



SUPPLEMENT

to the HONGKONG GOVERNMENT GAZETTE of 9th January, 1886.

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 14.

The following Annual Report of the Postmaster General is published for general information.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,
Acting Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 9th January, 1886.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
HONGKONG, January 1st, 1886.

SIR,—I have the honour to report on the British Postal service in Hongkong and China during 1885.

2. For several years past the Annual Report of this Department has been commenced with a remark on the absence of anything of importance to record. The year under review has, however, been somewhat eventful.

3. The Money Order relations of this Colony have undergone a very marked extension. In the Postal Report for 1878 the following passage will be found:—

“Applications are not infrequently received for Money Orders on Continental Countries, the United States, &c., and though it would certainly not be worth while to keep accounts with those countries for the sake of, perhaps, one order every three months exchanged with each, yet such applications are always refused with regret. If there were a sort of International clearing-house, say at Berne, and it were understood that each Post Office should keep accounts with that clearing-house, and with that only, it would then be not only possible, but also easy for every Union country to exchange Money Orders with every other Union country.”

4. To a very great extent the above suggestion has been realised. The International clearing-house, however, is not at Berne, but in London, and the system of Through Money Orders (as they are called) adopted there has admitted this Colony to money order relations with nearly the whole of the Continent of Europe, the United States, Canada, Bermuda, the South and West African Colonies, Cyprus, Egypt, the Falkland Islands, Honduras, the West Indies, Iceland, Madeira, Mauritius, Newfoundland, S. Helena, the Seychelles, and New Zealand. Chinese in New Zealand send money orders here through London rather than not send them at all. A money order exchange with France has been arranged by way of India, and the same means has been adopted for the exchange of money orders with Goa. In addition to these, conventions for the direct exchange of orders have been entered into with Hawaii and North Borneo.

5. The following table shews the number of Through Money Orders which have been forwarded by way of London since the system was commenced a year ago. It will be seen how impracticable it would be to maintain a separate system with each country whilst the amount of business is so small, and yet that the total amount remitted is not inconsiderable:

Country.	Number of Orders drawn	Total amount of Orders.
Belgium,	3	£ 15. 11. 5
Canada,	6	29. 1. 7
Denmark,	6	27. 0. 3
Egypt,	1	2. 0. 0
Germany,	46	176. 1. 9
Holland,	2	8. 17. 11
Italy,	2	1. 19. 11
Mauritius,	1	4. 0. 3
Natal,	1	2. 17. 1
New Brunswick,	1	5. 0. 0
Norway,	2	2. 10. 0
Portugal,	7	9. 18. 0
Sweden,	5	24. 13. 3
United States of America,	22	83. 14. 0
West Indies (British),	1	5. 0. 0
TOTAL,.....	106	£ 398. 5. 5

6. The sale of Postal Notes has kept up during the year. They are a great convenience at the smaller Ports, where Money Orders are not to be had. The steady decline in the value of silver has however, introduced some difficulty into the system. It is absolutely necessary to offer these notes for sale at a fixed rate of exchange, which of course must not be more than a trifle above the rate of the day. But, whatever rate has been fixed, exchange has always slipped down lower, thus necessitating frequent re-adjustment of account and leading to much trouble.

7. Siam has entered the Postal Union, and a properly organised Post Office has been opened at Bangkok under the direction of H. R. H. Somdet Phra Chow Nong Ya Tho Chow Fa Bhanurangsri Swangwongse Krom Hluang Bhanuphanduwongse Woradej, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. A kind of unrecognised agency of the Hongkong Post Office used to be maintained in the Consulate General at Bangkok, where Hongkong stamps were sold, and where a letter could be registered. The new service is in every way an improvement, and completes the chain of Post Offices which may now be said to encircle Asia, at least from Aden to Hakodate. The gradual opening of Corea has of course led to a considerable increase of correspondence for that country.

8. Perhaps the event of the year most interesting to the public has been the establishment of Parcel Post with the United Kingdom and several West Indian islands. This service is as yet in its infancy, but the following figures will show that it is likely to be largely availed of:—

Outward Parcels.

