240).

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same place as the original telegram. The newspapers combined to receive messages from news associations in identical terms, and, by dividing the cost, obtained a rate equal on the average to 4½ *d.* per hundred words. Under the arrangements adopted for the transmission of news messages the number of words so sent did not necessitate a corresponding amount of work, but it is an interesting fact that in 1895 the number of words dealt with for the press formed two fifths of the total number. In that year the loss on these telegrams was estimated at about £300,000 a year. The high price paid as purchase money is another of the factors to be considered, only in so far, however, as the Telegraphic Department has failed to meet the interest on the debt so incurred. The telegraph companies were very liberally treated, and in certain cases excessive prices were undoubtedly paid. Probably the most important reason for the financial failure of the telegraphs under government ownership and control has been the influence of forces productive of good in themselves, but quite different from those which had previously been dominant when the telegraphs were under private control and during the early years of government management. The effect of these forces is clearly seen in the reduction of the tariff in 1885, the extension of facilities under inadequate guarantee, and the increase in the pay of the staff.[1] Mr. Buxton is of the opinion that the worst feature of the postal business is the telegraph service. "It has never been profitable and now the telephone system has so largely taken its place that the revenue is falling off," while the "Economist" considers that "it is obvious that both in the Savings Bank and the Telegraph branches reforms are urgently needed in order to place matters on a sound financial basis."[2]

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1895, pp. 37–38.

The proportion of the amount spent on salaries and wages which in 1881, before Mr. Fawcett's revision, stood at about 55 per cent, increased, as a result of that revision and Mr. Raikes' revision in 1890, to about 65 per cent.

[2] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., clix, col. 389; *Economist*, Sept. 21, 1907, p. 1576.

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CHAPTER XI

THE POST OFFICE AND THE TELEPHONE COMPANIES

THE first telephone brought to England by Lord Kelvin in 1876 was a very crude instrument, useful only for experimental purposes and of interest only as a forecast of later development. In the following year two Post Office officials introduced some machines which had been presented to them by the American inventor Bell, and although not very efficient, they were of some commercial use. The Post Office made arrangements with the agents of the inventor for the purpose of supplying its private wire renters with these machines if they should wish to make use of them. With the invention of the microphone in 1878, and its application to the telephone, a thoroughly practical method of transmitting speech was at last introduced. In the same year a company was formed to acquire and work the Bell patents. They endeavoured to come to an agreement with the Post Office by which the latter might obtain telephones at cost price, and would in return facilitate the operations of the company, but the negotiations came to nothing. There was then no suggestion of an exchange system, and the company proposed merely to supply telephones and wires to private individuals. In 1879, the Edison Telephone Company of London was established, an announcement having been made in the autumn of 1878 that it was proposed to establish exchanges. An attempt was made to amend the Telegraph Act so as to confer specifically upon the department monopolistic control over telephonic communication, but the amendment failed to receive the sanction of the House of Commons. The Postmaster-General then filed information against both companies, on the ground that the transmission of messages by telephone was an infringement of the telegraphic monopoly. In the summer of 1880 the two companies amalgamated as the United Telephone Company, and in December judgment was given by the High Court of Justice in favour of the Post Office.[1]

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1895, xiii, 350, pp. 1–6; *Law Reports, Queen's Bench Division*, vi, p. 244; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., cclxxxviii, col. 1053.

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In April of 1881 the Postmaster-General granted the United Telephone Company a licence to establish and operate a telephone system within a five-mile radius in London, the central point to be chosen by the company. On the other hand the company agreed to pay a royalty of 10 per cent of its gross receipts and to accept the judgment of the High Court. Licences were also granted to establish telephone exchanges in the provincial towns within a radius of one or two miles, all the licences to expire in 1911. The Postmaster-General reserved the right to establish exchanges for the department and the option of purchasing the works of the licencees in 1890 or at seven-year intervals from 1890, six months' notice having first been given. The policy of the United Telephone Company was to confine its own operations to London and to allow patent apparatus to be used in other parts of the country by subsidiary companies, leaving them free to negotiate with the Post Office for provincial licences.

The telephone policy of the Post Office from 1880 to 1884 consisted in the granting of licences to the companies in restricted areas, so that the telegraph revenue might suffer from competition as little as possible, and the establishment by the department of exchanges in certain places not as a rule served by the companies. Owing to the refusal of the Government to solicit business, their exchanges did not prove a success. The department itself would probably have preferred to take over the whole telephone business in 1880, but this policy met with no favour from the Lords of the Treasury, who were of the opinion "that the state, as regards all functions which are not by their nature exclusively its own, should at most be ready to supplement, not endeavour to supersede private enterprise, and that a rough but not inaccurate test of the legitimacy of its procedure is not to act in anticipation of possible demands." The operation by the government of the unimportant exchanges possessed by them was sanctioned by their Lordships, "on the understanding that its object is by the establishment of a telephonic system to a limited extent by the Post Office to enable your department to negotiate with the telephone companies in a satisfactory manner for licences." The London and Globe Company was given a licence in 1882 to establish exchanges in London, but

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they were entirely dependent upon the United Company for instruments, so that there was no real competition. The department proceeded to issue licences for the establishment of competing systems in places where there were already government exchanges. From 1880 to 1884 the Postmaster-General granted twenty-three licences, and some twenty-seven towns, with 1141 subscribers, were served by the department. The policy of the Post Office during these years, as thus outlined, was far from satisfactory to the public, due largely to the desire to protect the telegraph revenue, and the failure to appreciate the possibilities which the new system of communication was capable of offering. The companies, restricted as they were to local areas, could not offer any means for communication between these areas, since special permission had to be obtained for the erection of trunk lines. The Government offered to provide these on condition that a direct payment of £10 a mile per double wire and one half the revenue over that sum should be paid for their use, but this offer the companies naturally refused to consider. The Lancashire and Cheshire Company proposed to fix their trunk-line charges so low as to pay expenses only, but they were informed by the Government that they must charge 10*s.* a mile annual rental. In addition, they were not allowed to charge less than 1*s.* at their call offices, the then prevailing fee for a telegram. A few trunk lines, it is true, were constructed by the Government and rented to the companies, but they were quite insufficient to satisfy the demand. In London, the United Telephone Company was not allowed to extend its system beyond the five-mile radius without special permission and the payment of an increased royalty. In addition, the companies had no way-leave powers, but had to depend upon the good will of householders to fly their wires from house-top to house-top, with the result that in London there was a ridiculously large number of exchanges. Finally the companies were restricted to connecting subscribers with the exchange or their place of business, and, although messages could be telephoned for further transmission by the telegraphs, there was not that close connection between the telephonic and telegraphic systems which might eventually have led to the mutual advantage of each. Moreover, in 1882, the Government

