

The number of letters despatched from London on the 10th January, 1840, was 112,104. The number of letters and newspapers now sent out from London daily is about 2,000,000. The mails despatched from London to the provinces by railway weigh 28,000 tons a year, and those received in London 18,000 tons.

The number of telegrams delivered in London annually is 18,500,000, and of parcels nearly 8,000,000, the rate of delivery per head of the population being about 138 letters, &c., $3\frac{2}{3}$ telegrams, $1\frac{2}{3}$ parcels.

The postmen employed in delivering and collecting letters, &c., were, in 1881, 3,751, and now 5,321, or an increase of 41·8 per cent.

The complaints made by the public of late delivery of letters, &c., in the London postal area during the year ended the 31st December, 1889, numbered 220 only.

The female staff employed on counter and telegraph duties in the London postal service numbers 560 persons. On the average twenty retirements take place annually. About twelve leave to be married, four on account of ill-health, and three to better their position. The death-rate of the female staff is less than 0·5 per cent.

In 1890 there were in the metropolitan area 8 principal distributing-offices for letters and parcels and 6 separate dépôts for parcels, together with 93 secondary sorting and posting-offices for the collection into and delivery from of letters and parcels.

The public business, such as the sale of stamps, &c., is conducted at 98 Crown offices and 770 letter-receiving houses. In 1839 there were about 70 letter-receivers in the London district.

Stamps can be purchased by the public from about 3,000 shopkeepers, licensed for the purpose by the inland revenue authorities.

There are 11 head, 96 branch, and 304 receiving-offices in the metropolis where telegraph business is transacted.

The area included in the London postal system, which extends from Mill Hill and Whetstone in one direction to South Norwood and Sydenham in another; from Chiswick to North Woolwich; from Wimbledon to Greenwich, and from Hanwell to Woodford, is about 250 square miles; and the population is estimated at 5,000,000. This gives about $2\frac{1}{2}$ square miles to each of the 107 centres of letter- and parcel-distribution. As about 35 miles of new streets, and 15,000 new houses are built in every year, new centres have been arranged for letter-delivery. The annual increase adds houses and streets to the postal zone equal annually to Oxford and Cambridge.

The conveyance of the letter and parcel mails between the various districts of London, and to and from the respective railway termini, is performed by means of vehicles of different descriptions, amounting to about 550 in number. The total distance traversed daily by these conveyances is about 5,750 miles, or nearly a fourth of the circumference of the globe. The distance travelled by these vehicles in one year amounts to about 1,800,000 miles. About 380 regular and 95 casual drivers are employed, and 1,100 horses are used.

The valentine has nearly had its day. Missives of this description in London have dropped from 3,000,000 in 1883 to 342,000 in 1890, and of the latter about 12,000 circulated by the comparatively new parcel-post system. Easter cards are gaining in public favour. The number circulating within London bounds in 1890 was about 640,000, as against 520,000 in 1889. Christmas cards dealt with in London have reached the prodigious number of 50,000,000.

And now the commemoration of another festival has to be watched in its effect on postal duties—that of Primrose Day. Last year the delivery of primrose parcels by letter and parcel-post was 55,000, or about double the number in 1886. Of these over 3,000 were brought into London by the Brighton parcel-coaches.

SOME REMINISCENCES.

(From an article in the *Blackfriars Magazine*.)

When penny-postage came into force the Earl of Lichfield was Postmaster-General. When the jubilee of that reform of the 10th of January, 1840, was celebrated, the Right Honourable Henry Cecil Raikes, M.P.—chairman of the feast of the 15th January, 1890—reigned in his stead. When the old rates of postage were abolished, Lieut.-Colonel Maberly occupied the secretarial chair, but the guiding spirit was Sir Rowland Hill. Soon he became sole Secretary. After him, in 1864, came Sir John Tilley, K.C.B., who, at the jubilee banquet (January, 1890), recalled his experiences, gained before most of the guests in the Venetian Chamber, in which he spoke, were born—before, indeed, the actual Secretary of the Post Office himself—the vice-chairman of the evening—Sir Arthur Blackwood, K.C.B., had seen the light.

Between Lord Lichfield and the Right Honourable Henry Cecil Raikes there came as Postmasters-General the Earl of Lonsdale, the Earl of St. Germans, the Marquis of Clanricarde, the Earl of Hardwicke, Viscount Canning, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Colchester, the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, Lord Stanley of Alderley, the Duke of Montrose, the Marquis of Hartington, Mr. Monsell (Lord Emly), Sir Lyon Playfair, Lord John Manners (Duke of Rutland), Professor Fawcett, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, and Lord Wolverton. Now, in the administrations of these thirteen Ministers of the Crown, assisted by the four Secretaries named, what has been accomplished? Who have been active figures in the minor parts? Why is a period of fifty years of official work cause of jubilation?

The army of one hundred thousand Post Office servants—established and auxiliary—scattered over the face of the land must be as exact and well-ordered in their movements as would be an actual army in the field, in the finest condition and under the severest discipline. But, unlike an army whose component parts move in masses, each man in the Post Office has his distinct sphere of action, and yet must move in such exact harmony with his distant comrades that loitering of the rural postman at John o' Groats may not trouble the dwellers at the Land's End; and, in lieu of martial law, the working-bees are held together by no more potent bond than the value of their situations, a short set of rules, and a British sense of duty.