Date of Mail.	Number of Parcels.	Net weight.	Total declared value.	Postage accruing to Colony.
October 13,	42	74 lb.	£ 54. 3. 0.	\$ 9.00
„ 27,	46	92 „	91.19. 5.	10.90
November 10,*	150	219 „	292. 2. 6.	28.90
„ 24,	109	156 „	105. 7.10.	21.60
December 8,	88	158 „	108.16. 6.	19.10
„ 22	68	128 „	102 .9.11.	15.90
TOTAL,....	503	827 lb.	£754.19. 2.	\$105.40

* Christmas and New Year Mail.

Inward Parcels.

London Date.	Number of Parcels.	Net weight.	Total declared value.	Postage accruing to Colony.
October 6,	102	208 lb.	£ 92. 0. 0.	\$25.50
„ 20	106	176 „	104. 2. 2.	21.90
November 3	102	206 „	184. 9. 7.	24.70
„ 17	192	346 „	141. 5. 7.	43.30
TOTAL,....	502	936 lb.	£521.17. 4	\$115.40

* Christmas and New Year Mail.

9. The contents of the parcels sent home have chiefly been these:—Bamboo-ware, beads, bronze cards, carvings, chinese ink, cigars, clothing, curios, drapery, dolls, d'Oyleys, fans, ferns, fruit handkerchiefs, insects, jewellery, lace, lacquered-ware, manuscript, mats, needlework, patterns, peppermint oil, photographs, pictures, pipes, porcelain, rugs, seeds, shells, silks and gauze, silver, skin sticks, tea, toys, watches.

The contents of parcels sent from home have been:—Accoutrements, arms, books, cake, card clothing, cosmetics, cutlery, electro-plate, feathers, flags, flowers, fruit, haberdashery, instruments, jewellery, labels, lace, lamps, lamp-wick, leather, medals, medicine, millinery, music, needlework, patterns, perfumery, photographs, pictures, price lists, silk and velvet, stationery, table linen, telegraph copes, tops, watches.

The following table shows the number of Parcels despatched to and from the various ports, all the rest were to and from Hongkong:—

	<i>Outward Parcels.</i>	<i>Inward Parcels.</i>
Shanghai,	99	192
Hoihow,
Canton,	29	22
Macao,
Swatow,	8	3
Amoy,	15	11
Foochow,	15	7
Ningpo,	6	8
Hankow,	10	11
H. M. Fleet,	26
Total,	182	280

11. This opportunity may perhaps be taken of explaining that a parcel for China can be posted by Post Office in the United Kingdom, at the rate of 10*d.* a lb. and that it will be conveyed under registration to, and delivered free at any of the Ports named in the last paragraph, or that it can be forwarded, at the sender's risk, to any other place in China to which there is communication.

12. It is already evident that the inward Parcel system will lead to a number of those false claims about losses which are always being raised from time to time about every kind of correspondence. The Parcel mail leaves London only fortnightly, and even then comes out by way of Gibraltar. It is quite possible therefore that a letter may arrive here nearly three weeks before a parcel posted about the same time. The addressee meanwhile is convinced his parcel is lost. Except however by some casualty, such as fire or shipwreck, there is no probability that any parcel will be lost.

13. The Money Order extensions and the Parcel Post system reviewed above have of course added very considerably to the work of this Department. On the other hand a proposal has been submitted by the Imperial Post Office to lighten that work by the abolition of the present complicated system of accounts kept between this Office and London. The Postal Union regulations have practically swept away all Postal Accounts with other countries, but the old-fashioned system of accounts with London has been retained. It has been pointed out that the difference between the total balances for one year and another, even taking extreme cases, does not amount to £150, and that it would be cheaper for the Colony to pay that sum annually than to keep elaborate accounts of a charge of twopence-halfpenny on this letter and sixpence on that. The question will, it is hoped, be settled by the entire adoption of Union principles between the two offices.

14. The series of Postage Stamps in use has been re-arranged so as to consist entirely of decimal values. The desirability of having only one issue of Stamps for both Postal and Revenue purposes has not been lost sight of, but certain difficulties must be overcome before this can be brought about.

