

What servant of the Post Office has been ever known to shrink from his post of duty, even when danger threatens? Marine mail-guard Mortleman on board the "Violet," in a storm in mid-channel, knowing that the vessel into whose hold the water was swiftly pouring must soon be lost, goes down darkling into the flooded mail-room to rescue, if it may be, the bags in his charge, and so, dying in the act, leaves his life a memory. The Scotch rural messenger, blinded and frozen by the snow-storm, hangs the mail-bag on a tree, so that it may at least be saved, and then lies down to die beneath it. The mail-guard Bennett, sorely hurt in a railway collision, thinks less of his mangled body than of collecting the fragments and contents of the scattered mail-bags. The Northumberland mail-cart contractor, not daunted by a raging storm, heroically drives across the moor because he sees his duty plain before him, and lays down his life in doing it. So in all grades of the service, in all the varying conditions which official duty presents, and regardless of time and circumstance, the grand old signal of what England expects her sons to do is ever to the fore.

Who would not find cause for jubilation in belonging to a service whose honourable watchword is "Duty," and whose labours rarely cease; a service in which there is daily something to be attempted, and, if Heaven wills, to do? Who would not see in the completion of fifty years of the operations of a great and world-wide fiscal reform, which has brought unnumbered blessings to the human race, a fit occasion for giving utterance to some not unreasonable rejoicings?

In these fifty years the plan of penny-postage has been worked out, a book-post established, halfpenny post-cards introduced, a sample-post set at work, a parcel-post which benefits the million, cheap and widely extended telegraphy, telephones, and the vast Savings Bank, established. Perhaps, after all, these are trifles, and more remains for mightier men to do.

Lord Canning sanctioned the book-post, and Sir Lyon Playfair the post-cards and postal-orders. Mr. Raikes introduced the sample-post; Professor Fawcett, parcels. The Duke of Montrose began upon, and Lord Hartington finally brought out, the telegraph system. The name of Lord Stanley of Alderley is linked with the Savings Bank; and Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, although out of office, virtually carried in Parliament the sixpenny rate for telegrams.

Few can remember the first posting of penny-post letters on the 10th of January, 1840. Some can. Mr. William James Godby is certainly able to do so. He was a surveyor for fifty years, so that he can recall 1840 with ease, and, as a young clerk, have a good margin to spare.

A few months ago there died a very ancient Post Office servant, Mr. Job Smith, of Islington, N. He had been a postman in the old days, nearly seventy years ago; and was in 1889 still a pensioner, aged ninety-three. He died on the very day on which, trudging to St. Martin's le Grand as usual, he received his monthly stipend.

Mr. Moses Henry Nobbs, the last surviving mail-guard, began work June 27th, 1836, and still does duty as mail-officer at Paddington. He could remember a good deal in his fifty-four years of service. Old memories must have revived as he went down from London to Brighton, two or three years ago, as guard-in-charge of the special trip of the New Brighton parcel-coach. He was fully equipped, as of yore, for that perilous journey, a timepiece from Jamaica serving to complete the outfit. A blunderbuss, from Exeter, was handed in at the last moment to make the armament fourfold, and had to be tied on to the hind seat with official string. Several valued colleagues, still in active service, date from prehistoric—that is, ante penny-postage—times. If we knew their names for certain we would chronicle in these pages all the good men and true who have for so many years borne, like our famous flag, "the battle and the breeze" of official life.

Once, some time in November, 1867, when Mr. Disraeli was Chancellor, there came a little note from the late Mr. George Ward Hunt, at the Treasury, to the late Mr. Scudamore. It contained only a few words: "You may give the notices for the Telegraph Bill."

That brief intimation, like the magician's wand, has largely changed the face of the Post Office, given the postal side perhaps eighteen or twenty thousand colleagues, erected one hundred and eighty-three thousand miles of telegraph-wires, produced an annual transmission of fifty millions of telegrams, and an annual receipt of two millions of money.

Many years ago some miscreants blew down a prison-wall in Clerkenwell with gunpowder. As a result, fifteen hundred special constables were sworn in at the post-office. The astute Colonel John Lowther du Plat Taylor, C.B., an old servant of the Post Office and a soldier born, swiftly saw his opportunity, and formed therefrom, and has ever since maintained, his splendid Post Office Regiment of a thousand Volunteers, fit to go anywhere and do anything, as was shown by their services in Egypt. More power to his elbow—and theirs!

Once half a dozen clerks in the Post Office bought a chest of tea, kept it in a cupboard, and dealt it out among themselves at cost-price, a few pounds at a time. Look out of the windows of the Savings Bank, craning your head a trifle, and there you will see the modern *replica* of the postal cupboard, a building and a business with an annual turnover of a million and three-quarters sterling. So do great things grow from small beginnings.

One day, about thirty years ago, a bank director of Huddersfield, Sir Charles William Sikes, wrote a little paper on a possible Postal Savings Bank. How many hundreds of millions sterling, the savings of the people, have passed, mainly as a result of Sir Charles's suggestions, through the coffers of the Post Office on their way to the National Debt Office for care and investment?

In the past there have been (as there are in the present) many active figures on whom, uniting as they did a sound discernment with an absorbing power for official work, must rest, in a large degree, the merit of what has been accomplished. Of the brilliant statesmen who have adorned the office of Postmaster-General, a volume could be written; but, good as were their services to the State at the Post Office, it is mainly in other spheres of public duty that their substantial reputation has been acquired.

Sir Rowland Hill rests in Westminster Abbey, and he, "though dead, yet speaketh" in the administration of the Post Office. A foreign grave has closed over the remains of one of the ablest and most devoted of officials, the late Mr. Frank Ives Scudamore, C.B. He might often be seen