

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

REPORT of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, CAPE TOWN, on the POSTAL DEPARTMENT for the Year 1872. (Presented to the Honourable the House of Assembly by command of His Excellency the Governor, June, 1873.)

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JUNE, 1873.

General Post Office, 8th May, 1873.

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary, &c., &c.

SIR,—In April, 1871, I furnished the Government with a report of the condition of this department in regard to the extent of its operations during the year 1870, the amount of postal revenue collected, and the cost at which this branch of the service had been carried on, comparing these with transactions of the same kind in former years. It did not seem, however, to have met with any attention, nor to have been of interest to any one. I did not therefore arrange, as I had intended, for the regular record of statistics in a tabular form for easy reference, as it would have entailed a very great additional labour upon the different branches of my office, without any hope of its proving of service in the end. I trust, however, when we have more room at our disposal in the new building now in course of preparation for a general post office, to be able more conveniently to have this attended to. I believe that an annual report of this extensive department may in time prove useful as well as interesting to the Government.

It was evident to us all, when that report was compiled, that mails conveyed in every direction through the Colony had increased very much in a few years, and that there were indications of an extension of post offices and conveyance of mails being shortly required to meet the wants of the Colony; but it was impossible to have anticipated anything like what has taken place. Some of these demands have been supplied, occasioning, of course, a sensible increase of expenditure, but at the same time a fair advance in postal collections. The fact, however, that a demand for increased postal communication between places in the Colony as well as with places beyond it has occurred, and the prospect of its farther progress is in itself so significant of the steady advancement and prosperity of the Colony that whether the postal revenue has kept pace with postal expenditure or not during these changes it is of small importance; but I think I will show that it has more than done so.

The discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West has, of course, had the largest share in causing this change. It has not only called for the extension of our postal system to meet the wants of colonial correspondents, but the influx of people from England, and in fact all parts of the world, into that country has led to an addition of our postal communication with England, by both regular mail and private steamers.

Our first mail from Cape Town to the Diamond-fields was dispatched on

the 19th January, 1871, to Klipdrift, the only post office then in that country; it contained sixteen letters and twenty-six books and papers, and was conveyed by passenger wagon.

The first mail cart was put upon the line from Hope Town to Klipdrift in March, 1871, and our first mail from this to go by it weighed 14 lb. Up to March, 1872, there was only this one post office (belonging to the Colony) in the Fields, but two others were then opened,—the one at Du Toit's Pan, the other at De Beer's New Rush; and in that month the mails from this office alone for the Diamond-fields contained 4,883 letters and 3,552 books and papers; and we received from thence 4,730 letters and 1,416 books and papers. Taking five months in 1872, viz.,—June, July, August, September, and October, I find that we dispatched from this office alone to the Fields 26,810 letters and 35,320 books and papers,—receiving from thence in the same time 36,181 letters and 14,552 books and papers. I have no returns from other offices to show what work they did for that country, but I know it must have been very considerable, and it became necessary to run a second cart a week upon the whole line from Wellington to Klipdrift, *via* Beaufort West, Murraysburg, Richmoud, Hanover, Phillip's Town, Hope Town, Du Toit's Pan, and De Beer's New Rush. We had also to do the same upon a portion of the line connecting the Eastern Districts with our main line to the Diamond-fields, viz., between Cradock and Richmond, *via* Middelburg. This second cart was added in August last, and some idea of the necessity for it may be formed from the fact that the mail we dispatched from here on the 5th July, 1872, weighed 460 lb., and contained 1,726 letters and 2,352 books and papers. The mail received from thence on the 18th July was not weighed, but it contained 2,038 letters and 766 books and papers.

The mails dispatched from this three times a week along the line to Port Elizabeth has also been increasing so much in bulk and weight that it will be necessary to run a daily cart to meet the requirements of this office and enable us to forward them with regularity, and afford the Frontier districts that participation in the advantages of the postal communication with the United Kingdom which the increased number of steamers is calculated to give us.

The contractors have several times threatened to give notice of abandoning their contract on account of the weights they are now called upon to carry, and I have no doubt they will do so shortly. They applied for an extension of the time allowed upon the different sections of their line, but I find that this cannot be granted without causing a derangement of the postal services beyond Graham's Town to such an extent that I consider it impossible to advise the Government to accede to it. Their difficulty would be relieved by increasing the number of carts from 3 to 6 a week each way; and although this would be an additional expense, I am strongly of opinion that it is the best mode of dealing with it. The increased expense of this figuring in the annual statement of expenditure under Conveyance of Mails would be more than balanced by the increase under various heads of General Revenue.

Our present contract for the conveyance of mails between this and Port Elizabeth is £6,515; and if an extra cart were dispatched from this after arrival of each mail steamer, as has been suggested, there would be an addition of £2,070, making the total expense £8,585 per annum for an unsatisfactory service, whilst probably for £12,000 we could provide daily mail conveyance.