15. Mr. LEIRIA, the senior clerk in this Office, retired on pension after thirty-two years good service. Mr. HUTCHISON, Acting Assistant Postmaster General, obtained an appointment in Corea before the return from leave of absence of Mr. TRAVERS, whom he had replaced, and the Department was again left without Assistant. It is impossible to speak too highly of the way in which the work was carried on during the interim by Messrs. ROCHA and MACHADO, who were entrusted with the duty of supervising the routine of the service. During this time a period of International Statistics occurred (the month of May) the complicated details of which were dealt with satisfactorily.

16. An International Congress assembled at Lisbon in February last for the purpose of revising, extending and perfecting what are now practically the postal arrangements of the world. It is impossible to lay down the two ponderous volumes which record the proceedings of this conference, or even the revised Convention which formed its principal work, without a feeling of disappointment. Regulations are left that would have been better abolished, whilst, of the few changes that have been made, some are of questionable utility. The entry of the Australian and South African Colonies into the Union seems little nearer than it was five years ago. The vexatious and needless distinction between Printed and Commercial Papers is retained, as is a frivolous regulation for a compulsory exchange of specimen Postage Stamps. The period of Statistics has been made to recur every three instead of two years, and this is a real boon. Moreover the rational system of multiplication advocated from the first by this Office has been adopted. The results of 28 days' observations are to be multiplied by 13 instead of multiplying a month's totals by 12. When five mails leave within the month it is obvious that on the latter system this Colony would pay as for sixty mails in the year, whereas there are but fifty-two.

17. The fee for Registry of Local correspondence has been reduced to 5 cents, which, at present rates of exchange, is the same as the fee of 2*d.* charged at home for Registration. It is hoped that this increased facility will tend to check the habit of forwarding bank notes in unregistered letters. Some years ago the Postal system of the United Kingdom was seriously deranged on account

of the thousands of letters which arrived in London every morning containing Postage Stamps. People advertised. Send thirteen stamps for this; Send five shillings' worth of stamps for that. A sorter or postman who stole a bundle of letters at random was certain to find several of them containing stamps. This Office has had to struggle hard not to suffer in the same way from the persistence with which residents at the Ports, chiefly Canton and Swatow, will, in spite of all remonstrances, pay their small bills here by means of bank notes sent in unregistered covers. Chinese do not steal bundles of letters at haphazard, they select those that feel tempting, and unfortunately it is not only or even chiefly the people that enclose bank notes in letters who suffer, the correspondence of others is taken. At one time it seemed to be rapidly becoming the rule that even a sample of calico or cloth put into a letter marked it for immediate theft.

18. The whole work of a Post Office is organised on the supposition that ordinary letters will contain nothing of intrinsic or immediately convertible value. If it were certain that every letter would contain a bank note, each letter as posted would have to be entered on a list, and to be recorded throughout its entire transit, just as a registered article is. The number of officers employed would grow to that of a standing army. If therefore a portion of the public will persist in throwing on the Post Office a responsibility which it notifies on every opportunity its organisation does not enable it to accept, they must be left to take the consequences.

19. An endeavour has been made to establish three regular deliveries, at 9, 12, and 3. As steamers arrive here at any hours, a system of this kind cannot be carried out very strictly, at least without a greatly increased staff, but it answers fairly well for the slacker days when no contract mails arrive. It is unfortunate that, as a general rule, the postmen have to leave for their afternoon rounds before the Canton steamer is in. They are not back till late, and the half-dozen letters from Canton may not be distributed till after dark. It is really impossible to make the whole arrangements of the Office depend on this tiny handful of correspondence. Those who may have felt aggrieved about Canton letters will perhaps accept this explanation. During the war the inconvenience was particularly marked, as it was never known whether the steamer was to be expected or not.

20. The Franco-chinese war was not a happy period in Postal matters. The regular packet service to Shanghai was suspended, the mails being carried by private ships which often started after a very short interval. On one occasion the Shanghai mail had to be sent up unsorted. Correspondence for Formosa was forwarded with difficulty, and for considerable periods not at all. Pakhoi suffered from the same difficulties, but only for a short while. The alarm of a blockade was raised at Swatow, and arrangements were in readiness to transport the mails overland. Fortunately they were not called into requisition. Ningpo was blockaded during several weeks.

21. The French packets now call at Kobé both on their upward and downward passages, which much simplifies the conveyance of mails to that Port. The mails for Japan were sent on with fair regularity throughout the year, no serious detention for want of connecting steamers having taken place.