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announced that they would grant no more licences unless the subsidiary companies agreed to sell to them all the instruments they wished, the intention probably being for the Government to supply instruments to companies which would establish exchanges in real competition with the United Telephone Company. Since the subsidiary companies could not supply these instruments without the consent of the parent company, the only result was still further to restrict telephonic development.[1]

In 1884, the prevailing public discontent in connection with the Government's treatment of the situation manifested itself in the press and in the House of Commons. The Post Office was accused of practising a policy of strangulation toward the companies, and the Postmaster-General, Mr. Fawcett, acknowledged that there was some truth in the charge. He advised the Treasury that the companies' areas of operation should be unlimited, and that their operations should be confined to the transmission of oral communications. The restricted licences were withdrawn and new, unrestricted licences granted, terminable in 1911 with the same qualifications with reference to royalties and government purchase that were inserted in the old licences. Nominally the result produced free competition, but actually competition was impossible until the expiration of the fundamental patents in 1892. The year before their expiration, the companies succeeded in getting control of the situation by an amalgamation of the United Telephone Company with its licencees under the name of the National Telephone Company. Mr. Dickinson, Deputy Chairman of the London County Council, stated that the nominal capital of the United Telephone Company, £900,000 (with an actual capital expenditure in 1887 within the Metropolitan District of £228,180) was taken over by the National Telephone Company at a cost of £1,484,375, and the Duke of Marlborough said in the House of Lords that of the £3,250,000 capital of the new company over £2,000,000 was "water." Mr. Raikes, the Postmaster-General, who was in favour of competition, wrote to the United Company, disapproving of the

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1883, p. 6; 1885, p. 9; 1886, p. 10; *Rep. Com.*, 1898, xii, 383, pp. 3, 57; 1895, xiii, 350, pp. 1–6; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., cclxxii, col. 712; cclxxxviii, coll. 1056–57, 1060–61; cclxxxix, coll. 82.

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whole transaction. With the expiration of the patent rights, the New Telephone Company was resuscitated, with the Duke of Marlborough as chairman, an agreement having been concluded with the Telephone Subscribers' Protective Association for a twelve guineas' service in London, but it in turn was absorbed by the National Company, much to the disgust of the members of the Association. So far as way-leave rights were concerned the position of the companies remained in a very unsatisfactory condition. A committee of the House of Commons advised that certain way-leave rights should be granted, but nothing was accomplished, although a bill was introduced in the House of Commons in 1885 to enable the companies to erect posts without the consent of the road authorities.[1]

Mr. Forbes, the chairman of the National Telephone Company, said to the Committee of 1892: "I am prepared to concede that the telephone company which conducts about 93 or 94 per cent of the whole telephonic business of the country conducts a great deal of it monstrously badly, but it is not their fault, it is the fault of Parliament"; and again in referring to the lack of way-leave power: "Take London for instance; London is very badly served, but why is it very badly served? Because everything depends upon the caprice of the individual." As a result of the complaints that the telephone system was giving an inadequate service because of the high rates on an inflated capital, because the utility of the telephones was impaired in that they could not be used in connection with the telegraph and postal services, and because of the lack of powers to erect poles in the streets or to lay underground wires or to connect their exchanges by trunk lines, the Government announced a change of policy in 1892.[2] This change was set forth in a Treasury Minute of the 23d of May, 1892, and in two memoranda of agreement of the same year to

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1884–85, xii, p. 63; 1892, xvii, 278, sess. 1, pp. 3–5; 1895, xiii, 350, pp. 1–6, 92, 188–93; 1898, xii, 383, p. 12; *Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., cclxxxviii, coll. 1052 f.; cccxxxvi, col. 1809; cccxxxvii, col. 1435; cccxlvi, col. 908.

[2] Only five years before, Mr. Raikes, the Postmaster-General, said in the House of Commons: "I am inclined to think that it is extremely doubtful whether there would be much public advantage in establishing telephonic communication generally between those [the principal] towns" (*Parl. Deb.*, 3d ser., cccxix, col. 664).

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which the National and the New Companies were respectively parties, the arrangements being sanctioned by Parliament in the Telegraph acts of 1892 and 1896. So far as it affected the National Company the arrangement was embodied in detail in an agreement dated the 25th of March, 1896, no similar agreement being made with the New Company because that company went into liquidation in 1892, and in 1896 surrendered its licence. By the agreement of 1896 the National Telephone Company surrendered its previous licence except for certain definite districts called "Exchange Areas," a large number of which were specified in the agreement. These areas were as a rule coterminous with the urban districts, but comprised in addition certain areas made up of two or more urban districts together with the intervening country. Power was reserved to the Postmaster-General to specify other exchange areas, the understanding being, both with regard to areas already specified and those to be specified, that industrial areas of wide extent should be recognized in cases where there were no considerable towns forming centres of business, that neighbouring towns intimately connected in their business relations should be placed in the same area, and that small towns and villages should also be so grouped when each by itself would not pay. Outside these areas the Postmaster-General alone was entitled to carry on telephone business, no more licences being granted for the whole Kingdom, and for any particular town only with the approval of the corporation or municipal authority. Call offices for the use of the public were to be opened at the company's exchanges and connected with the post offices in order that exchange subscribers might telephone over the trunk lines to exchange subscribers in other towns. Where intercommunication took place between the systems of the company and the Post Office, a terminal charge on the part of the receiving system was allowed. Telephonic messages could be sent to the post offices for transmission as telegrams and delivery as such or for delivery as letters. Express messengers could also be sent for by telephone, and telegrams received at the post offices might be transmitted by telephone.

The Postmaster-General was authorized to grant to the company all such powers of executing works within its exchange areas

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(other than works under, over, or along any railway or canal) as were conferred upon him by the Telegraph acts of 1863, 1878, and Section 2 of the act of 1892. If required by the company, he must provide underground wires between different exchanges in the same exchange area, and must allow the company to conclude agreements with railway and canal companies over whose property he had exclusive right of way. In exchange for these privileges the company agreed to sell its trunk lines to the Postmaster-General, their value being fixed at a later date at £459,114, which amount was paid to the company on the 4th of April, 1895, the length of trunk line taken over being 2651 miles having 29,000 miles of wire. In order to remove a serious handicap to the success of competing companies, the trunk lines were henceforth to be controlled and extended by the Post Office, the company to receive five per cent of any gross charges for trunk-line tolls which it might collect as an agent of the Post Office. The rates charged by the Post Office for trunk-line conversations in 1896 were, for distances of 125 miles and under, the same as those previously charged by the company, and were lower than the old rates for distances in excess of 125 miles.[1]

In the mean time there was evidence of considerable opposition to the practical monopoly of the company within the exchange areas. A motion introduced in the House of Commons by Doctor Cameron, member of Parliament for Glasgow, in favour of government purchase of the telephones, received considerable support, but was rejected by the Government on the ground that the resulting increase in the number of civil servants, not paid at market wages and constantly trying to bring pressure to bear on members, was too serious an evil to receive the sanction of the Government.[2] The claim was also made by some of the towns and by Glasgow in particular that the municipalities should be allowed to install their own telephone systems in opposition to those of the company. A select committee was appointed to consider this demand on the

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1892, xvii, 278, sess. 1, pp. 17–18; 1895, xiii, 350, pp. 8, 34; *Rep. P. G.*, 1896, pp. 16, 17; *Rep. Com.*, 1898, xii, 383, pp. 35–37, 40; 1905, vii, 271, pp. 233–235; 55 and 56 Vict., c. 59, 59 and 60 Vict., c. 40; *Parl Deb.*, 4th ser., iii, coll. 168, 186, 196.

