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GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.

His Excellency The GOVERNOR directs the publication of the subjoined Annual Report of the Hongkong General Post Office for the Year 1866.

By Order,

HENRY JOHN BALL,
Acting Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 29th June, 1867.

No. 32.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, HONGKONG,
27th June, 1867.

SIR,—Some delay has occurred in handing in my usual Annual Report, caused by my absence, accompanied by EDWARD HUGH REA, Esquire, the Special Surveyor of the Post Office in the East, on an Official tour of inspection of the Postal Agencies at the various Ports and places in China and Japan. Having returned to Hongkong on the 15th Instant I proceeded at once to collect the information necessary for this purpose and I now transmit for the information of His Excellency Sir RICHARD GRAVES MACDONNELL my report being that for the year 1866.

In the first place I regret to remark that the Office has not apparently been so productive of Revenue during the year ending the 31st December last as it was in 1865 by the sum of \$28,250.26 cents, and the following statement shews, that whilst the Imperial share of the Revenue was £3,928.18.7 = \$18,858.86 cents less in 1866 than it was in 1865, the Colony's share was \$9,391.40 cents minus for the same period:—this diminution is accounted for by the depressed state of Commercial and Banking interests in the East, during the year many Mercantile Firms of standing, and Six Banks have either failed or discontinued business; by a monthly line of Steamers running for a portion of the year between Manila and Singapore carrying Mails which were formerly conveyed to this place for transmission to the United Kingdom and other places; by the continuance of an illicit conveyance of letters by vessels running on the Coast of China and Japan, and chiefly to Shanghai, where they have been deposited at the Local Post Office to the detriment of the Colonial Revenue, a fact which is substantiated by the report for the year ending 31st March last which has just been published by the Municipal Council of that place, from which it appears that nearly six thousand Loose Letters were received at that Office from Hongkong in the year. Under an agreement which I made during a recent visit to Shanghai such letters will, even if taken to the Local Post Office in the first instance, be handed over to the British Post Master, who will collect the ordinary Sea Postage upon them. The mails carried by the French line of Mail Packets have also increased somewhat to the disadvantage of the British Revenue.

Comparative Statement of Revenue.

Total amount of Revenue collected during the year 1865,	£40,029.16.1	= \$192,143.06
Do. do. do. 1866,	34,144.6.8	= \$163,892.80
Total deficiency in 1866 as compared with 1865,		
	5,885.9.5	= \$ 28,250.26
Total amount of Imperial Revenue collected in 1865,		
Do. do. do. 1866,	£27,267.18.5½	= \$130,886.03
	23,338.19.10½	= \$112,027.17
Total deficiency in 1866 as compared with 1865,		
	£ 3,928.18.7	= \$ 18,858.86
Total amount of Colonial Revenue collected in 1865,		
Do. do. do. 1866,		\$ 61,257.03
		\$ 51,865.63
Total deficiency in 1866 as compared with 1865,		
		\$ 9,391.40

The amount (exclusive of Postage Stamps) outstanding and due to this Office from the Packet Agencies at the Ports at the end of the year 1865 was \$8,553.47 cents, whilst that due at the end of 1866 was \$13,704.10 cents thus shewing that there was \$5,150.63 cents more outstanding and due to the Department in 1866 than in the previous year, and therefore reducing the total deficiency in last year's Revenue to \$23,099.63, and making the Colony's share of the Postal Revenue for 1866 in reality only \$4,240.77 cents less than that of 1865.

The Revenue of the Department is not however a perfect criterion of the amount of work performed in the Post Office, as for instance, if, as before shewn, £23,338.19.10½ was collected here on account of the Imperial Office, it is only reasonable to assume that a sum even larger than that has been collected in the United Kingdom and elsewhere and retained there, upon correspondence sent in the mails to Hongkong, and I therefore estimate that the existence of this Office and the Agencies which are subject to it induces a sum equal to about £60,000 Sterling per annum towards the payment of the Postal Subsidy,

and this I am satisfied by the result of experience recently gained might be very much augmented if Officers of the Post Office were placed on board the Packets to sort the mails on the voyage, a subject which will form a part of the General Report of my tour of inspection.

The expenditure for the year 1866, so far as the same has been defrayed by the Colony amounts to \$25,356.46 cents or \$57.13 cents less than that of 1865, this does not embrace any portion of the charge for the carriage of the English Mails, although it includes a sum of \$2,439.81 cents paid for the conveyance of mails by private Ships.

