

STAFF.

The total number of officers on the staff on the 31st March was as under:—

	31st March, 1903.
Postmaster-General	1
Classified staff:—	
First Division	3
Clerical Division	1,217
Non-clerical Division	677
Distributors and messengers	503
Total, classified staff	2,401

Employees not on permanent staff:—

Country Postmasters and Postmistresses	1,656
Nightwatchmen	3
Mail-cart drivers	4
Postmasters and telegraphists or telephonists who are Railway officers	151

Total 4,215

COMPARATIVE Return of Officers of the Post and Telegraph Department for the Years ended 31st March, 1902, and 31st March, 1903.

	Mar. 31, 1902.	Mar. 31, 1903.		Mar. 31, 1902.	Mar. 31, 1903.
Postmaster-General	1	1	Brought forward	122	128
Secretary	1	1	Chief Postmasters	17	17
Superintendent of Electric Lines	1	1	Postmasters and Officers in Charge on permanent staff	111	112
Assistant Secretary and Inspector	1	1	Clerks (including Telephone Exchange cadettes and cadets in post-offices)	1,167	1,274
Controller of Money-orders and Savings-banks and Accountant	1	1	Operators (including cadets in telegraph-offices)	—	10
Chief Clerk	1	1	Post Office Sorters	234	230
Assistant Controller of Money-orders and Savings-banks and Accountant	1	1	Letter-carriers	49	58
Clerks in General Post Office—			Messengers (Post Office)	70	69
Secretary's Office	18	18	Linemen	468	503
Inspector's and Dead-letter Branch	7	7	Telegraph distributors and message boys	3	3
Controller of Money-orders and Savings-banks and Accountant's Branch	66	69	Nightwatchmen	4	4
Storekeeper and assistants	7	10	Mail-cart drivers	—	151
Electrician	1	1	Postmasters and telegraphists or telephonists who are Railway officers	144	151
Assistant Electrician	2	1	Country Postmasters, Postmistresses, and telephonists	1,601	1,656
Mechanicians and cadets	7	6			
Telegraph Inspectors	4	5	Totals	3,990	4,215
Assistant Inspectors of Post-offices	3	4			
Carried forward	122	128			

The staff is efficient, and the conduct of its members continues satisfactory. Grave offences have been practically unknown, and minor errors and irregularities have been comparatively few, which is to the credit of the employees as a whole.

A partial reorganization of the postal staff became necessary, owing to the growing importance of many of the offices and the growth of work generally. An increase in the number of supervising officers has resulted; and, while not overlooking the interchange of duties among the rank and file, it has been found necessary to place branches under officers of a higher rank than heretofore. The condition of many of the controlling officers of the telegraph branch has also been improved. This not only opens out an additional prospect of promotion, but will make for increased efficiency as well.

"The Post and Telegraph Department Act, 1902" (referred to in last year's report as an amending Classification Bill), became law on the 1st October last. It provides an amelioration of the pay of many of the lower grades of the non-clerical division, as may be gathered from the following:—

Letter-carriers, first grade, and telegraph linemen: Minimum salary increased from £130 to £135 per annum, and maximum salary from £140 to £150.

Letter-carriers, second grade: Minimum salary increased from £95 to £105, and maximum from £120 to £125.

Letter-carriers, third grade: Minimum salary increased from £50 to £60, and maximum from £85 to £100.

Post-office messengers, first grade: Minimum salary increased from £85 to £105, maximum from £120 to £140.

Post-office messengers, second grade: Minimum salary increased from £50 to £60, maximum from £80 to £95.

In the assistant counter-clerks' class the annual increments have been altered from two of £10 and six of £5 to five of £10. In the assistant despatch-clerks' class, from two of £10 and ten of £5 to seven of £10; in the distributors' class, from one of £10 and four of £5 to three of £10. Assistant counter-clerks now reach the maximum pay in five instead of eight years; assistant despatch-clerks, in seven instead of twelve years; distributors, in three instead of five years.

A new class of sorters is also provided, mainly with a view to the transfer of non-clerical officers, such as letter-carriers, not educationally or otherwise qualified for higher positions in the clerical division, to the mail-sorting branches of the principal offices. At the same time there is