[2] *Ibid.*, 4th ser., iii, coll. 166 f.

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question of "whether the provision made for telephone service in local areas is adequate, and whether it is advisable to grant licences to local authorities or otherwise," but, owing to the dissolution of Parliament, the committee did not present a report. Considerable evidence was heard, however, and the committee recommended that another committee should be appointed during the next session to consider and report upon the evidence already taken and, if necessary, take more evidence. The witnesses examined were as a rule of the opinion that the telephones should be taken over by the state; but there was a difference of opinion as to whether municipal licences should be granted. Dissatisfaction with existing conditions seemed to be widespread. The Glasgow Corporation expressed disgust with the service of the company on account of the difficulty of getting into communication with subscribers, frequent interruptions and noises, and the chance of being overheard by a third party, the first complaint being due in their opinion to inadequate exchange accommodations, the second and third to the one-wire system. The corporation was accused on the other hand of attempting to dislocate the company's system by refusing them permission to lay underground wires, while the overhead wires were unfavourably affected by the electric tramway currents. The Deputy Town Clerk of Liverpool was in favour of government telephones, but opposed municipal licences on the ground that they would increase the expense of telephoning between a municipal exchange and one belonging to the company. The London County Council advised that severe restrictions should be laid upon the company by imposing maximum rates, etc., or that the state should take over the company's system or that the municipality should do so. Questions were sent to subscribers in London by the County Council, by the company, and by the Commissioner of Sewers, asking for their opinion on the service rendered by the company there. As may be imagined, the replies sent to the County Council and the Commissioner were on the whole unfavourable to the company, while those sent to the company were generally favourable to them. It was shown that the number of subscribers in English and Scotch cities was fewer than in most continental cities, and that, comparing the population of the United Kingdom with that

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of the United States, the number of subscribers in the former should be about 145,000 instead of about 50,000; but nothing was said of the superior postal and telegraphic facilities of the United Kingdom as compared with the majority of foreign countries, facilities which would naturally reduce the demand for a comparatively new and in many cases unpopular method of communication. The rate of the company in the Metropolitan area for a business connection was £20 for a yearly agreement, with substantial reductions for second and additional connections, and £12 for private houses. On a five years' agreement the rates were £17 and £10 respectively. The rate in Paris at the same time was £16. For the provincial cities in England, such as Manchester, Liverpool, etc., the rate was £10 for a first connection and £8 10s. for second and additional connections, and for the large towns, such as Norwich, Chester, Exeter, etc., £8 within half a mile of the exchange, £9 within three quarters of a mile, £10 within one mile, and an additional £2 10s. for each additional half-mile, with reductions for extra connections. For small outlying and isolated towns the half-mile rate was £6 10s., one mile £8, and £2 10s. for every additional half-mile.[1]

In 1898, another committee was appointed with Mr. Hanbury as chairman, "to enquire and report whether the telephone service was calculated to become of such general benefit as to justify its being undertaken by municipal and other authorities, regard being had to local finance." The committee were of the opinion that the existing telephone system was not of general benefit either in the kingdom at large or in those portions where exchanges existed, that it could hardly be of benefit so long as monopolistic conditions existed, and that it was capable of becoming much more useful if worked solely or mainly with a view to the public interest. They condemned the flat rate subscription charge of the company as of benefit only to the wealthier commercial classes in English cities. They commented unfavourably upon the fact that in the London area there were only 237 call offices open to non-subscribers, and that as a rule messages could not be sent from them to subscribers

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1895, xiii, 350, pp. iii, 25–27, 60–62, 87, 90–91, 163, 176, 221, 223, 275, 281–82, 321–22; *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., xxxi, coll. 207 f.; xlviii, coll. 463–66.

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except when the sender and recipient were in the same postal district or town, when the message might be delivered. They were of the opinion that the telephones were far more useful in other countries where the conditions were not so favourable. Conditions, they thought, were unlikely to improve under the present management. The company must pay dividends on an inflated capital; its licence would expire in 1911, and the Government was hardly likely to pay the company at that date for goodwill. In addition, there were no restrictions on charges, the company had a motive for limiting its subscribers, as expenses increased proportionately with an increase in their number, and the question of way-leaves was a source of great difficulty. Finally, they declared in favour of competition by the municipalities and the Post Office as tending to reduce rates, extend the system, and, if the Government should eventually purchase the telephones, give alternative systems to choose from. The Government adopted the committee's report, and, in a Treasury Minute of the 8th of May, 1899, laid down the principles upon which licences should be granted by the Postmaster-General to the municipalities, and announced that in London the Postmaster-General would himself establish an exchange system.[1]

In accordance with the finding of the committee and the resulting Treasury Minute, an act was passed in 1899, conferring upon the boroughs and borough districts to which the Postmaster-General might grant licences the right to borrow money upon the security of the rates for the erection and management of telephone systems. A loan of £2,000,000 was authorized for the use of the department itself in establishing telephone competition with the company in London. The act also defined the relations between the company and the municipalities (or other new licencees) in the event of competition. If the telephone company would agree to abandon the power of discriminating between subscribers and would consent to limit their charges within the maxima and minima prescribed by the Postmaster-General, the latter was to extend any way-leave rights already possessed for the period of the licence granted to the competing municipality or new licencee.

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1898, xii, 383, pp. iii–xiii.

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If the new licence were extended beyond 1911, the company's licence would be likewise extended, but if their licence were extended for as much as eight years beyond 1911, the company were bound, at the request of the licencee and under certain conditions, to grant interchange of communication within the area. The new licences would be granted only to local authorities or companies approved by them, and the National Company was prohibited from opening exchanges in any area in which they had not, before the passing of the act, established an effective exchange. The effect of the act was to limit competition to the municipalities, to confine the National Company to those towns and areas they were already serving, and to throw upon the Postmaster-General the duty of serving other parts of the country.[1]

The form of the licences for municipalities, among other conditions, contained provisions designed to secure for the public an efficient and cheap service. It was provided that the plant should be constructed in accordance with specifications prepared by the Postmaster-General, no preferential treatment should be allowed to any subscriber, the charges made should be within certain specified limits, neither the licence nor any part of the plant of the licencee should be assigned to or amalgamated with the business of any other licencee, and that the licence might be terminated if an exchange system were not established within two years. The provisions of the agreement of 1896 which secured coöperation between the Post Office and the National Company and combined the telephone with the telegraph and postal services were also introduced into the municipal licences. The municipalities were bound to give intercommunication between their exchanges and any established by the Postmaster-General, and terminal charges for trunk-wire communications between the exchange subscribers of any other system and those of the local authority were forbidden. About sixty local authorities made enquiries with a view to taking out licences, but only thirteen licences were accepted. That of Tunbridge Wells was surrendered in 1903, owing to an agreement arrived at between the National Telephone Company and the corporation, the municipal telephones not having proved

[1] 62 and 63 Vict., c. 38.