There has been no change in the Staff of Officers of the Department during 1866, neither have there been any additional Agencies established, and my recent inspection has satisfied me that none can be opened with advantage to the Public Revenue.

I am satisfied that the Peninsular and Oriental Company have now put every possible check upon the illegal conveyance of letters by the Contract Packets running between this place and Shanghai; but it is also clear to me that great numbers of letters are still illicitly carried in a way that it is next to impossible to discover; many are carried by passengers, and others are sent by Special Chinese Messengers, who in the absence of an Officer of Customs cannot of course be searched, the loss to the Revenue on this line and the other Coast lines must be considerable.

The amount realized by the sale of Postage Stamps during the year 1866 was \$134,107.94 cents or \$29,775.04 cents less than it was in 1865.

The share of the postage which the Colonial Government received on mails from the United Kingdom during the last year amounted to £1,227.18.3 or £14.0.9 less than the sum received from the same source in 1865.

During the year 1866, 171,835 letters and 152,855 Newspapers and Prices Current were sent in the mails by the British Packets to the United Kingdom; these figures shew a decrease of 58,238 Letters and 5,156 Papers in the year 1866 as compared with the previous year, it follows therefore that the falling off in the Revenue has been principally caused by a decrease in the correspondence sent from Hongkong to the United Kingdom, whilst 10,074 letters and 1,871 papers were also transmitted in the mails carried by the French Packets, shewing an increase of 204 letters and a decrease of 3,265 papers under this head; no account is taken of the number of letters and papers received in the mails by either the British or French Packets.

The Registered letters received from London during 1866 numbered 939, and those despatched to London amounted to 1,005, shewing an increase of 35 of the former and 26 of the latter over those of 1865.

The number of Ship Mails (*i. e.* mails conveyed by Vessels not under Contract) received at Hongkong during the year 1866 was 1,121 or 112 less than those received in 1865, and the number of such Mails which were despatched from Hongkong during 1866 was 1,616, or 110 in excess of the number despatched in 1865.

During the year 1866, 1,395 Official letters on the business of the Office were received, and 1,066 letters were written and sent from the Office: these are exclusive, of course, of minutes, the usual routine letters and printed forms, and of a vast deal of correspondence which takes place in Notes, and shew an increase of 126 letters received and 272 written over those of the year 1865.

The system of fines for Overtime and premiums for time saved on the voyage which was inaugurated in November 1865, has, it may be assumed from a return appended, resulted so far in accelerating the Contract Mails; from this return it will be observed that in the year 1866 the Peninsular and Oriental Company delivered 15 Mails here before their due date and 9 Mails after they were due here; in the year 1865, 3 Mails arrived on their due date, 13 before their time and 8 after their time, and, that in 1866 31 days were gained on the voyage, and 25 lost, against 24 days gained and 36 lost in 1865, and that in 1866 the quickest time in which a Mail was conveyed to Hongkong via Marseilles was 37 days, whilst in 1865, 41 days was the shortest time occupied in this service. The French Packets delivered their quickest mail in 1866 in 39 days, and in 1865 in 38 days.

I also inclose returns of the specified and actual days of arrival and departure of the British Mail Packets during the year 1866.—I have the honor to be, Sir, Your most Obedient Servant,

F. W. MITCHELL,
Postmaster General.

The Honorable HENRY JOHN BALL,
Acting Colonial Secretary,
Hongkong.

RETURN shewing the NUMBER of DAYS allowed for the conveyance of MAILS from London to Hongkong, via Southampton and via Marseilles, the time each voyage occupied, and the number of days lost or gained, during the Year 1866.