22. The attention of both the British and French Post Offices has been called to the inconvenience caused by the English and French mails arriving, as they did during all the first half of the year, almost together. The remedy lay in the hands of the French Post Office. As the representation to it was made by its own Agents, not by this office, it is not known what view has been taken of the subject, but the evil has for the present disappeared.

23. Perhaps a more serious inconvenience to the community is the frequent departure of the American mail on the same day as the mail for Europe. This is a most unfortunate arrangement, and one that surely cannot be absolutely necessary. In the Post Office its results are very trying. The verandahs and the windows are blocked up with Chinese purchasing stamps and posting their letters, Europeans find it almost impossible to get what they want, and, two days' work being compressed into one, neither mail can be despatched with the desirable care and accuracy.

24. The trans-Pacific steamers ceased for some weeks to bring mails from San Francisco. The effect on the outward mails to that port was very marked; as far as the Chinese community is concerned correspondence almost ceased to be posted. It would seem to be certain that Chinese have again discovered some way of smuggling their correspondence into the United States, or else the vigilance of the Customs Officers has been relaxed. The outward mails for San Francisco are nothing like what they were a year ago. No doubt the same number of letters are sent, but they are sent otherwise than through the Post Office. The inward mails from San Francisco are at present being brought by the steamers of the O. & O. Co. only, the Pacific Mail steamer not bringing any.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

ALFRED LISTER,
Postmaster General.

The Honourable FREDERICK STEWART, F.L.D.,
Acting Colonial Secretary,

&c.,

&c.,

&c.

APPENDIX.

APPROXIMATE STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1885.

Supplied to the International Bureau of the Postal Union, Berne.

CLASS OF CORRESPONDENCE.	INTERNATIONAL.		LOCAL.		TOTAL.	COMPARISON WITH 1884.		
	De-spached.	Received.	De-spached.	Received.		Total in 1884.	Increase.	Decrease.
.....	576,000	406,000	62,000	51,000	1,095,000	1,095,000
.....	13,000	16,000	6,000	11,000	46,000	45,500	500	...
Articles,.....	1,150	900	1,400	900	4,350	4,100	250	...
.....	7,700	2,700	1,600	1,000	13,000	18,200	...	5,200
.....
.....	140,000	328,000	32,000	10,000	510,000	471,000	39,000	...
.....	260,000	190,000	13,000	8,000	410,000	340,000	70,000	...
.....	5,000	2,900	4,000	4,260	16,160	15,460	700	...
.....	6,000	3,000	2,834	...	9,000	5,980	3,020	...
.....	24,700	28,000	...	2,340	57,874	54,800	3,074	...
.....
.....	312	1,872	52	26	2,262	2,280	...	18
.....	548	736	130	156	1,570	890	680	...

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 15.

The following report from the Government Astronomer, for the month of October, 1885, is published for general information.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,
Acting Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 9th January, 1886.

HONGKONG OBSERVATORY.

Weather Report for October, 1885.

In the *China Coast Meteorological Register*, based on information transmitted by the Great Northern and the Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies, which was daily published, is given a summary of the atmospheric circumstances in Luzon and along the Coast of China. It also contains information regarding the weather in Nagasaki and Wladivostock, and the first appearance and progress of typhoons.

Slight fog was observed on the morning of the 14th.

Dew fell in the evening on the 14th, in the evening on the 19th, the 25th and the 29th.

Unusual visibility was noted on the 19th, the 23rd and the 24th.

A Solar halo was seen at 1 p. on the 5th.

Lightning was seen in the afternoon on the 1st and the 5th, and faint thunder was heard on the former day.

Between 12.45 a. and 1.30 a. on the 6th a light thunder-storm passed from SW through W towards NE at a great distance from here.

Lightning was seen in the evening on the 9th.

The Total Distance travelled by, as well as the Duration and average Velocity of Winds from different quarters were as follows:—

Direction.	Total Distance.	Duration.	Velocity.
	Miles.	Hours.	Miles per hour.
N	1054	95	11.1
NE	1866	132	14.2
E	7387	414	17.8
SE	390	44	8.9
S	36	7	5.1
SW	32	7	4.6
W	72	16	4.5
NW	39	7	5.6
Calm	11	22	0.5