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a success.[1] In the case of seven others the licences were surrendered or cancelled. The following corporations held licences in 1905: —

Hull	licence terminating 31st December,	1911
Glasgow		1913
Swansea		1920
Brighton	30th April,	1926
Portsmouth		1926

In all the above cases except Hull, the National Telephone Company had agreed to forego the granting of special favours to subscribers, had established intercommunication, and their licence was accordingly extended in those places to the dates of termination of the corporation licences. In Glasgow the National Telephone Company made several applications for permission to lay underground wires, but the corporation refused the concession on any terms. In spite of this advantage and the inability of the company to meet the low unlimited user rate of the corporation telephones on account of agreements with subscribers in other towns, the corporation found it advisable to sell its plant to the Post Office in 1906 for £305,000 at a capital loss of between £12,000 and £15,000. Brighton followed suit a little later for the sum of £49,000, at a loss of £2450. Swansea experienced considerable difficulty in borrowing money to extend its system on account of the refusal of the Local Government Board to grant the necessary borrowing powers. The Post Office offered £22,000 for a plant which had cost £27,173. This offer was refused by the corporation, and an agreement was concluded with the National Telephone in 1907 for the sale of the plant at a price sufficient to repay the whole capital. Offers were also made to Hull and Portsmouth by the department, but were refused, as they were not sufficiently high to cover expenditure.[2]

As a rule the local authorities offered an initial flat rate lower than that paid by the company's subscribers in competing centres,

[1] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., cxxiv, coll. 781–82; cxv, col. 841; cxvi, coll. 915–17.

[2] *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., lxxxii, coll. 168–186; cliv, coll. 1067–68; clxiv, col. 87; London *Times*, 1906, July 6, p. 10; 1907, Jan. 3, p. 8; Feb. 9, p. 3; Mar. 22, p. 4.

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but most of the other rates of the corporation authorities were somewhat higher. The service offered by the public telephones was not so satisfactory as had been hoped, and the more numerous connections open to the company's subscribers formed an initial advantage which it was difficult to overcome. On the other hand, the corporations often had the advantage of underground connections which were denied to the company, but the relatively small number of the subscribers of the corporation telephones, the high cost of underground connections, the clumsy service offered in many cases, and the ability of the company to offer lower rates in competitive areas proved too much for most of the corporations which were granted licences.[1]

In the meantime the National Telephone Company had been experiencing considerable difficulty in getting permission to lay underground wires in London. In 1892, the Telegraph act of that year authorized the Postmaster-General to grant to his licencees the same way-leave powers which he enjoyed, subject to the conditions that the licencees should not exercise such powers in London without the consent of the County Council, nor in any urban district outside London without the consent of the urban authority, nor elsewhere without the consent of the County Council. In pursuance of this authority the Postmaster-General, in the agreement of the 25th of March, 1896, undertook, at the request of the company, to authorize them to exercise his way-leave powers in any exchange area. The company did not apply for the exercise of such authority in London, but an attempt was made by them to obtain the consent of the London County Council to allow their wires to be placed underground, and the work proceeded with the permission of the local road authorities in London. Negotiations with the council were fruitless, largely on account of the price asked for way-leave and the demand for lower rates. The Postmaster-General was advised that it was his duty to see that the act of 1892 was enforced, and the resulting correspondence with the company having failed of any satisfactory result, an information in the name of the Attorney-General was filed against the company, asking for a declaration that they were not entitled to proceed with their

[1] *Rep. Com.*, 1905, vii, 271, pp. 10, 76, 79, 233–235.

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underground works in London without the authority of the Postmaster-General and the consent of the County Council. An order to that effect was made on the 24th of July, 1900. This seemed a favourable opportunity for the Postmaster-General to secure from the company certain concessions with reference to their London exchange system as well as privileges for the subscribers of the postal exchanges which had been established in London and an agreement with reference to the purchase in 1911 by the Post Office of the company's London exchanges. These concessions and privileges were finally embodied in an agreement made on the 18th of November, 1901, by which the Postmaster-General agreed to furnish such underground wires on the demand of the company as he might think reasonable and likely to be useful to the Post Office later, as well as underground wires connecting the exchanges of the Post Office with those of the company. When the subscribers of the London Postal Exchanges exceeded 10,000 in number, the company agreed to pay half of the rent of the latter wires. No terminal charges were payable for a message passing over these wires, or for a message over the trunk lines between the subscribers of the Post Office in London and those outside London, or between subscribers of the company in London and those outside London. In addition, the Postmaster-General promised to afford to the company's subscribers in London all such facilities with reference to postal, telegraphic, and telephonic communications as he granted to Post Office London subscribers and upon the same terms and conditions. He also agreed to consider all applications from the company for way-leaves on railways and canals where he enjoyed such rights, and the company promised to establish telephone communications without favour or preference. A decision was also reached fixing equal rates for the postal and company's subscribers in London, based primarily on the number of messages sent with an unmeasured rate lower than that previously in force, no revision to be made without six months' notice being given. Finally it was agreed that in 1911 or before — if the company's licence should have been previously revoked — the Postmaster-General should buy and the company should sell at its fair market value all such plant as should then be in use by the

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company in London and be suitable for the Post Office at that date. None of the plant was to be considered suitable unless installed with the written consent of the Postmaster-General, the question of suitability to be decided by arbitration if necessary.[1] The local authorities protested in vain against the agreement, their contention being that the committee of investigation had advised competition, whereas the government had on the other hand succeeded only in making very unsatisfactory terms with the company.[2]

In 1905, the Postmaster-General and the National Telephone Company concluded an agreement for the purchase of the company's provincial plant based upon much the same principles which had governed the London agreement. The question of purchase in the provinces was complicated by the fact that in some towns there were competing municipal telephones, a resulting duplication of plant, and an extension of the licence period beyond 1911. By the terms of the agreement, the Postmaster-General on the 31st of December, 1911, shall buy and the National Telephone Company shall sell (*a*) "all the plant, land, and buildings of the company brought into use with the sanction of the Postmaster-General and in use on the 31st of December, 1911, for the purpose of the telephonic business of the Company, (*b*) any licensed business of the company in towns where there are municipal exchanges and where the licence extends beyond 1911, (*c*) the private wire business of the company (for which no licence is required) in use after the 31st of December, 1911, with buildings, plant, etc., (*d*) all stores and buildings suitable for use in accordance with specifications contained in the agreement, (*e*) all spare plant and works under construction if suitable for the telephonic business of the Post Office." The plant, land, and buildings were deemed to be brought into use with the sanction of the Postmaster-General if they were in use or being brought into use at the date of the agreement; in the case of plant to be installed, if constructed in accordance with specifications contained in the agreement and of

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1902, lv, 25, pp. 4–10; *Rep. Com.*, 1905, vii, 271, pp. 1–3, 53–54, 233–235; *Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., lxxxii, coll. 183; ci, coll. 1002–03; cxxxii, coll. 422.