VIÀ SOUTHAMPTON.					VIÀ MARSEILLES.				
Date of Departure.	Time allowed in Time Table.	No. of days occupied.	No. of days gained.	No. of days lost.	Date of Departure.	Time allowed in Time Table.	No. of days occupied.	No. of days gained.	No. of days lost.
1866.					1866.				
January 4	52 days	49	3	..	January 10	46 days	43	3	..
" 20	48 "	51	..	3	" 26	42 "	45	..	3
February 4	48 "	56	..	8	February 10	42 "	50	..	8
" 20	48 "	50	..	2	" 26	42 "	44	..	2
March 4	48 "	47	1	..	March 10	42 "	41	1	..
" 20	48 "	50	..	2	" 26	42 "	44	..	2
April 4	48 "	47	1	..	April 10	42 "	41	1	..
" 20	48 "	47	1	..	" 26	42 "	41	1	..
May 4	48 "	49	..	1	May 10	42 "	43	..	1
" 20	48 "	46	2	..	" 26	42 "	40	2	..
June 4	49 "	48	1	..	June 11	42 "	41	1	..
" 20	48 "	45	3	..	" 26	42 "	39	3	..
July 4	48 "	45	3	..	July 10	42 "	39	3	..
" 20	48 "	46	2	..	" 26	42 "	40	2	..
August 4	48 "	49	..	1	August 10	42 "	43	..	1
" 20	49 "	44	5	..	" 27	42 "	37	5	..
September 4	48 "	50	..	2	September 10	42 "	44	..	2
" 20	52 "	49	3	..	" 26	46 "	43	3	..
October 4	52 "	50	2	..	October 10	46 "	44	2	..
" 20	52 "	56	..	4	" 26	46 "	50	..	4
November 4	52 "	54	..	2	November 10	46 "	48	..	2
" 20	52 "	50	2	..	" 26	46 "	44	2	..
December 4	52 "	51	1	..	December 10	46 "	45	1	..
" 20	52 "	51	1	..	" 26	46 "	45	1	..
TOTAL, ..	1,186 days	1,180	31	25	TOTAL, ..	1,040 days	1,034	31	25

Average No. of days allowed for each voyage,.....49
Do. " " occupied in "49

Average No. of days allowed for each voyage,.....43
Do. " " occupied in "43

F. W. MITCHELL,
Postmaster General.

General Post Office, Hongkong, 27th June, 1867.

STEAM COMMUNICATION WITH ENGLAND

Specified and actual days of arrival and departure of the Mail Contract Packets during 1866, shewing the number of days occupied in the passage to and from Southampton, and to and from Marseilles.

ARRIVAL.

Name of Packet.	Date on which Packet should have arrived according to Time Table.		Actual date of Arrival.		No. of Days occupied in the voyage via Southampton.	No. of days occupied in the voyage via Marseilles.
	1866.		1866.			
Baroda,	February	24	February	21	49	43
Ottawa,	March	8	March	11	51	45
Behar,	"	23	"	31	56	50
Salsette,	April	8	April	10	50	44
Rangoon,	"	20	"	19	47	41
Orissa,	May	6	May	8	50	44
Northam,	"	21	"	20	47	41
Ottawa,	June	6	June	5	47	41
Delhi,	"	20	"	21	49	43
Benares,	July	6	July	4	47	40
Orissa,	"	22	"	21	48	41
Northam,	August	6	August	3	45	39
Behar,	"	20	"	17	45	39
Baroda,	September	5	September	3	46	40
Rangoon,	"	20	"	21	49	43
Ottawa,	October	7	October	2	44	37
Orissa,	"	21	"	23	50	44
Behar,	November	10	November	7	49	43
Ellora,	"	24	"	22	50	44
Benares,	December	10	December	14	56	50
Emeu,	"	25	"	27	55	48
Salsette,	10th January, 1867		8th January, 1867		50	44

DEPARTURE.

Name of Packet.	Date of departure from Hongkong according to the Time Table.		Actual date of departure.		No. of days via Southampton.	No. of days via Marseilles.
	1866.		1866.			
Ottawa,	January	1	January	1	48	44
Yedo,	"	15	"	15	48	44
Emeu,	February	1	February	1	49	42
Benares,	"	15	"	15	47	40
Behar,	March	1	March	1	49	42
Baroda,	"	15	"	15	49	44
Ottawa,	April	1	April	1	49	43
Behar,	"	15	"	15	48	43
Salsette,	"	29	"	29	49	44
Rangoon,	May	13	May	13	48	53
Orissa,	"	30	"	30	52	48
Northam,	June	13	June	13	52	46
Ottawa,	"	29	"	29	58	51
Delhi,	July	12	July	12	52	45
Benares,	"	29	"	29	56	48
Orissa,	August	12	August	12	53	48
Northam,	"	28	"	28	54	47
Behar,	September	11	September	11	54	49
Baroda,	"	27	"	27	52	46
Rangoon,	October	15	October	15	50	44
Salsette,	November	1	November	1	50	43
Orissa,	"	15	"	15	47	43
Behar,	December	1	December	1	49	42
Ellora,	"	15	"	15	50	46

F. W. MITCHELL,
Postmaster General.

General Post Office, Hongkong, 27th June, 1867.