In 1872 we received an offer from our present contractors, Glynn and Barry, to run a daily post for £11,000; and although horses may be now somewhat dearer and wages higher, I think parties would be found willing to undertake it for the amount I have named.

Upon the line from Cape Town to Namaqualand it is also necessary to make some improvements, and introduce increased means of conveyance of mails; but I intend of bringing this matter under the consideration of the Government in a separate and special communication.

I propose now giving some postal statistics which I think will prove, among other things, that there has been a considerable advance in the demand upon the services of the Post Office department within the last three years, proportionate, it may be, to the improved condition of the Colony generally, but certainly in all respects far greater than the machinery of the establishment was calculated to meet.

In 1870 there were 326 post offices in existence, the management of which in salaries cost £8,951 5s. 4d. The extent of post roads open was 4,290 miles, of which 3,420 miles were for post carts, 870 miles for horse posts, and the total number of miles travelled by mails during the year 692,640 miles, of which 586,560 were by carts and 106,080 by horses.

The whole amount expended on account of conveyance of

mails was	..	..	..	..	£29,440	15	7
Salaries	..	..	..	..	8,951	5	4

Total .. £38,392 0 11

The postal revenue derived from postage collections, premiums upon money orders, and fines was £29,808 5s. 5d.

In 1871 there were 313 officers, with salaries attached amounting to £9,034 10s. 2d. The length of roads used for mails (not including the distance from Hope Town to Klipdrift) was 4,542 miles, of which 3,666 were for mail carts and 876 for post horses. The total number of miles over which mails were carried was 696,384 miles, of which 589,680 were by carts and 106,704 by horses.

The total amount expended on account of conveyance was	£27,259	18	7
Salaries	..	..	..
	9,034	10	2

Total .. £36,294 8 9

In addition to this was paid to the Union S. S. Company, on account of former contract to Mauritius and Ceylon, the sum of £2,125, but it is not properly a charge against the year 1871 for conveyance of mails. The postal revenue for the year was £30,998 19s. 3d.

In 1872 there was 324 offices, with salaries amounting to £9,909 3s. 1d. The extent of roads open for posts was 4,572 miles, of which 3,666 were travelled by carts and 906 by horses. The number of miles travelled by mails was 803,712, of which 693,888 were in carts and 109,824 on horseback.

The total cost of conveyance by land was £28,031 5s. 7d. In addition to this there were £600 paid to the Union S. S. Company for conveyance of mails between Table Bay and Port Elizabeth, twice a month, at £25 per trip. Our total expenditure, therefore, for conveyance of mails and salaries was £38,540 8s. 8d.; our postal revenue for the year was £36,391 7s. 6d.

From the foregoing statement it will be seen that the postal revenue was less than the expenditure in

1870 by	..	..	..	..	..	£8,538	15	6
1871	..	..	..	..	..	5,295	9	6
1872	..	..	..	..	..	2,149	1	2

And, in fact, that the apparent deficiency has been steadily decreasing since 1870. It is a fallacy, however, to call this a deficiency, as no credit is taken in our accounts for the proportion of postage that would be due upon official correspondence and Government Gazettes, if it were chargeable. It would be impossible for me to state exactly what this should be, but taking the result of the calculations made with much care by Mr. Aitchison (the late secretary to the General Post Office) in 1866, as a basis for such an estimate—when he made it at that time £10,000 in round numbers, I presume no one will question the

airness of our assuming it now to be at least £12,000. The introduction of this item into the accounts as a credit in our statement of collections for those years would show an excess of postal revenue over postal expenditure as follows :—

In 1870 of	..	..	..	..	£3,416	4	6
In 1871 ..	..	..	..	..	6,704	10	6
In 1872 ..	..	..	..	..	9,850	18	10

Mr. Beere, the controller in the circulation branch of this office, has furnished me with a report of his department, compiled with much care, and must have occupied a considerable portion of his time after office hours to collect the figures and facts for it, as there is not yet the means of entering them in a tabulated form as they occur for reference. It is too voluminous to be of use in the Colonial Office as a record, or for reference; besides which, it contains matters so purely departmental that it would hardly be understood or appreciated beyond this office. I avail myself, however, of this opportunity to make such extracts from it as appear to me suitable for embodiment in this report.

From a comparative statement in that report of letters, newspapers, and books forwarded to England per steamers (Royal Mail and private) in 1867, 1871, and 1872, it appears there were—

In 1867	104,957 letters	} No return of books.
In 1871 ..	..	..	..	125,866 letters
In 1872 ..	..	..	..	162,590 letters, 64,964 books, &c.