[2] *Ibid.*, 4th ser., ci, coll. 976–993.

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land and buildings, if acquired or constructed with the consent of the Postmaster-General. With reference to plant not constructed in accordance with the specifications, and plant and buildings of any kind in competitive areas, the Postmaster-General reserved the right to object to buy such plant or buildings, the question of suitability in competitive areas to be settled by arbitration. The value to be paid for the company's undertaking, not in the competitive areas and not being private wire business, shall be the value on the date of purchase exclusive of any allowance for past or future profits or any consideration for compulsory sale or any other consideration. The value in competitive areas is to be determined by agreement, regard being had to net profits and to the circumstances and conditions under which the company would carry on such business after the date of sale. The value of the private wire business (apart from the plant, land, and buildings used therein) is to be three years purchase of the net profits on the average of the three years ending 31st of December, 1911. Any other property or assets of the company may be purchased by the Postmaster-General, the price to be determined by arbitration, if necessary, and, after the date of sale, the telegraphic business of the company will be carried on (whether by the company or the Postmaster-General) at the expense and for the benefit of the Postmaster-General. In the meantime the company agreed to maintain its plant in good and efficient working order, not to show favour or preference among its subscribers, to accept minimum and maxiumum rates, to allow intercommunication without terminal charges between their and the Post Office subscribers in the same area, and not to collect terminal charges for messages sent over the trunk lines between subscribers of the company and those of the Post Office. The Postmaster-General agreed to extend to subscribers of the company all such telegraphic and postal facilities as his own subscribers enjoyed, and to undertake underground works for the company elsewhere than in London under the same conditions as in London. An agreement was also reached that similar rates should be charged where the Postmaster-General and the company maintained competing systems. As a result, measured rates were, as a rule, substituted for the old flat rates, much to the

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indignation of various Chambers of Commerce in the Kingdom. In the case of complaint as to inefficient service, if the charge is held to be proved before a person appointed by the Board of Trade, and if it is not the result of a refusal to grant way-leaves, the Postmaster-General may require the company to remedy conditions in the particular area concerned or may call upon them to sell the inefficient system to him. In the first case if there is no improvement or if the second alternative has been adopted, the Postmaster-General may require immediate sale under the same terms that would have held if it had not taken place until the 31st of December, 1911.[1]

The income received by the Post Office for the fiscal year 1906–07 from the London and provincial exchanges and trunk-line business was £908,246, working expenses, £456,459, balance for depreciation, interest, etc., £451,787, leaving a balance of £19,061 over and above an estimated amount of £432,726 for depreciation and interest at three per cent on the capital expenditure. The London exchange, with a gross income of £330,512, showed a surplus of £25,586 over and above depreciation fund and interest on capital expenditure, the provincial exchanges a deficit of £15,758, and the trunk lines a surplus of £9333. The number of subscribers to the Post Office provincial exchanges (excluding Glasgow and Brighton) was 10,010. Including the Glasgow subscribers (11,103) and the Brighton subscribers (1542), the total was 22,655. Arrangements were then being made for local intercommunication between subscribers of these exchanges and those of the company in the same places. Hull and Portsmouth were the only towns maintaining municipal telephonic systems in 1907, Hull having 2128 telephones in use and Portsmouth 2553. The number of telephones in the London Post Office telephone service was 41,236, including 425 public call offices. The agreement of 1905, providing for similar rates in the provinces between exchanges of the Post Office and those of the company, was followed after considerable discussion by the announcement of the adoption of a new scale in May, 1906. The rates are now based on the principle of a measured service under which each subscriber pays according to the

[1] *Acc. & P.*, 1905, xliv, 16, pp. 3–23; *Rep. Com.*, 1905, vii, 271, pp. iii–xi.

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quality and quantity of the service desired. He may contract for any number of calls from four hundred upward, and he may share a line with another subscriber at a reduced rate, or he may rent a line for his own exclusive use.[1]

[1] *Rep. P. G.*, 1905, app., pp. 90–92; 1907, pp. 21–23, 93.

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CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

THE important points in the history of the British Post Office are necessarily somewhat obscured by the great mass of less important characteristics which accompanied its development. Organized at the beginning of the sixteenth century as a means for the conveyance of state letters, its messengers, by tacit consent, were allowed to carry the letters of private individuals. The advantage so afforded for the control of seditious correspondence led to the monopolistic proclamations of the closing years of the sixteenth and the opening years of the seventeenth century. Before 1635 the state obtained no direct revenue for the conveyance of private letters. The messengers or postmen who were supposed to be paid by the state, derived the larger part of their income from the postage on these letters and from letting horses to travellers.

The object in retaining for the Royal Posts the sole right to carry the letters of private individuals assumed a new form in the seventeenth century. Witherings showed that by diverting the postage on private letters from the postmen to the state the Post Office might be made self-supporting. Legal rates were imposed, letters were carried at a much higher speed, and the system of packet posts was extended over the great roads of England. The supervision of private correspondence became a matter of only secondary importance. The struggle between the King and Parliament resulted in securing popular control over the posts of the kingdom. At the same time, during the political unrest, competing systems of posts were repressed with difficulty. The inability of government officials to meet the increasing needs of a growing metropolis led to the establishment of a Penny Post in London by Dockwra, a private individual.

The first part of the eighteenth century saw the extension of a postal system in the colonies and an attempt on the part of the Post

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Office to obtain the postage on letters passing over the cross-roads of England. The increase in England's colonial possessions and her growing trade with foreign countries produced a corresponding growth in the packet service. The last part of the century saw the establishment of Palmer's mail coaches in order to meet competition from the post coaches. The great increase in revenue which accompanied the industrial revolution led to corruption among the postal officials, resulting in the reform of 1793. The period of rapid growth had passed, and the close of the eighteenth century was a period of consolidation for the new offices which had been created, and better coöperation in the work which they performed.

