

STAFF.

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

	31st March, 1904.
Postmaster-General	1
Classified staff :—	
First Division	3
Clerical Division	1,285
Non-clerical Division	761
Distributors and messengers	524
Total, classified staff	2,574
Employees not on permanent staff :—	
Country Postmasters and Postmistresses	1,713
Nightwatchmen	3
Mail-cart drivers	4
Postmasters and telegraphists or telephonists who are Railway officers	160
Total	4,454

COMPARATIVE Return of Officers of the Post and Telegraph Department for the Years ended 31st March, 1903, and 31st March, 1904.

	Mar. 31, 1903.	Mar. 31, 1904.		Mar. 31, 1903.	Mar. 31, 1904.
Postmaster-General	1	1	Brought forward	124	125
Secretary	1	1	Assistant Inspectors of Post-offices	4	4
Superintendent of Electric Lines	1	1	Chief Postmasters	17	17
Assistant Secretary and Inspector	1	1	Postmasters and Officers in Charge on permanent staff	112	116
Controller of Money-orders and Savings-banks and Accountant	1	1	Clerks (including Telephone Exchange cadettes and cadets in post-offices)	1,274	1,360
Chief Clerk	1	1	Operators (including cadets in telegraph-offices)		
Assistant Controller of Money-orders and Savings-banks and Accountant	1	1	Post Office Sorters	10	13
Clerks in General Post Office—			Letter-carriers	230	273
Secretary's Office	18	18	Messengers (Post Office)	58	66
Inspector's and Dead-letter Branch	7	7	Linemen	69	76
Controller of Money-orders and Savings-banks and Accountant's Branch	69	69	Telegraph distributors and message-boys	503	524
Storekeeper and assistants	10	10	Nightwatchmen	3	3
Master cable steamer "Tutanekai"	1	1	Mail-cart drivers	4	4
Electrician	1	1	Postmasters and telegraphists or telephonists who are Railway officers	151	160
Assistant Electrician	1	1	Country Postmasters, Postmistresses, and telephonists	1,656	1,713
Mechanicians and cadets	6	6			
Telegraph Inspectors	5	5			
Carried forward	124	125	Totals	4,215	4,454

The conduct of the staff has been satisfactory, while efficiency has been well maintained. Considering the magnitude of the business, complaints from the public have been singularly few, which in a measure is due to the firm way in which errors discovered by the Department, without complaint from outside, are handled. The systematic comparison in the clearing-room of the forwarded and received (office) copies of telegrams has not been relaxed, and all errors are noticed. Errors and irregularities on the postal side are similarly taken up.

Postal cadets seeking promotion to the Sixth Class are now required to pass an examination in general postal knowledge, and it is intended in future to require telegraph cadets to pass the postal examination as well as obtain a certificate of proficiency in telegraph-operating. There is a tendency on the part of young officers to assume that an acquaintance with the daily routine allotted them is all that is expected, with the result that their knowledge is too local for their services to be of real value outside their own particular duties. As far as can be done, without disorganizing business, cadets throughout the service are transferred from one branch to another from time to time, so that they may acquire a general insight of the varied duties.

Notwithstanding the exceptional advantages offered to cadets who pass the Civil Service Examinations, it is a matter for regret that comparatively few lads trouble themselves to work up for the examinations. Seeing that cadets who pass the Junior Examination gain one year's seniority, and that two years' seniority is secured by cadets who pass the Senior Examination, the number of candidates is somewhat disappointing. The advantage gained by cadets who pass the examinations is necessarily secured to them throughout the whole of their service. As all officers who joined the Department since the 13th September, 1880, have to pass the Senior Examination before they may be promoted to a class higher than the Fifth, the effect of the failure to pass the examination will ere long become very apparent to them.

A technical examination for telegraph officers will take place in July next. These examinations will be held at shorter intervals than heretofore.

From the 1st April last the payment for overtime performed by the postal staff at chief post-offices in respect of week-day attendance was brought into line with the payment to telegraph officers—i.e., for attendance in excess of ninety-six hours in two consecutive weeks, instead of only for attendance between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. The payment for Sunday and holiday overtime is not changed. Distributors and others in the non-clerical division drawing salaries not exceeding £100 are now paid 1s. an hour instead of 8d., and the rate for officers drawing a salary of £100 has been made uniform.