There is no record of the number of letters received from England, as they are forwarded by weight and brought to account in that way in the books of the London post office and in this, at the rate of 2s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per cunce upon letters and 9d. per lb. on books passing between England and the Colony. Foreign letters, &c., are differently charged; but it is plain from the change that has taken place in the balances forwarded from this monthly, in settlement of our postage account with the Imperial Office, that they have increased in much the same ratio as those forwarded.

The changes that have taken place in the postal communication between this and England within a short time will be perhaps best understood from the following return of mails received from England per private steamers in 1871 and 1872 :—

Year.			Number of Ships.	Letters.	Bags of Mails.
1871	..	..	8	7,000 about	65
1872	..	..	31	26,078	298

The number of bags of mails received by regular mail steamers during those years was as follows :—

In 1871	..	..	..	..	1577 bags.
In 1872	..	..	..	..	1517 bags.

Showing an increase in the number of bags conveyed by private steamers of 233, and a decrease in the number by Royal Mail steamer of 60, but an increase upon the whole of the mails received by both mail and private steamers of 173 bags.

The largest mail received during 1872 was per *Danube*, 6th February—74 bags, 58 of which were for this Colony, the rest for Natal.

Mails dispatched from this office for places other than the United Kingdom by ships, &c., in 1871 and 1872 contained—

In 1871	..	..	..	10,004 letters, books, &c.
In 1872	..	..	..	12,500 letters, books, &c.

Registered Letters.

The number of registered letters received in the General Post Office from Inland post offices—

In 1867 was	..	..	..	..	6,092
In 1871 was	..	..	..	..	9,263
In 1872 was	..	..	..	..	13,309

The number dispatched from this office to inland post offices—

In 1867 was	..	..	..	..	3,811
In 1871 was	..	..	..	..	5,996
In 1872 was	..	..	..	..	5,972

The number received in this office from England—

In 1867 was	..	..	..	..	1,298
In 1871 was	..	..	..	..	2,264
In 1872 was	..	..	..	..	3,930

And those dispatched to England were—

In 1867	..	..	..	..	1,920
In 1871	..	..	..	..	3,337
In 1872	..	..	..	..	5,358

I will here quote from some of Mr. Beere's remarks upon the subject of the tri-weekly mail to the frontier, which will be found to bear me out in what I have often lately had occasion to say in regard to the necessity for increasing the means of conveyance of mails:—"How the postal matter for the Colony generally has increased our work may be gathered from the circumstance that formerly on Thursdays, as the contractor lately assured me, the frontier mail could often be put into one bag, not weighing more than about 55 lb., now it is seldom under 300 lb., and, in fact, is more frequently as much as 800 or 900 lb. in weight.

The following return of the weight of mail matter dispatched from this office to the frontier per post-carts and steamers will afford still proof of the necessity:—

Year.	Per Cart.	Per Steamer.	Total.
1869	.. 70,929 lb.	6,586 lb.	77,515 lb.
1870	.. 68,778 lb.	26,162 lb.	94,940 lb.
1871	.. 78,603 lb.	20,685 lb.	99,288 lb.
1872	.. 77,641 lb.	28,893 lb.	106,534 lb.

The increase in 1872 over 1869 being 29,019 lb. in all, and very nearly the whole of this increased weight was conveyed by steamers, as will be seen from the above, at a very considerable amount less than it would have cost had we sent it overland.

The weight of the mails forwarded along the northern route through Beaufort West, Murraysburg, Richmond, through Colesberg to the Free State, and through Hope Town to the Diamond-fields was:—

In 1870	..	..	..	23,922 lb.
In 1871	..	..	..	26,449 lb.
In 1872	..	..	..	39,058 lb.

Dead Letters.

The number of letters returned to this office which have remained in country post offices upwards of two months unclaimed, and of unstamped letters posted in the country, have also wonderfully increased. We only commenced keeping a record of the number opened and returned to the writers in May,

1872, and I find that from the 1st of that month to the 31st December there were 9,325 letters returned, upon which the postage charged was £13 3 7s. 4d.; and of these 1,801 were either refused or the writers could not be found, and were returned to the office again, upon which the amount of postage charged was £26 4s. 2d. The number, therefore, which actually reached their writers was 7,524, and the postage collected upon them £107 3s. 2d.

Money Order System.

The means of remitting small sums of money through post offices in money orders were extended to St. Helena in August, 1869, to Klipdrift and De Bear's New Rush, in Griqualand West, in May, 1872, and to Natal in September, 1872.

The number of money order offices in the Colony has been increased by two during the year, one at Dordrecht the other at Ceres. There are now fifty of them. The transactions of these offices have not undergone much change in the last few years as will be seen from the annexed tabulated statements for 1870, 1871, and 1872, but they continue to render very valuable assistance to the public in the settlement of small accounts; the average amount passing between colonial offices in those years having been about £60,000 per annum, yielding to the revenue of the office in premiums upwards of £800 per annum.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES PIERS, Postmaster-General.