The first forty years of the last century saw the Post Office at its best as an instrument of taxation. But this very fact drew attention to the lack of other and more important objects. Rates had been forced so high that people resorted to legal and illegal means to evade paying them. The feeling was growing that a tax upon correspondence was not only a poor method of raising money but that its ulterior effect in restricting letter writing was producing undesirable results upon the people of England industrially and socially. A great mistake had been made by the Post Office in acquiring steam packets. They suffered severely from private competing lines and were always a loss to the Government. A partial remedy was attained by the transfer of all the packets to the Admiralty. Eventually the popular cause, championed by Hill and Wallace, forced itself upon the attention of the Government. A Parliamentary committee, after listening to the evidence of representative witnesses, declared itself in favour of low and uniform rates of postage for the United Kingdom, the result being the adoption of inland Penny Postage in 1840.

Among the numerous changes which have characterized the development of the Post Office since 1840 are the successive reductions in rates; the transfer of the packet boats from the Admiralty, followed by the resolution of the Government to revert to the old principle of depending upon private enterprise for the sea carriage of the mails; the extension in the use of the railways as a medium of conveyance; the establishment of a parcel post; and the decision of the government to provide banking and assurance

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facilities for the thrifty person of small means. But the greatest departure in the field of the department's activities has been the acquisition of the telegraphic system of the Kingdom. Misled by their advisers as to the capital cost and induced by popular pressure to abandon strictly business methods of administration and extension, the telegraphic experiments of the department have not been a financial success. Not only has this been the case, but, in their efforts to protect the revenue, successive Governments have hindered the development of telephonic communication. At this late date we can safely assume that in 1870 the department should either have granted the telephone companies far greater powers or should themselves have assumed the burden of providing an adequate system of telephonic communication. In 1911, the property and franchises of the telephone companies will pass to the control of the Government, thus vastly increasing the work of the department if, as seems probable, the Government should assume direct management, and greatly enlarging the number of dissatisfied members of that part of the civil service under the control of the Post Office.

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APPENDIX

EXPENDITURE AND REVENUE TABLES

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APPENDIX

TABLE I

GROSS PRODUCT, EXPENDITURE, AND NET PRODUCT OF THE POST OFFICE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM MARCH 25, 1723 TO APRIL 5, 1797

Year ending	*Gross Product*	*Expenses*	*Net Product*
	£	£	£
March 25, 1724	178,071	81,732	96,339
25	175,274	75,407	99,867
26	178,065	83,253	94,812
27	182,184	81,295	100,889
28	183,915	79,250	104,665
29	179,189	86,882	92,307
30	178,817	84,027	94,790
31	171,412	79,243	92,169
32	176,714	84,678	92,036
33	171,283	79,137	92,146
34	176,334	84,633	91,701
35	182,171	83,541	98,630
36	188,210	90,589	97,621
37	182,490	85,402	97,088
38	186,578	93,914	92,664
39	183,747	85,497	97,250
40	194,197	103,532	90,665
41	191,408	101,323	90,085
42	197,721	110,137	87,584
43	190,626	102,185	88,441
44	194,461	109,347	85,114
45	194,607	108,852	85,755
46	201,460	120,570	80,890
47	209,028	123,086	85,942
48	217,453	138,701	78,752
49	212,801	124,478	88,323
50	207,490	110,093	97,397
51	203,748	104,633	99,115
52	207,092	109,371	97,721
April 5, 53	206,666	108,518	98,148
54	214,300	116,935	97,365
55	210,663	108,648	102,015
56	238,445	144,203	94,242
57	242,478	162,629	79,849

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TABLE I — *continued*

Year ending	*Gross Product* £	*Expenses* £	*Net Product* £
April 5, 1758	222,075	148,346	73,729
59	229,879	143,784	86,095
60	230,146	146,643	83,493
61	240,497	153,808	86,689
62	233,722	155,927	77,795
63	238,999	141,166	97,833
64	225,326	109,134	116,182
65	262,496	104,925	157,571
66	265,427	103,484	161,943
67	275,230	113,286	161,944
68	278,253	112,470	165,783
69	284,914	120,154	164,760
70	285,050	128,988	156,062
71	292,782	137,239	155,543
72	309,997	144,394	165,503
73	310,126	142,940	167,176
74	313,032	148,965	164,077
75	321,943	148,755	173,188
76	318,418	150,936	167,482
77	329,921	171,346	158,575
78	347,128	209,124	137,994
79	372,817	233,569	139,248
80	387,092	250,683	136,409
81	417,634	263,477	154,157
82	393,235	275,910	117,325
83	398,624	238,999	159,625
84	420,101	223,588	196,513
85	463,753	202,344	261,409
86	471,176	185,201	285,975
87	474,347	195,748	278,599
88	509,131	212,151	296,980
89	514,538	195,928	318,610
90	533,198	202,019	331,179
91	575,079	219,080	355,999
92	585,432	218,473	366,959
93	627,592	236,084	391,508
94	691,268	260,606	430,662
95	705,319	295,822	409,497
96	657,541	191,084	466,457
97	691,616	178,266	513,350[1]

[1] *Parl. Papers*, 1812–13, *Reports from Committees*, ii, pp. 60–61.

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TABLE II

AVERAGE YEARLY GROSS PRODUCT, EXPENDITURE AND NET PRODUCT OF THE POST OFFICE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM 1725 TO 1794

	Gross Product	*Expenses*	*Net Product*
	£	£	£
1725–29	179,725	81,217	98,508
1730–34	174,912	82,344	92,568
1735–39	184,639	87,989	96,650
1740–44	193,682	105,304	88,378
1745–49	207,069	123,137	83,932
1750–54	207,859	109,910	97,949
1755–59	228,708	147,522	81,186
1760–64	233,738	141,340	92,398
1765–69	273,264	110,864	162,400
1770–74	302,197	140,525	161,672
1775–79	338,045	182,766	155,279
1780–84	403,337	251,331	152,006
1785–89	486,587	198,273	288,314
1790–94	602,514	227,033	375,481

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TABLE III

GROSS PRODUCT, EXPENDITURE, AND NET PRODUCT OF THE POST OFFICE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, INCLUDING THE TWOPENNY POST, FROM JANUARY 5, 1804 TO JANUARY 5, 1838

Year ending	*Gross Product* £	*Expenses* £	*Net Product* £	*Loss on Returned Letters*[1]
Jan. 5, 1804	1,429,429	416,767	956,212	56,450
5	1,466,271	420,395	983,363	62,513
6	1,648,523	457,686	1,119,429	71,408
7	1,718,187	456,968	1,185,659	75,560
8	1,711,980	468,531	1,167,425	76,024
9	1,739,855	489,469	1,173,062	77,324
10	1,855,746	519,359	1,260,822	75,565
11	1,987,404	546,460	1,365,251	75,693
12	1,960,510	540,397	1,344,109	76,004
13	2,078,879	576,885	1,422,001	79,993
14	2,209,213	616,564	1,506,064	86,585
15	2,372,429	675,548	1,598,295	98,586
16	2,418,741	704,639	1,619,196	94,906
17	2,280,209	649,129	1,537,505	93,575
18	2,186,621	665,354	1,433,871	87,396
19	2,240,553	683,680	1,467,533	89,340
20	2,191,562	586,193	1,522,640	82,729
21	2,172,875	611,187	1,465,605	96,083
22	2,122,965	645,241	1,393,465	84,259
23	2,128,926	620,977	1,428,352	79,597
24	2,154,294	596,336	1,475,167	82,791
25	2,255,238	628,829	1,540,022	86,387
26	2,367,567	636,353	1,632,267	98,947
27	2,392,271	706,640	1,589,672	95,869
28	2,278,411	706,192	1,484,164	88,095
29	2,287,961	663,775	1,544,224	79,962
30	2,265,481	675,319	1,509,347	80,815
31	2,301,431	694,254	1,517,951	89,226
32	2,321,310	658,325	1,569,038	93,947
33	2,277,274	643,464	1,531,828	101,982
34	2,294,910	636,756	1,553,425	104,729
35	2,319,979	696,387	1,513,052	110,540
36	2,353,340	678,836	1,564,458	110,046
37	2,461,806	704,768	1,645,835	111,203
38	2,462,269	698,632	1,641,106	122,531

[1] *Reports from Com.*, 1837–38, xx, pt. 1, p. 500. Before 1797, the loss on returned letters seems to have been included in the Charges of Management.

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TABLE IV

AVERAGE YEARLY GROSS PRODUCT, EXPENDITURE, AND NET PRODUCT, ETC., OF THE POST OFFICE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM 1805 TO 1838

	Gross Product	*Expenses*	*Net Product*	*Loss on Returned Letters*	*Actual Gross Product*
	£	£	£	£	£
1805–09	1,656,963	458,610	1,125,787	72,566	1,584,397
1810–14	2,018,350	559,933	1,379,649	78,768	1,939,582
1815–19	2,299,710	675,670	1,531,280	92,760	2,206,950
1820–24	2,154,124	611,987	1,457,045	85,092	2,069,032
1825–29	2,316,289	668,358	1,558,079	89,852	2,226,437
1830–34	2,292,081	661,623	1,536,318	94,140	2,197,941
1835–38	2,399,348	694,656	1,591,112	113,580	2,285,768

SCOTLAND

	Gross Product	*Expenses*	*Net Product*
	£	£	£
1800–04	117,108	18,952	98,156
1805–09	148,816	23,981	124,835
1810–14	182,259	29,153	153,106
1815–19	191,812	40,736	151,076
1820–24	185,235	46,351	138,884
1825–29	205,599	49,485	156,114
1830–34	204,481	54,729	149,752
1835–37	216,191	59,553	156,638

IRELAND

	£	£	£
1800–04	92,745	64,368	28,377
1805–09	150,845	90,922	59,923
1810–14	192,969	115,019	77,950
1815–19	210,159	124,149	86,010
1820–24	190,431	119,200	71,231
1825–29	214,165	115,875	98,290
1830–34	244,098	108,898	135,200
1835–37	247,068	114,093	132,975

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TABLE V

GROSS PRODUCT, EXPENDITURE, AND NET PRODUCT OF THE POST OFFICE FOR SCOTLAND AND IRELAND FROM 1800 TO 1837

	Scotland			*Ireland*		
Year ending Jan. 5	*Gross Product* £	*Expenses* £	*Net Product* £	*Gross Product* £	*Expenses* £	*Net Product* £
1800	100,651	16,896	83,755	84,040	59,216	24,824
01	113,126	18,020	95,105	[2]66,030	48,656	17,376
02	121,700	18,692	103,007	102,293	70,489	31,806
03	124,809	20,581	104,228	102,518	66,008	36,510
04	125,257	20,562	104,694	108,844	77,471	31,373
05	137,479	21,175	116,303	118,429	79,448	38,981
06	146,148	22,465	123,682	146,682	93,651	53,031
07	151,696	23,358	128,338	149,857	90,940	58,917
08	152,453	27,496	124,956	158,749	91,200	67,549
09	156,305	25,412	130,892	180,510	99,371	81,139
10	168,098	26,543	141,555	180,670	110,064	70,606
11	169,082	24,853	144,229	195,531	117,639	77,892
12	178,896	26,260	152,636	189,963	118,344	71,619
13	191,857	26,248	165,609	195,458	112,938	82,520
14	203,366	[1]41,814	161,551	203,226	116,113	87,113
15	201,992	40,950	161,042	212,562	121,371	91,191
16	193,727	40,570	153,157	225,000	132,331	92,669
17	185,417	41,181	144,236	212,269	126,476	85,793
18	189,690	39,756	149,934	203,456	123,186	80,270
19	188,236	41,225	147,011	197,510	117,384	80,126
20	184,512	43,106	141,405	197,677	123,060	74,617
21	179,403	47,078	132,324	192,511	127,494	65,017
22	184,014	47,302	136,711	187,120	118,932	68,188
23	184,164	47,515	136,649	186,024	112,778	73,246
24	194,085	46,755	147,330	188,826	113,739	75,087
25	205,988	49,066	156,921	199,602	118,698	80,904
26	214,271	50,113	164,158	207,177	113,539	93,638
27	203,137	49,378	153,759	207,757	117,564	90,193
28	203,305	51,393	151,911	216,232	116,836	99,396
29	201,298	47,476	153,822	239,559	112,740	126,819
30	202,754	50,999	151,754	241,063	111,955	129,108
31	204,593	55,434	149,159	247,711	117,622	130,089
32	206,594	54,601	151,992	256,976	102,654	154,322
33	203,324	54,875	148,448	242,671	107,127	135,544
34	205,144	57,738	147,406	232,071	105,145	126,926
35	209,069	59,306	149,762	240,471	109,973	130,498
36	218,748	59,408	159,339	245,664	112,045	123,619
37	220,758	59,945	160,813	255,070	120,261	134,809

[1] First payment of tolls amounting from £16,000 to £20,000 a year. 2d *Rep.*, app. no. 39, *Rep. Com.*, 1837–38, xx.
[2] Three quarters only. 1st *Rep.*, app. no. 28.

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TABLE VI

GROSS REVENUE, EXPENDITURE, AND NET REVENUE OF THE POST OFFICE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, NOT INCLUDING TELEGRAPHS, FROM 1838 TO 1907

Year ending		*Gross Revenue* £	*Expenditure* £	*Net Revenue* £
Jan. 5,	1838	2,339,737	687,313	1,652,424
	1839	2,346,278	686,768	1,659,509
	1840	2,390,763	756,999	1,633,764
	1841	1,359,466	858,677	500,789
	1842	1,499,418	938,168	561,249
	1843	1,578,145	977,504	600,641
	1844	1,620,867	980,650	640,217
	1845	1,705,067	985,110	719,957
	1846	1,887,576	1,125,594	761,982
	1847	1,963,857	1,138,745	825,112
	1848	2,181,016	1,196,520	984,496
	1849	2,143,679	1,403,250	740,429
	1850	2,165,349	1,324,562	840,789
	1851	2,264,684	1,460,785	803,898
	1852	2,422,168	1,304,163	1,118,004
	1853	2,434,326	1,343,907	1,090,419
	1854	2,574,407	1,400,679	1,173,727
Dec. 31,	1854	2,701,862	1,506,556	1,195,306
	1855	2,716,420	1,651,364	1,065,056
	1856	2,867,954	1,660,229	1,207,725
	1857[1]	3,035,713	1,720,815	1,314,898
	1858[2]	3,241,535	1,953,283	1,288,252
	1859	3,461,924	1,952,432	1,509,492
	1860	3,531,165	1,953,234	1,577,931
	1861	3,665,128	3,154,527	510,601
	1862	3,764,004	2,926,551	837,453
	1863	3,999,455	2,956,486	1,042,969
	1864	4,231,558	3,078,297	1,153,261
	1865	4,423,608	2,941,086	1,482,522
	1866	4,599,667	3,201,681	1,397,986
	1867	4,668,214	3,246,850	1,421,364
	1868[3]	4,683,646	3,266,724	1,416,922

[1] 1st *Rep. P. G.*, 1855, p. 68.
20th *Rep. P. G.*, 1874, app., p. 46.
[2] Expenditure for sailing packets in 1858 was £935,883.
[3] Postage ceased to be charged on government departments early in 1868.

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TABLE VI — *continued*

Year ending	*Gross Revenue* £	*Expenditure* £	*Net Revenue* £
Dec. 31, 1869	4,764,575	3,459,227	1,305,348
1870[1]	4,929,475	3,435,865	1,493,610
1871	4,900,454	3,610,700	1,289,754
1872	5,208,922	3,684,946	1,523,976
1873	5,348,040	3,792,679	1,555,361
1874	5,751,600	3,915,213	1,836,387
Mar. 21, 1875	5,815,032	3,920,891	1,894,141
1876–77[2]	6,017,072	4,070,006	1,947,066
1877–78	6,047,312	3,990,620	2,056,692
1878–79	6,274,450	3,840,076	2,434,374
1879–80	6,558,445	4,060,758	2,497,687
1880–81[3]	6,733,427	4,135,659	2,597,768
1881–82	7,027,600	4,286,596	2,741,004
1882–83	7,300,960	4,545,398	2,755,562
1883–84	7,764,855	5,154,829	2,610,026
1884–85	7,906,406	5,317,213	2,589,193
1885–86	8,170,604	5,486,724	2,683,880
1886–87	8,471,198	5,880,141	2,591,057
1887–88	8,705,337	5,933,820	2,771,517
1888–89	9,102,776	6,062,902	3,039,874
1889–90	9,474,774	6,266,263	3,208,511
1890–91[4]	9,851,078	6,687,089	3,163,989
1891–92	10,451,998[5]	7,192,487	3,259,511
1892–93	10,600,149	7,507,645	3,092,504
1893–94	10,734,885	7,759,712	2,975,173
1894–95	11,025,460	7,955,344	3,070,116
1895–96	11,759,945	8,086,272	3,673,673
1896–97	12,146,935	8,246,356	3,900,579
1897–98	12,420,376	8,683,317	3,737,059
1898–99	13,049,317	9,190,006	3,859,311
1899–1900	13,394,335	9,683,999	3,710,336
1900–01[6]	13,995,470	10,064,903	3,930,567

[1] 10th *Rep. P. G.*, 1864, pp. 32–38; 18th *Rep. P. G.*, 1872, pp. 26–27.

Until 1858 revenue does not include revenue from impressed newspaper stamps nor does expenditure include cost of packet service until 1861.

[2] In 1876 the beginning of the financial year of the Post Office was changed from 1st January to 1st April.

[3] 27th *Rep. P. G.*, 1881, app., p. 52.

[4] 37th *Rep. P. G.*, 1891, app., p. 64.

[5] Including estimated value of services to other departments from 1891–92 on.

[6] 47th *Rep. P. G.*, 1901, app., p. 82.

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TABLE VI — *continued*

Year ending	*Gross Revenue* £	*Expenditure* £	*Net Revenue* £
Mar. 21, 1901–02	14,465,870	10,465,101	4,000,769
1902–03	15,005,262	10,819,938	4,185,324
1903–04	15,824,394	11,201,122	4,623,272
1904–05	16,274,978	11,446,279	4,828,699
1905–06	17,064,023	11,849,012	5,215,011
Est'm'd 1906–07[1]	17,361,042	12,289,787	5,071,255

[1] 53d *Rep. P. G.*, 1907, p. 95.

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TABLE VII

AVERAGE YEARLY GROSS REVENUE, EXPENDITURE, AND NET REVENUE OF POST OFFICE FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM NOT INCLUDING TELEGRAPHS FROM 1841 TO 1906.

	Gross Revenue £	*Expenditure* £	*Net Revenue* £
1841–45	1,658,214	1,001,405	656,809
1846–50	2,143,717	1,304,772	838,944
1851–55	2,569,836	1,441,334	1,128,502
1856–60	3,135,587	1,785,911	1,349,676
1861–65	4,016,750	3,013,389	1,003,341
1866–70	4,729,155	3,322,069	1,407,086
1871–75	5,404,809	3,784,886	1,619,923
1876–81	6,326,141	4,019,423	2,306,718
1881–86	7,634,085	4,958,152	2,675,933
1886–91	9,121,032	6,166,043	2,954,989
1891–96	10,914,487	7,701,292	3,213,195
1896–1901	13,001,286	9,174,516	3,826,770
1901–1906	15,926,905	11,156,292	4,770,613

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and intent of the various acts of Parliament dealing with rates and finance. "The Financial Report of 1797," various returns submitted to the House of Commons, and the reports contained in the "Accounts and Papers" for the first part of the nineteenth century are chiefly concerned with the financial side of the history of the British Post Office. Since 1840 the most important sources of information are the yearly reports of the Postmasters-General, dating from 1854, and the voluminous reports of committees appointed to investigate debated points in the organization and policy of the Post Office as well as to advise upon matters which had produced friction between the department and its employees.

Of the secondary works there is little to be said. The only one from which any important information has been obtained is Joyce's "History of the British Post Office to 1836." This book contains a great deal of valuable matter arranged in rather a haphazard fashion and with no references. Writing as a Post Office official at the end of the nineteenth century, Joyce hardly appreciated the conditions which his predecessors had to meet. In Stow's "London" are found some interesting facts about the London Penny Post, in Blomefield's "Norfolk" early postal conditions in Norwich are described. The other books of the same description contain only incidental references to minor points of Post Office development.

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